

## **Minutes of the meeting of Council held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Friday 25 July 2025 at 10.00 am**

**Present:** Councillor Roger Phillips (chairperson)  
Councillor Stef Simmons (vice-chairperson)

**Councillors:** Polly Andrews, Bruce Baker, Jenny Bartlett, Chris Bartrum, Graham Biggs, Dave Boulter, Harry Bramer, Jacqui Carwardine, Simeon Cole, Frank Cornthwaite, Clare Davies, Dave Davies, Barry Durkin, Mark Dykes, Matthew Engel, Toni Fagan, Elizabeth Foxton, Carole Gandy, Catherine Gennard, Peter Hamblin, Liz Harvey, Robert Highfield, David Hitchiner, Dan Hurcomb, Terry James, Jim Kenyon, Jonathan Lester, Ed O'Driscoll, Aubrey Oliver, Rob Owens, Justine Peberdy, Dan Powell, Ivan Powell, Philip Price, Ben Proctor, Adam Spencer, Louis Stark, Pete Stoddart, John Stone, Elissa Swinglehurst, Charlotte Taylor, Richard Thomas, Kevin Tillet, Diana Toynbee, Rebecca Tully, Allan Williams, Rob Williams and Mark Woodall

**Officers:** Chief Executive, Director of Governance and Law and Director of Finance

### **10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pauline Crockett, Helen Heathfield and Nick Mason.

### **11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **12. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **13. CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Council noted the Chairman's and Chief Executive's announcements as printed in the agenda papers.

### **14. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (PAGES 7 - 16)**

A copy of the public questions and written answers, together with supplementary questions asked at the meeting and their answers, is attached to the Minutes at Appendix 1.

### **15. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (PAGES 17 - 20)**

A copy of the Member questions and written answers, together with supplementary questions asked at the meeting and their answers, is attached to the Minutes at Appendix 2.

## **16. LEADER'S REPORT**

Council received and noted the Leader's Report which provided an update on the activities of Cabinet since the previous ordinary meeting on 7 March 2025.

Council questioned the Leader and the following actions were raised:

- In response to a question concerning the commitment of the council to develop a 'Child Friendly Herefordshire' it was suggested that scrutiny could consider a task and finish group exercise.
- In response to a question regarding projects underway to increase SEND provision, additional information would be made available.
- In response to a question regarding the holiday activities and food programme 2025-2026, to liaise with government regarding the provision of funding for the Autumn half term for the programme.
- In response to a question regarding how the council would seek to address the deficit in the DSG, a strategy would be shared with members. The strategy would detail how the council would seek to take the issue forward with central government.
- In response to a question regarding thresholds for support it was suggested that scrutiny could consider an investigation into how local residents who did not qualify for the holiday activities and food programme but who were struggling could be supported during the school holidays.
- In response to a question regarding the timelines for the delivery for the Community Transport grant through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Allocation 2025/2026 it would be considered what assistance could be provided to local community groups to access the funding.
- In response to a question regarding work that was ongoing with respect to riparian landowners it was explained that an update would be provided.
- To provide a response to a question regarding the procurement of highway resurfacing services and the extra miles resurfaced compared to the existing BBLP contract.
- In response to questions regarding calls to implement a 40 mph speed limit around Locks Garage in Allensmore an officer appraisal on the proposal would be sought.
- In response to a question regarding road side railings officers would be asked to look at the safety of corroded railings on Belmont Road and Greyfriars Bridge.
- In response to a question regarding food waste caddies and the potential for wildlife to scavenge, officers would be asked to consider that the containers were sufficient robust before they were issued.
- A response would be provided to a question regarding the proposed provision of fencing in Churchill Gardens, around Churchill House, following an officer review of the proposal.

## **17. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDERS**

Council debated the motions contained in the report by the Director of Law and Governance.

**Motion – Securing Herefordshire's Role in the UK and European Defence Industrial Strategy**

Councillor O'Driscoll proposed and introduced the motion.

Councillor James seconded the motion.

Council debated the motion. There was support across the majority of Council for the recommendations contained in the motion but concern was expressed by some members regarding the inclusion of munition and ammunition manufacturing in Herefordshire.

The motion was put to the recorded vote and was carried by a simple majority.

