

Minutes of the meeting of the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Tuesday 3 June 2025 at 10.00 am

Committee members present in person and voting:	Councillors: Bruce Baker, Frank Cornthwaite (Vice-Chairperson), Liz Harvey, Ed O'Driscoll (Chairperson), Rob Owens, Justine Peberdy and Roger Phillips
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Others in attendance:

G Dando	Chief Operating Officer - Resident Services	Herefordshire Council
D Etheraads	Museum Lead	Herefordshire Council
R Evans	Regional Manager (West Midlands)	Active Travel England
F Horton	Transport Planning Services Manager	Herefordshire Council
D Land	Head of Transport and Access Services	Herefordshire Council
H Merricks-Murgatroyd	Democratic Services Officer	Herefordshire Council
N Millington	Chair, Herefordshire Cultural Partnership (CEO of Rural Media)	Herefordshire Cultural Partnership (CEO of Rural Media)
P Price	Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure	Herefordshire Council
C Purcell	Board Member, Herefordshire Cultural Partnership	Herefordshire Cultural Partnership
A Rees-Glinos	Democratic Services Support Officer	Herefordshire Council
E Swinglehurst	Cabinet Member Environment; Deputy Leader of the Council	Herefordshire Council
D Webb	Statutory Scrutiny Officer	Herefordshire Council

51. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Diana Toynbee and Cllr Elizabeth Foxton.

52. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Cllr Justine Peberdy was present as the named substitute for Cllr Diana Toynbee, and Cllr Liz Harvey was present as the named substitute for Cllr Elizabeth Foxton.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

54. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were received.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

55. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Documents containing questions received from members of the public and the responses given, plus supplementary questions and their respective responses were published as a supplement to the published agenda and papers.

56. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

No questions had been received from councillors.

57. CULTURAL STRATEGY 2019-29

The committee considered a report on the Cultural Strategy 2019-29. The principal points are noted below:

1. The Museum Lead noted that the cultural strategy was adopted by the council but not produced by the council. Instead, the cultural strategy is held by the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership.
2. It was added that at this stage, the council supports the cultural partnership which is an independent body of arts organisations and funders who work across the county. Although the partnership is unfunded, it has been supported by the council through grants from UKSPF funding in recent years.
3. The Chair of the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership noted that the genesis for the report written in 2024 was that the partnership had reached a point with the strategy needing to be reviewed in light of changes since. The review therefore was to look at the state of culture and cultural activity and creative industries within the county. The consultants employed to carry out the report found that as part of its data, 4,000 new creatives were created in the county.
4. The Executive Director Meadow Arts added that traditional ONS data miss very small businesses which help form a significant part of the county's creative industry.
5. In response to a question about whether the cultural strategy has ever been formally adopted by the council, the Museum Lead noted that he had been endorsed but not formally adopted.
6. The Chair of the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership added that the difference between endorsement and adoption is key because of the responsibility that exists with delivering the objectives of the strategy.
7. In response to a question about whether there is an implementation plan in place to deliver on the strategy, the Museum Lead added that the implementation is by the organisations on their own terms so where there is direction of travel in the strategy, each organisation will deliver that in their own way within the confines of the strategy. Therefore, there is no direct, single document that sets an implementation plan across the strategy.
8. The Executive Director Meadow Arts added that the first draft of the strategy had big ambitions but was not hard on a delivery plan. Part of the revamp now is for the partnership itself to scrutinise that aspect of delivery of the strategy. There is

also an ongoing review of governance and setting up new terms of reference to establish who needs to be on the partnership without it becoming too large.

