

Scrutiny Management Board

Inequality and social mobility Task and Finish Group

Terms of Reference

Background

The Council Plan 2024-2028 has an objective to “*tackle inequality and improve social mobility through timely intervention and prevention activities which allow residents to live independent and fulfilling lives*”. This could be interpreted as being a wide-ranging objective though the council plan focuses it on social care services.

The council does not have an explicit plan or strategy to tackle inequality and improve social mobility. Accordingly, by implication, work on tackling inequality and improving social mobility is dispersed across other plans and strategies with the risk that important actions may be missed or that work will lack impact by not being joined up. A lack of a coherent, whole-council approach may also result in a key objective being lost to competing priorities.

This task and finish group aims to support this fundamental objective of the delivery of the council plan by undertaking an in-depth review of inequality and social mobility and making recommendations by which inequality can be reduced and social mobility increased.

Objectives

- To define and understand the different dimensions of inequality (including but not limited to protected characteristics, rurality, socio-economic background and care experience) and social mobility in Herefordshire and the United Kingdom, including Herefordshire Council’s understanding of inequality and social mobility.
- To measure inequality and social mobility across the county and the different dimensions that impact on inequality and social mobility within the county and between Herefordshire and other parts of the UK
- To gather examples of local authorities and wider local partnerships meaningfully reducing inequality and/or meaningfully improving social mobility from across the UK and other countries.

- To identify the plans, strategies and actions deployed by the council to reduce inequality and improve social mobility, and the degree to which they are likely to or are actually reducing inequality and improving social mobility, and the degree to which they are not.
- To make recommendations to the executive on steps that should be taken to meaningfully reduce inequality and improve social mobility across the county.

Resources

- The chair will appoint 5-7 elected members of Council, excluding those appointed to Cabinet, to the Task and Finish Group.
- The group will have the ability to appoint up to two co-opted members to its group, either as expert witnesses or residents of Herefordshire.
- The group will be supported by staff from Democratic Services, Transformation Directorate and such others as the group deems appropriate.
- The Scrutiny Management Board will be invited to input into the review and will be kept informed of the group's progress
- Other committees and boards of Herefordshire Council may be invited to input into the review
- The Task and Finish Group will determine which external organisations will be invited to give evidence to the Group

Indicative timetable

TOR agreed and members appointed	July 2025
Scope and agree an indicative work programme	July 2025
Desk research Initial evidence gathering	July 2025
External witnesses Gathering evidence from external organisations	September-November 2025
Internal witnesses Gathering evidence about council and partnership plans and strategies	July-November 2025
Recommendations	Feb 2026

The task and finish group will agree its timetable in consultation with relevant officers, representatives of external organisations and its own assessment of the time needed at each step. This indicative timetable is an estimate before detailed information gathering has commenced.