FOR (38): Councillors Andrews, Baker, Bartrum, Biggs, Bramer, Carwardine, Cole, Cornthwaite, Clare Davies, Dave Davies, Durkin, Dykes, Foxton, Gandy, Hamblin, Highfield, Hurcomb, James, Kenyon, Lester, O'Driscoll, Oliver, Owens, Phillips, Dan Powell, Price, Proctor, Simmons, Spencer, Stark, Stoddart, Stone, Swinglehurst, Taylor, Thomas, Tillett, Allan Williams and Robert Williams.

Against (2): Councillors Harvey and Woodall.

Abstentions (10): Councillors Bartlett, Boulter, Engel, Fagan, Gennard, Hitchiner, Peberdy, Ivan Powell, Toynbee and Tully.

#### **RESOLVED:**

##### **This Council notes:**

- **The publication of the UK Government's *Strategic Defence Review 2025 – Making Britain Safer: Secure at Home, Strong Abroad*, which sets out plans to make defence an engine for economic growth across the UK.**
- **The SDR's headline commitments, including:**
  - **A new £1.5 billion “always-on” pipeline of investment in UK munitions and energetics factories, delivering at least six new manufacturing sites;**
  - **£6 billion investment in munitions and up to 7,000 UK-built long-range weapons;**
  - **Over 1,800 skilled jobs to be created across the UK defence sector;**
  - **A commitment to increase defence spending to 2.5% of GDP;**
  - **A new Defence Exports Office and forthcoming Defence Industrial Strategy aimed at accelerating acquisition and opening up supply chains to UK SMEs.**
- **The announcement of a defence partnership between the UK and EU enabling UK companies to access EU defence programmes, including the €150 billion SAFE initiative and wider €800 billion ReArm programme thereby potentially unlocking substantial export and inward investment opportunities.**

##### **This Council further recognises:**

- **Herefordshire's proud history in the defence sector, including its longstanding role in munitions production, Special Forces presence, and engineering excellence.**

- **The county's strong foundations in advanced manufacturing and potential to host one of the government's planned new munitions and energetics factories.**

**This Council resolves to ask the executive to:**

- 1. Develop a Herefordshire Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Prospectus, highlighting the county's strategic readiness to host defence-related investment, including a munitions facility, with a focus on clean and sustainable manufacturing.**
- 2. Formally write to the Secretary of State for Defence, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Ministry for Business and Trade, urging them to consider Herefordshire as a location for one of the planned new factories and associated supply chain investment.**
- 3. Call on the Government to support rural areas like Herefordshire by:**
  - **Prioritising infrastructure upgrades in strategic industrial zones;**
  - **Establishing an investment support scheme modelled on Enterprise Zones;**
  - **Fast-tracking planning for clean-tech and defence-linked developments.**
- 4. Engage with UK defence primes and SMEs to promote supply chain expansion in the county, particularly for dual-use and green defence technologies.**
- 5. Work with FE and HE providers to align training and apprenticeships with the emerging needs of the UK and European defence sector.**
- 6. Ensure that all defence-linked investment is underpinned by Herefordshire's values of environmental responsibility, ethical governance, and community benefit.**

### **Motion – Future of Neighbourhood Planning services**

Councillor Dave Davies proposed and introduced the motion.

Councillor Rob Williams seconded the motion.

Council debated the motion. There was widespread support across the Council for the motion.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried by a simple majority.

### **RESOLVED:**

**Herefordshire Council acknowledges that:**

- **Neighbourhood planning empowers local communities to shape the development and growth of their areas through the creation of Neighbourhood Plans.**
- **The preparation of Neighbourhood Plans requires significant time, expertise, and financial resources, often placing a burden on parish and town councils.**

- **Neighbourhood Plans contribute to more democratic, locally-informed planning decisions and support the delivery of sustainable development aligned with community needs and aspirations.**

**Therefore it is Resolved to –**

- 1. Call upon the Chief Executive to contact His Majesty's Government to provide increased and sustained funding to support the development, review, and implementation of Neighbourhood Plans.**
- 2. Request that the Government ensures funding is accessible to all communities, to promote inclusivity and fairness in the planning process.**
- 3. Write to Herefordshire MPs and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities, and Local Government to communicate this resolution and advocate for enhanced support for neighbourhood planning.**

### **Motion – Housing Targets**

Councillor Harvey proposed and introduced the motion.

