Herefordshire Council

Title of report: Adult social care demand task and finish group terms of reference

Meeting: Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Monday 28 July 2025

Report by: Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All wards

Purpose

To determine whether to form a task and finish group to conduct an appreciative inquiry into adult social care demand in Herefordshire.

Recommendation(s)

That:

a)   **The committee agree to form a task and finish group according to the terms of reference attached as Appendix 1.**

Alternative options

1.   The committee could make changes to the terms of reference before agreeing to form the task and finish group.

2.   It could decide not to form the task and finish group. This is not recommended as the committee has previously agreed to carry out this work.

Key considerations

3.   From a review of the corporate risk register, and following discussions with senior officers of the council, the committee has identified the growing demand for adult social care services as a priority for its work programme. This is reflected in Herefordshire Council's corporate risk register, which has identified "Demand for client-based services continues to increase resulting in increased budget pressures and poor outcomes for those people in receipt of our services." as a fundamental risk to the local authority.

4. In common with other local authorities, the demand for adult social care services from Herefordshire Council has risen steadily since 2011. This demand is driven by a number of factors:

    a. Ageing population: Herefordshire has a higher than national average and growing elderly population, leading to a higher need for social care services.

    b. Rurality: The dispersed rural nature of Herefordshire presents logistical challenges in delivering services.

    c. Rising costs: The increasing cost of providing adult social care, coupled with fiscal tightening, has created financial strain.

    d. Dementia: The number of people with dementia in Herefordshire is projected to increase significantly, adding to the demand.

    e. Increased complexity and longer duration of need.

5. The task and finish group therefore seeks to:

    a. Understand the extend of demand for adult social care services provided or commissioned by Herefordshire Council.

    b. Explore the drivers of increased demand for adult social care, and the capacity of the local authority to fund it.

    c. Identify strategies and work carried out by other local authorities to reduce demand, or to increase revenue to pay for services.

    d. Make recommendations to the executive on steps that should be taken to reduce service demand and to increase revenue.

6. Draft terms of reference for the task and finish group are attached as Appendix 1.

Community impact

7. The scrutiny function supports community development through robust scrutiny of the council's policy framework, including the Local Plan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Council Plan and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

8. Scrutiny also supports community issues more directly through the work of the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee.

9. The function also helps to ensure that the council discharges its corporate parent duties effectively, through scrutiny of the corporate parenting board and the council's broader work to support its looked after children and their families.

Environmental impact

10. 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.

11. 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 keep Herefordshire a great place to live."

12.   Climate change and carbon reduction related issues are directly identified in the remit and therefore focus of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee.

13.   Whilst this is a decision 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.   Online meetings, 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

14.   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.

15.   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

16.   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.

17.   As this report is primarily for information, there are no direct resource implications arising from this report. However the function may require some funding in order to carry out its work effectively. Requirements may include purchasing training or expert advice. However it is anticipated that much of the training and development required during the year can be met using existing council resources.

Risk management

18.   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.

19.   To mitigate 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 Council Plan

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

h.   good relationships with partners and providers.

Consultees

20.   None

Appendices

Appendix 1   Adult Social Care Demand for Services Task and Finish Group, Terms of Reference

Background papers

None