9. In response to a question about whether the council has taken on enough of an active role in the cultural strategy, the Museum Lead noted that the council in recent years has made a huge effort in investment and culture. It was added that there has been a drive in direction based on the strategy that has not existed in the previous ten years.
10. The Executive Director Meadow Arts added that the Chair of the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership also sits on the council's economy and growth board representing culture which reflects a positive change. It is also positive that the partnership is in attendance at this meeting of the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee. The Herefordshire Cultural Partnership represents culture across the county and the council is a very important part of the partnership's quarterly meetings.
11. The Chair of the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership noted that from the partnership's perspective, the first five years of the strategy have been very positive in working with the council. Going forward, it is a question of whether the council wants to adopt the strategy as its own or whether the partnership continues to work in the same way it has done to date with an independent cultural compact working closely with the council. Part of that piece of work to reach that point is to look at the external landscape including the potential of devolution.
12. In response to a question about where else does the partnership see good examples of collaboration and working, the Chair of the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership noted that well devised initiatives that then speak to other issues including, for example, the Our Place project can be replicated in the future.
13. The Executive Director Meadow Arts noted that other examples that could be considered are Plymouth and Gloucester in which the latter is a pioneer in Creative Health which is a new sector where there can be significant changes in more rural areas to help change and improve lives. The partnership is also working with Talk Community to reach into deeply rural areas with Creative Health programmes.
14. The Chair of the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership noted that thanks to the support of the council through the Towns Fund, the partnership is about to finish a digital media hub in the centre of Hereford. There are now industry professionals within the county to represent and compete on both a national and international level.
15. A committee member noted that the council should highlight the cultural strategy to parish, city, and market town councils to encourage their participation and support of local initiatives.
16. It was also noted that the recent Herefordshire Histories Festival is an example of an event that celebrated all small-makers and small businesses, particularly in the rural areas, and the digital platform helped to support it.
17. The Executive Director Meadow Arts noted that going forward the priorities in the cultural strategy will be kept consistently as headings on agendas for meetings.

Resolved:

That

- a. Herefordshire Council formally endorses the renewed Cultural Strategy 2025-2029 and the key findings of the *5th Sector* report.
- b. Herefordshire Council to support Herefordshire Cultural Partnership to produce an implementation plan to deliver the renewed Cultural Strategy 2025-29.
- c. Herefordshire Council ensures there is a dedicated officer to work with the partnership to produce and deliver the strategy's implementation plan.
- d. Herefordshire Council to ensure the updated Cultural Strategy 2025-29 is reflected in economic development and health and social care service delivery, including the evolving Talk Community network.
- e. Herefordshire Council highlight the Cultural Strategy 2025-29 to town and parish councils and encourage engagement and support for local initiatives.
- f. Herefordshire Council assist with the development and promotion of co-working and creative hub spaces for creatives to access shared resources and facilities to support development of new culture-based businesses in Herefordshire.

58. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

The committee considered a report on the Local Transport Plan (LTP).

The slides presented by the Transport Planning Services Manager are outlined below (in italics), with the principal points noted below.

A The Transport Planning Services Manager introduced the presentation and welcomed the opportunity to update the committee on the Local Transport Plan.

a.1 The Transport Planning Services Manager noted that last year a lot of public engagement was carried out to see what the public wanted focusing on in the Local Transport Plan.

a.2 It was noted that the strategies have been split into two parts with one half focused on the city, and the other half focused on the rural market towns as both are unique in terms of their transport networks.

a.3 There are three action plans including, 1) the transport network as a whole; 2) the city and; 3) the rural market towns. This will help to put appropriate measures into the appropriate places.

a.4 It was added that an internal consultation was carried out with staff prior to going to the public including consultation with planning services, business development services, education etc. to ensure that the offer to the public was appropriate before going out to the public with the draft local transport plan.

B The Transport Planning Services Manager presented:

Age of respondents

b.1 The responses were compared to the demographics of Herefordshire and it was found that there was difficulty with engaging with younger residents. Some additional links have been established with the college to attempt to engage better with younger residents.

Transport options

b.2 A key question asked was whether people felt that they had good options for transport and the resounding response was no. A key focus of the LTP, therefore, is that those options need to be enhanced.

Support for Action Plans

b.3 The action plans are a list of projects that have been identified for the city, transport network, and rural market towns.

b.4 Overall, people are either very neutral to them or supportive of them. The actual opposition is quite low which helps to reinforce that the decisions taken by officers, reflect the right projects.

Priorities on LTP5 objectives

b.5 The main trend is that people do not support things like active travel, EV charging, and sustainable ways of transport. Instead, more car-dominant ones are very supported. This is a change to what the government trends are saying and it is important that a balance is struck within the LTP.