Councillor Toynbee seconded the motion.

Council debated the motion. There was widespread support across the Council for the motion.

The motion was put to the recorded vote and was carried by a simple majority.

FOR (49): Councillors Andrews, Baker, Bartlett, Bartrum, Biggs, Boulter, Bramer, Carwardine, Cole, Cornthwaite, Clare Davies, Dave Davies, Durkin, Dykes, Engel, Fagan, Foxton, Gandy, Gennard, Hamblin, Harvey, Highfield, Hitchiner, Hurcomb, James, Lester, O'Driscoll, Oliver, Owens, Peberdy, Phillips, Dan Powell, Ivan Powell, Price, Proctor, Simmons, Spencer, Stark, Stoddart, Stone, Swinglehurst, Taylor, Thomas, Tillett, Toynbee, Tully, Allan Williams, Robert Williams and Woodall.

Against (1): Councillor Kenyon.

Abstentions (0):

### **RESOLVED:**

**In July 2024 Herefordshire along with every other planning authority in the country, received a letter from the Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner, in which she gave notice of the government's intention to impose significantly increased top-down housing growth targets on all local authorities.**

**Here in Herefordshire this has meant an increase of over 11,000 houses to our already ambitious housing delivery plans. Meaning that the update of our Local Plan looking out to 2041 is being challenged to impose nearly 28,000 new homes on our rural communities and already pressed urban centres.**

**This housing target comes without justification and without consideration of local conditions. The target is not evidence based, it is not positively prepared, it is not reasonable and it is not sympathetic to the nature of our county.**

**This Notice of Motion proposes that:**

**Whilst this council will – as requested by government – “make every effort to allocate land in line with our housing need, as per the standard method”, this Council fully supports our officers and our Cabinet in their actively seeking to “justify a lower housing requirement than the figure the method sets, on the basis of local constraints on land and constraints on delivery”.**

The meeting ended at 12.40 pm

**Chairperson**

Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from members of the public

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mr Frecknall, Hereford	Herefordshire Council is being both ambitious and generous in proposing to fund and build a Southern Link Road for National Highways to subsequently adopt as part of A49(T) Hereford Bypass. Would the cabinet member please confirm that the Southern Link Road's final design will be to DMRB 60mph standard throughout?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
<b>Response:</b> I can confirm that the road will be built to Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) standards and with input from National Highways to inform design so that at some point when the whole of the Hereford Western Bypass is completed it could be adopted by National Highways as the A49 allowing the current A49 through the City to be detrunked. Decisions on speed limit will be informed by the design process and no presumption has been considered on a 60mph speed limit at this time.			
PQ 2	Mr Stephenson, Ledbury	<p>Small rural market towns, such as Ledbury continue to be forcibly and exponentially overdeveloped and expanded, against local peoples' wishes. This is without first considering or uplifting local services, which are already considerably straining to meet the current populace. This overdeveloped and forced urbanisation is destroying swathes of countryside, undermining local values, ways of life and the very identity of such market towns. If residents wanted to live in a suburban sprawl, they would have moved to larger towns. This overdevelopment causes, increased traffic, pollution, crime, increased safety and security risks to locals and children. Further to this, locals are effectively living in a building site, with constant road works for years to come.</p> <p>What are Herefordshire Council doing, and when will they stand up and fight for the county against Central Government's forced and unwanted overdevelopment of the area?</p>	Cabinet member environment
<b>Response:</b> The Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024, introducing mandatory housing targets for all councils within England. The mandatory housing target for Herefordshire is 27,260 homes and this is considerably higher than the previous growth figure that was being planned for which would have resulted in 16,100 new homes over the same 20-year period. In response to the draft NPPF consultation that took place last summer, a detailed response was submitted to the Government on behalf of the council outlining concerns that the mandatory targets are set too high and do not reflect past build rates and market demand, similarly that rural counties such as Herefordshire would require significant investment in infrastructure in order to consider planning for this level of growth. These comments did not influence the published version of the NPPF in December which largely remained unchanged.			

