Herefordshire Council

Title of report: Update on recommendations made by the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee

Meeting: Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: 24 March 2025

Report by: Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All wards

Purpose

To provide the committee with an update to recommendations made by the committee since September 2023.

Recommendation(s)

That:

a) The committee notes the responses to recommendations made by this committee.

b) Continues to pursue any outstanding recommendations; and

c) Agrees any response to the recommendations actioned or not.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Danial Webb, Tel: 01432 260659, email: Danial.Webb@herefordshire.gov.ukl

Alternative options

1. As the committee has previously agreed to make these recommendations, and to receive a report on their implementation, no alternative options are presented.

Key considerations

2. An important part of the scrutiny process is the recommendations made by a committee following its scrutiny of a given topic.

3. Paragraph 2.6.8 of Herefordshire Council's Constitution states that "*scrutiny committees can make reports and recommendations to the leader, Council and some partner organisations. The decision takers are not required to implement the recommendations but do have to consider any recommendations made.*"

4. Herefordshire Council has an established process for the consideration and implementation of scrutiny recommendations, contained in its Constitution. This states that "*The chief executive will notify the relevant scrutiny committee of the response of the executive within two months of receipt of the scrutiny report, with the exception of matters relating to statutory health scrutiny and issues relating to crime and disorder scrutiny which require a response from the relevant body within 28 days. If the cabinet or cabinet member wishes to extend the deadline a report will be made to the relevant scrutiny committee explaining why this is considered necessary. Decisions of the executive or Council on any scrutiny recommendations will be recorded in the usual way*."

5. Appendix 1 of this report contains a list of every recommendation made by the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee since September 2023. The table also includes, where available:

    a. the date the recommendation was submitted for a response;

    b. the deadline for the response;

    c. the date a response was received; and

    d. the response received (if any).

Community impact

6. The scrutiny function supports community development by holding the executive and its partners to account and making evidence-based recommendations that it believes will strengthen policy and practice in Herefordshire. Regularly reviewing reviews ensures that recommendations are considered and responded to, as well as providing feedback to committee in order to strengthen the quality of their recommendations.

Environmental impact

7. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.

8. All reports to scrutiny committees, as with all council committees, include appraisals of the impact of the report content on climate change. Scrutiny committee work programmes directly link to the council plan priorities, including the key priority to 'Protect and enhance our environment and ensure that Herefordshire is a great place to live'.

9. Whilst this is a report on back office functions and will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the council's Environmental Policy. Examples include:

    a. Creation of an online-only briefing programme, eliminating the need to travel to Hereford for a single meeting.

    b. Paper-free briefings and informal meetings, eliminating the need for printed paper.

Equality duty

10. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

    a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this act;

    b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

    c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

11. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. As this report is primarily for information, we do not believe that accepting (or rejecting) this report will have an impact on our equality duty.

Resource implications

12. Effective scrutiny produces evidence-based recommendations. These can be informed by learning from best practice and an understanding of 'what works' at other similar local authorities, as well as developing a robust picture of what the situation is locally based on data, intelligence and insights. Where adopted, recommendations can help with the efficiency and effectiveness of services that can be delivered differently, as well as informing the development of current and new policies.

13. As this report is primarily for information, there are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

Risk management

14. Effective scrutiny is a feature of the council's governance arrangements, where the council is operating executive arrangements. There are a range factors that could result in risks to council of not doing scrutiny effectively. These include the failure to:

    a. challenge and hold decision makers to account

b. link scrutiny work to the delivery of the council's priorities and risk management

c. carry out thorough and appropriate research to make evidence-base recommendations

d. engage partners and providers

e. ensure that structures and models of operation are fit for purpose and match ambition and available resources

f. ensure that scrutiny can operate as the voice of communities and

g. draw on member knowledge and experience to inform policy development.

15. To mitigate, tolerate or eradicate these risks, enablers for effective scrutiny include:

a. operating in an apolitical manner

b. clarity of vision and purpose

c. scrutiny support availability, capability and capacity

d. effective engagement and commitment by members and officers at all levels, including cabinet, opposition leaders, scrutiny chairs and senior officers who play a central role in setting the tone and direction

e. robust work programming and prioritisation of topics with clear objectives and expected impacts

f. ensuring that scrutiny work will add value to the council and communities e.g. through strong links between work programme topics and the integrated strategic plans that set out the actions and timescales to deliver the priorities in the County Plan

g. access to and availability of robust data and intelligence and

h. good relationships with partners and providers.

Consultees

16. None

Appendices

Appendix 1 Recommendations made by Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee, September 2023 – January 2025

Background papers

None