The principal points of the subsequent discussion are summarised below:

1. In response to a question about how many responses were received, the Transport Planning Services Manager noted that 110 were received.
2. In response to a question about the trend of responses that have been received and whether they will have an impact on the LTP, the Transport Planning Services Manager noted that there would have to be a review and would involve a mixture of whether the council are doing the right engagement with people to explain the benefits of those strategies and whether too much is focused on certain benefits over others. A lot of the strategies are government priorities which means that things such as active travel and EV charging have to be delivered.
3. The Chair expressed his disappointment with the lack of responses to the survey and noted his intention to encourage constituents to engage with the survey as much as possible.
4. The Transport Planning Services Manager noted that the LTP aligns with the council's priorities including the declaration of a climate emergency, however, it is limited as to what can be changed within the LTP in line with council policy and strategy.
5. In response to a question about whether the Local Transport Plan (LTP) is intended to be considered within the context of the existing local transport strategy, or whether it is being developed independently without reference to an accompanying strategy, the Transport Planning Services Manager noted that the LTP is linked to the housing allocation given previously. Since the LTP was being written, the government have increased those numbers significantly. Rather than

delaying the LTP, it has been decided to do an amendment to the LTP once the Local Plan is adopted. Part of that will include monthly meetings with the transport policy and planning teams to consider where the housing allocation is going and how it will operate with the existing infrastructure. A working document will be created highlighting projects that are needed and changes needed to the LTP.

6. In response to a question asking why the development of a LTP is not being aligned with the development of the update of the Local Plan, the Transport Planning Services Manager commented that to wait until the Local Plan is finished would incur significant costs on the council as the data for the LTP is time-limited and the council would need to continue to spend significant amounts of money on a document which can instead be amended. It was added that when the Local Plan is adopted with the increase to housing allocation, the LTP should be amended at that point.
7. The Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure added that there needs to be a LTP in place to ensure that the council is in the right place at the right time.
8. In response to a question asking why the LTP is being taken to 2041 instead of 2031, the Transport Planning Services Manager noted that there are fundamental strategies will remain regardless of the housing allocation including safety, reduced carbon, inclusivity etc. so the difference will be the action plans where the projects are placed to align to the future needs of the county.
9. The Transport Planning Services Manager added that the decision to split the LTP into two strategies with multiple action plans because what is needed in certain parts of the county is not in other areas.
10. Rhiannon Evans (Active Travel England) commented that from Active Travel England's perspective, it is great to see that active travel is embedded across the objectives including promotion of skills and the economy. It was added that it would be beneficial to see a bit more detail which can help to ensure that schemes are well-used to help achieve active travel objectives.
11. In response to a question about the lack of LTN/120 design commitments, the Transport Planning Services Manager noted that there is a guidance document called LTN/120 which Active Travel England have developed and it gives the local authority guidance as to how local walking and cycling routes should be designed. It was added that as a guidance document, it is not mandatory but linked to that are road safety audits which are mandatory. Following on from the LTP, the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which will be consulted on later this year and then hopefully be adopted this year which will give more detail on the routes that intend to be developed. Within that document, there will be recommendations on monitoring including LTN compliance and number of modal shift.
12. Rhiannon Evans (Active Travel England) added that there is currently a draft version of the rural guidance which the council is commenting on. It was acknowledged that it can be challenging to implement LTN/120 routes, particularly in more rural areas. However, although it is guidance it is a good quality level to aim for because LTN/120 routes can be associated with higher levels of uplift.
13. In response to a question about whether Active Travel England would like to see targets in modal shift, Rhiannon Evans (Active Travel England) noted that it

would be helpful to have that monitoring and evaluation to monitor and track how effective the council's schemes are.