In planning for growth, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) needs to consider sustainable locations that are accessible by more than one mode of transport and to focus development where existing services exist. This will involve looking at the city and the market towns as part of this process. The new Local Plan will be accompanied by an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), the purpose of this document is to make sure that any growth is aligned with the necessary infrastructure required (for instance schools, highways, open space, health provision, active travel etc) and will be delivered as part of any new development.

The new Local Plan will be subject to two public consultation stages (called Gateway 1 and Gateway 2), which provides an opportunity for people across the county to shape the future strategy. We will publicise the dates for these consultation stages as soon as finalised, which will include meetings in the market towns including Ledbury.

PQ3	Ms Martin, Hereford	It is settled and undisputed transport science that congestion in urban networks at or close to capacity cannot be reduced with peri-urban road building, nor traffic growth arising as a result of development, and there is no bypass anywhere that has achieved it. The global professional and academic communities have accepted it and the DfT acknowledges it in guidance but the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure at Herefordshire Council disagrees with them. What evidence is there that the western bypass will defy the universal laws of transport physics and economics and where can we find it	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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#### **Response:**

You only need to look over the border at the success of the A4440 Worcester Southern Link Road to show that providing new and enhanced road infrastructure around an historic city, provides demonstrable benefits to accessibility for all modes of travel, enabling housing and economic growth, environmental improvements within the city centre and enhanced resilience of the transport network.

The current situation within Hereford, is similar to that addressed within Worcester, where there is a lack of resilient infrastructure as a result of the single river crossing, meaning that any disruption along key routes, such as Victoria Street, can have a significant impact across the city and beyond, disrupting all movement, including that undertaken by bus, cycling and walking, increasing pollution and a detrimental economic impact on businesses within the county. The provision of a second river crossing to the south of Worcester unlocked significant potential for the city and a new river crossing and enhanced road network for Hereford will achieve the same.

#### **Supplementary Question:**

In my question I asked for evidence that the western bypass would defy the laws of transport planning physics and achieve what no other bypass has ever achieved by reducing congestion in the city. The response was that "You only have to look over the border at the success of the A4440 Worcester Southern Link Road".

You only have to drive in Worcester and along the Southern Link Road to see that, £194m later, not only do the people of Worcester still have a



congested city, they now have a congested bypass as well and it's going to get worse because this dualling scheme was completed less than three years ago. Do the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure and supporters of this scheme not understand that resurgent traffic in bypassed urban areas typically takes up to five years to manifest fully and that therefore the Worcester scheme can't be held up as an example of a successful traffic reduction measure?

**Response to Supplementary Question:**

The road layouts within historic cities was never designed to meet modern day needs with traffic growth having grown steadily in the last 30 years and predicted to rise in the future due to the increased housing targets across the country. As a result, Hereford's road network is already struggling to cope with demand, mainly due to the throttling effect of the single river crossing. It is therefore common sense that an additional river crossing, will help spread this load, and ensure less disruption to traffic times within the city, particularly in conjunction with the additional sustainable travel schemes that the council is delivering within Hereford.

A traffic analysis of the scheme will be developed to provide evidence of the beneficial impact of providing a by-pass compared to alternative options.

PQ 4	Mr Milln, Hereford	<p>Of the unattractive modern five storey steel tower at Jacob's Court consented by Herefordshire Council within the Central Conservation area without reference to design coding but soon found to be unsafe and scaffolded in 2010, questions were asked in June 2021 and November 2023.</p> <p>By 2021 the scaffolding, costing the Council £400 per month, already totalled over £60,000. The Cabinet Members' response to the 2023 supplementary assured us the timescale for resolving the issues and recovering the Council's rising costs were being finalised.</p> <p>Yet it is clear, another two years on, this is not the case and the building remains as much of an eyesore as ever it was. A scheme of repair, approved in 2022, is imminently due to expire for non-commencement.</p> <p>Given the failure to address the problem over many years, what action should Herefordshire Council now take?</p>	Cabinet member environment
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**Response:**

We recognise the need to bring this issue to a speedy conclusion and are working with the Owner's Management Committee for Jacobs Court.

**Supplementary Question:**

The Cabinet member's one line response fails to advance the Jacob's Court issue one jot. Grenfell Tower has been going on for eight years, Hereford's Jacob's Tower fifteen and before anyone is injured by it, its unsafe panels must be replaced and the eyesore scaffolding and sheeting removed if only to put a stop to the continuing drain on the public purse. I ask again what is the timetable for carrying out the remedial work and recovering some £80,000 Herefordshire Council has spent on a building that is privately owned?

**Response to Supplementary Question:**

Conversations are ongoing and it is not possible to give a definitive answer currently.

PQ 5	Mr Morfett, Hereford	With the limited headroom on the local sewerage systems, the current Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2014 required £24Million to expand sewerage capacity improvements in Hereford, Leominster and Rural Areas to alleviate sewer system overflows during times of flood. How much funding has been paid to date to protect public health and ensure that developments do not result in sewage pollution to people, property and rivers?	Cabinet member environment
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**Response:**

Welsh Water and Severn Trent are the statutory water and sewerage undertakers within Herefordshire. Therefore, they are legally obligated to provide water and sewerage services, this includes a continuous high quality water supply, ensuring that wastewater is properly disposed of, and managing their networks efficiently. Statutory Undertakers set out their investment programme in an Asset Management Plan (AMP) and these have been overseen by Ofwat, the economic regulator of the water and sewerage industry. In terms of the details of investment to date and over a given period, this is information that would need to be provided by the statutory undertakers concerned.

Statutory undertakers will be consulted upon sites as part of the detailed site assessments that will be undertaken to inform the development of the local plan. Similarly statutory undertakers are consulted on planning applications that come forward to Development Management for consideration. Furthermore, the Corporate Director for Economy and Environment will meet with both Welsh Water and Severn Trent to ensure that they remain accountable and committed to the improvements scheduled within their AMP Plans. The Statutory Undertakers will be invited to appear before CCSC Scrutiny Committee to ensure that they are considering the impact of their decisions including their investment programmes.

PQ 6	Mrs Protherough, Hereford	In noting that the anticipated cost of the SLR will require an allocation of £30 million, funded by a loan, what action will be taken in 2026 to meet additional cost if tenders from contractors are significantly higher than anticipated?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Response:** The Capital Programme, approved by full Council in February 2025, includes an allocation of £30m to deliver the first phase of the Hereford Western Bypass. The Outline Strategic Business Case identifies estimated costs and confirms that a review will be undertaken to confirm construction costs and a full business case will be prepared prior to committing to expenditure. Options for future funding will be identified following completion of the full business case and confirmation of costs.

**Supplementary Question:**

What additional costs would be required through council tax to meet repayments on the loan and what would be the impact on other initiatives and projects at the council?

**Response to Supplementary Question:**

The answer could be provided next year when the full design had been produced.

PQ 7	Ms Albright, Leominster	Does the council feel that 811 homes levied and 'released' under the phosphate credit scheme since 2019 is an acceptable level of delivery?	Cabinet member environment
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**Response:** The Council is proud of the progress and delivery of our pioneering and award-winning nature-based phosphate mitigation strategy which has to date created 247 kg of phosphate credits which will enable approximately 1,500 new homes. Following the release of these credits we have been working proactively with developers to progress planning applications using these and the 811 homes referenced is the number that have progressed to date.

This is however only one element of our overall approach which also includes working to support developers with private mitigation schemes and addressing the huge issue of restoring the overall health of the river.

To support developers to bring forward private mitigation schemes we have developed additional guidance, case studies, FAQ's and templates in order that this can minimise or mitigate the need to access the Council's credit scheme. We are also committed to continually reviewing and updating these to consider the best available technology to meet this challenge.

**Supplementary Question:**

247kg equates to around £3.45 million extracted from struggling local SMEs for no ecological gain.

The council is also in receipt of additional grant funding of around £2.7 million to specifically support housing delivery in the Lugg.

Does HC have plans on how to spend the funds they have accrued - to achieve the best outcomes as quickly as possible?

Is it ethical or effective to maintain the housing moratorium/mitigation situation when evidence shows new homes are not the cause of the nutrient overload in the Lugg and new homes are desperately needed?

Will Herefordshire Council write to catchment MPs and agencies to implore decision makers to remove the moratorium and instead adopt a 'fair share' position that reflects the data? And to beseech agencies to prioritise catchment restoration, rather than maintaining the ecological crisis and so continue to ransom cash from the wrong sector?