14. The Transport Planning Services Manager noted that the LTP is a dynamic document whereas the previous one was quite rigid. Instead, this document aligns with the council's priorities which have been set by cabinet and are what the council have established as its priorities. The current period of consultation allows for any specific objectives and strategies from the previous strategy to potentially be added into the new LTP, subject to review.
15. In response to a question regarding the language used in the LTP, the Transport Planning Services Manager explained that the LTP is just one of several key documents that developers must consider, alongside others such as the Local Plan. It was also noted that Active Travel England is a statutory consultee and may provide guidance or raise objections to planning applications that do not align with its objectives. While the language in the LTP could be made more prescriptive, it was cautioned that doing so might inadvertently hinder development or restrict the flexibility needed to address local priorities.
16. A committee member expressed concern in relation to the impact of developments particularly on smaller villages in the county.
17. In response to a question about when the LTP moves to the next stage and whether there will be dates on all of the proposals, the Transport Planning Services Manager noted that the next stage, post-consultation, is a review of the consultation. If it is felt that the LTP is suitable, potentially with minor amendments, then it is scheduled to go to Cabinet in September for approval and then full council in October for adoption. Once it is adopted, officers will come back with delivery plans and priorities of those projects. A lot will be limited by funding made available and without significant investment from the council itself, a lot of the dates will be fluid dependent on external funding.
18. In response to a question about what the 30-minute place is and how they will be prioritised, the Transport Planning Services Manager explained that one of the priorities put forward by the government is infrastructure within a certain timeframe which links in with the council's growth strategy. As the transport network is developed, it is important that local communities can access facilities and are easily accessible whether by bus or by car in a prescribed time-period.
19. In response to a question about how inclusion will be ensured as part of the council's EV rollout across the county, the Transport Planning Services Manager noted that the government has been supportive of EV charging grants so that they can be located in the rural areas and work is needed to be done to decide exactly where those chargers should be located. EV charging ports are also part of brand-new developments and in some developments, every house has an EV charging port. It also includes working with community groups such as community travel initiatives where they can be supported in either purchasing an EV vehicle or having an EV charger.
20. In response to a question about whether an app with timetables has been considered, the Head of Transport and Access Services noted that data should instead be driven through Google Maps rather than building a new app which is cost-inefficient and is used by few people.
21. In response to a question about what operational model would be considered in relation to demand-responsive transport (DRT), the Transport Planning Services Manager noted that it would be worthwhile considering what neighbouring

authorities have done in relation to DRT and what they found successful and unsuccessful. Shropshire is a relatively comparable authority to Herefordshire and would be a useful model to review.

22. In response to a question regarding the conduct and accessibility of strategic environmental assessments, the Transport Planning Services Manager stated that the information would be included in the Cabinet paper and made available online for public viewing.
23. The Transport Planning Services Manager stated that a supplementary planning document will be introduced to require developments to implement a travel plan, subject to the criteria established.
24. In response to a suggestion about ensuring that all the data is up-to-date which is informing the LTP, the Transport Planning Services Manager explained that since the old LTP was adopted, the council have created a transport model which will flag pinch-points and issues across the county.

Resolved:

- a. **That the draft Local Transport Plan is reviewed to ensure alignment with existing council plans and strategies.**
- b. **That the Local Transport Plan gives particular consideration to the needs of children and young people.**
- c. **The duration of the Local Transport Plan is kept in alignment with the Local Plan and Transport Strategy to which it applies - namely 2016-2031.**
- d. **Herefordshire Council work to increase the number of residents taking part in the Local Transport Plan consultation as a matter of urgency, extending the consultation deadline to 30 June to all members of the public.**
- e. **The policy wording of the Local Transport Plan is tightened to ensure that it is meaningful and capable of being applied.**
- f. **The Local Transport Plan recognises the full extent of existing new developments, for example Ledbury, and the infrastructure improvements necessary to accommodate this.**
- g. **The Local Transport Plan should include targets for the implementation of active travel measures.**
- h. **The Local Transport Plan recognises the inability of the power grid network to meet the needs of fast EV charging point.**

59. WORK PROGRAMME 2025-26

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer presented the draft work programme for the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2025/26.

The committee unanimously agreed the draft work programme for Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved that:

- a) The committee agree the draft work programme for Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee contained in the work programme report attached as appendix 1, which will be subject to monthly review, as the basis of their primary focus for the remainder of the municipal year.
- b) The committee note the forward plan attached as appendix 2 and identify any opportunities for collaboration or alignment of work.

60. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 8 July 2025, 14:00 pm.

The meeting ended at 1.11 pm

Chairperson