**Response to Supplementary Question:**

As part of the Council's Phosphate Mitigation Strategy approved by Cabinet in February 2024, this approved the commencement of the second phase of the programme which is currently in delivery, and also detailed the subsequent phase three.

Later this year a further report will be brought forward to Cabinet seeking approval to commence this third phase, whilst also proposing the exploration of further mitigation measures to inform the further and future phases.

The Council continues to work in partnership with stakeholders and government agencies towards achieving catchment restoration and the consideration of 'fair share'. However under the current legislation we are still required to ensure nutrient neutrality as set out in the Habitat Regulations.

PQ 8	Mr Hill, Hereford	<p>Would the Cabinet Member please consider introducing an Article 4 Direction (as has been done in Hereford City) to Herefordshire's other Market Towns requiring planning permission for change of use even within the same permitted development use class?</p> <p>Such moves would help to restore public and business confidence in maintaining a vibrant, diverse, and functional high street, particularly for independent traders and for reducing crime/disorder. This could also reasonably extend to restrictions on Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO). I would be keen to see a mapped out timetable to bring this into action within the remainder of this current administration.</p>	Cabinet member environment
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**Response:** An Article 4 Direction is part of planning legislation that allows the council to remove permitted development rights including changes of use from an area or property in certain limited situations where it is necessary to protect local amenity or the wellbeing of an area. An Article 4 itself does not prevent the development to which it applies but instead requires that planning permission is first obtained from the council for that development. Before pursuing an Article 4, the Council would give consideration to more effective and proportionate policy tools, for instance Local Plan Policies and Area Specific Design Codes. In order to introduce an Article 4 the Council would require justification and evidence to demonstrate that permitted development rights pose a real and specific threat to local amenity or the wellbeing of an area, the impact must be localised and blanket Article 4 Directions over large areas (i.e whole Market Towns) are discouraged. Article 4 Directions must be proportionate to the harm that it is seeking to address and the removal of permitted development rights should not go beyond what is necessary to protect the identified interest. Therefore, there are no current plans to introduce an Article 4.

PQ 9	Ms Laan, Hereford	<p>2,250 parks and green spaces across the UK have reached the high standards required to receive a coveted Green Flag Award in 2025, but none were awarded in Herefordshire. Investing in parks and green spaces not only improves the health and quality of life for its residents but it boosts tourism, reduces crime, strengthens community and makes the County an attractive destination for new employers. Why is this Council not able to fund the proper care and maintenance of its public open spaces, which so many other Councils can achieve?</p>	Cabinet member roads and regulatory services
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**Response:**

Herefordshire is blessed with several parks, open spaces and outstanding natural beauty, which we are proud of. Herefordshire Council manages 141 parks and green spaces, 64 of which include children's play areas. We are committed to investing in green spaces as they are critical recreational facilities for our residents. £1 million has been made available in our capital budget for this financial year and 2026/27 to enhance as many of these play areas as possible.

All parks and green spaces receive regular grounds maintenance in order to ensure that the sites remain safe and amenable for users. The contract that delivers this maintenance is coming to an end in 2026 and council officers are currently working on implementing a new contract in June 2026.

Once the new contract is in place, the aspiration is to review parks and green spaces in order to identify sites that could be suitable for a Green Flag application.

PQ 10	Mr McGeown, Weobley	<p>It is my understanding that Herefordshire Council has a statutory duty as set out on page 98, Working together to safeguard children 2023, There exists no statutory "cut off" for the time of receipt but Herefordshire's published best practice is:</p> <p>To provide copies of the reports submitted by all agencies for Review Child Protection Conference to parents and older children ... a minimum of 5 working days before review conferences to enable any factual errors to be corrected and the family to comment on the content."</p> <p>These reports will be submitted on standard template forms such as:  <a href="https://www.herefordshiresafeguardingboards.org.uk/documents/cpc-multi-agency-reporting-template-updated-march-2020">https://www.herefordshiresafeguardingboards.org.uk/documents/cpc-multi-agency-reporting-template-updated-march-2020</a></p> <p>Am I correct in my understanding of this statutory duty and are different templates used by Health and Police etc?</p>	Cabinet member children and young people
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**Response:**

Most of our partner agencies do use the template provided as best practice to guide reports that they submit to conferences although some agencies will use their own formatting and we allow this flexibility.

**Supplementary Question:**

Thank you to Councillor Powell for confirming that "all agencies reports" are submitted for Review Child Protection Conference and their format.

The Report Template clearly states:

"Have you shared your report with the family and / or person your information relates to"

Followed by a section for confirmation.

I have yet to find a family who have received "Reports from Other Agencies 5 working days in advance of RCPC". I believe this part of the Statutory Duty has never been achieved.

But my information can only be anecdotal.

Councillor Powell, through his position, can access all the full facts.

So what proportion of families subject to RCPC does Councillor Powell think get to receive these reports, an honest best guess at a percentage would provide a satisfactory answer?

**Response to Supplementary Question:**

As I explained in my response to your public question submitted to cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2025 the timeliness of child protection review conferences is the statutory key performance indicator.

The Director has confirmed that although most agencies do provide written reports for their contributions some will attend in person and provide a verbal report which is then included in the minutes. It is for the author of these partner agency reports to share with the parent and check the factual accuracy of the content of their reports prior to submission to Children Social Care. CSC do not record data on this.

The Corporate Director has advised that service is working on its own practice standards and the system monitoring of activities with them and she confirmed that the service do know from our case audits this is an area of improvement required.

PQ 11	Ms Reid, Hereford	<p>The Chief Executive's report mentions Ofsted's (17/7/2025) letter about their monitoring visit regarding children in care. It states:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">'The consistent moderation of practice audits, to ensure reliable evaluation of practice, and ... remain areas for improvement.'</p> <p>Overall, the letter is positive. However, there is contradictory evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recent negative media coverage including an online <i>Observer</i> article entitled: 'Outcry as council seeks to make man who faced child abuse trial a family guardian'. The article written in July 2025 states: 'A decision will be made about whether to give him [currently a foster carer] permanent guardianship at a family court hearing next month.'</li> <li>The website (<a href="http://www.families4change.org.uk">www.families4change.org.uk</a>) of the Families' Alliance for Change (Herefordshire) has a 'Media Coverage' section.</li> <li>The inquest into 21-year-old care leaver Natasha 'Tash' Ashby's death is due in March 2026.</li> </ul> <p>What is your current appraisal of Herefordshire Children's Services?</p>	Cabinet member children and young people
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**Response:**

Ofsted monitoring visits are focused on work undertaken by the department within the six month period prior to the monitoring visit taking place, therefore current practice. In addition, through its Quality Assurance Programme, the service also seeks feedback from current and recent service users, draws on current Key Performance indicators and undertakes audit of practice within the three months of the case audit. These four process seen collectively are providing a positive picture of improvement and outcomes for children. In the Ofsted Monitoring Visit of Oct 24 and Feb 25 we also

see positive progress and practice in those areas being made. As such our appraisal of the Children Services is, as reflected in the Ofsted letter of June 25, that positive progress at pace is being made.

**Supplementary Question:**

I mentioned contradictory evidence to Ofsted's (17/7/25) letter, for example, recent media coverage like *The Observer's* article and the upcoming inquest into a care leaver's death. But there is other evidence such as anecdotal evidence and a letter detailing serious concerns about Herefordshire Children's Services that was sent by Families' Alliance for Change (Herefordshire) to Ofsted before their monitoring visit focused on children in care. There are around 400 children in care and three inspectors inspected over two days.

Your response to my public question mentions "the service also seeks feedback from current and recent service users". However, there is a substantial power imbalance between service users and social workers, etc.

In view of the above, how can you be confident that the feedback process is really rigorous and is truly capturing the views and experiences of service users?

**Response to Supplementary Question:**

Between September 2024 – March 2025 109 families had provided feedback. In the first quarter of the current year 53 families had provided feedback which demonstrated a willingness on the part of local families to share their experiences with the council.





**Agenda item no. 6 - Question from members of the Council**

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 1	Cllr Hitchiner, Stoney Street	<p>Residents in my Ward have expressed concern about the state of Belmont Road between numbers 70 to 32 as it does not reflect well on the pride we have in our County. In particular, the vegetation growing around the railings and the railings themselves. This road is a key route into the city and because the traffic is slow, there is plenty of opportunity for residents and visitors to pause and admire the weeds. The vegetation has now been cleared I understand in preparation for Hereford in Bloom.</p> <p>This vegetation should not be cleared only to satisfy Hereford in Bloom. It should be cleared more regularly. Would the Cabinet Member agree with me that the programme of works should include the clearing of this vegetation in this location at least three times a year in April, July and September of each year?</p>	Cabinet member roads and regulatory services
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>Thank you for your question, Councillor Hitchiner.</p> <p>The vegetation at the location you mention has been recently cleared in advance of Hereford in Bloom. Such locations are not allocated to lists for routine maintenance but are cleared on an ad-hoc basis when the need arises. Any consideration of routine maintenance at this location along Belmont Road will need to be assessed alongside other areas on arterial routes into Hereford. Routine maintenance of such areas across the county can be explored with the new public realm contractor once available budgets are understood.</p>			
MQ 2	Cllr Proctor, College	<p>In July 2024 as part of a presentation to the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee the council stated that there were 1,953 people on the Homepoint list.</p> <p>In response to a recent FOIA request the council stated that this number had dropped to 663 in June 2025.</p> <p>What has happened to the 1,290 people who have vanished from the list?</p>	Cabinet member adults health and wellbeing
<p><b>Response:</b></p>			

In July 2024, the number of households registered on HomePoint was 1,943 as reported to the Scrutiny Committee. In November 2024, the council implemented a new IT system for HomePoint which meant that every person registered on the system at the time needed to reapply. Every household was contacted a number of times to complete their reapplication. At the time of the response to the FOI in July 2025, the number of households on the waiting list was correct at 663 households – a combination of those who had reapplied and new applications.

As at 24 July 2025, there are currently 712 households active on HomePoint, with a further 121 households who have partially completed their application and a further 508 households who are waiting to be assessed or who have not provided all their required documentation. This would mean that the number of households on the HomePoint system – either active or in process – is 1,341.

Key to securing an accurate figure is annual maintenance and updating of the system. When this is undertaken, the number of households will always reduce because households find their own accommodation and forget to update the system, households have secured accommodation with a Registered Provider and their application was not closed or they do not reply to emails asking if they wish to remain on the register.

Prevention is key to all the teams that form the Housing Service. Housing Officers actively work with households to prevent homelessness but where this is not possible they offer advice/ guidance as well as financial assistance. Anyone that makes a homelessness application will, with assistance from a Housing Officer, complete a HomePoint application. Social housing is in high demand with limited availability, so all households are also encouraged to look for alternative solutions to the waiting list. The Housing Officers will assist the household to secure private rental accommodation, can offer mediation, prevent evictions, secure accommodation with a Registered Provider or offer a financial solution such as a loan, rent or deposit. All of these preventative measures are helping to reduce numbers.

**Supplementary question:**

In November 2024, the council implemented a new IT system for Homepoint which meant that every person registered on the system at the time needed to reapply. I cannot imagine any technical or administrative reason for this. I can't imagine that when we implement a new planning system, we will require everybody to resubmit planning applications or that if we switch our council tax system, we will require everybody to re-register for council tax. So, what is it about people seek seeking social housing that means the council thinks it's acceptable to treat them in this way?

**Response to supplementary question:**

The system that was procured by the council for housing did require information from the previous system to be transferred manually to the new system. It was not an ideal situation but allowed the opportunity to clean up the data and correct entries for people who have found alternative accommodation, moved out of the area or their circumstances have changed. When Councillor Proctor was given the information initially it was quite low but since then we have continually written to people who were on the register to make sure that they are not missed off and we are continuing to put them on the system and new people are being added every day. I accept and I think the director accepts that the process of the procurement of that particular system was not what we would have wanted. But unfortunately we were not in a position to do very much about it at the time and we are continuing to have concerns about some sections of that system.

MQ 3	Cllr Oliver, Saxon Gate	<p>What measurements of air pollution have been taken over Hereford city during the last four years?</p> <p>Do these measurements show any decrease in the levels of pollution over those years?</p> <p>Have any actions being taken by the council over the last four years to try and reduce pollution?</p> <p>Which areas of the city have the highest levels of pollution, bearing in mind there is no safe level of air pollution, and all of us will be breathing in toxic air?</p> <p>Have air pollution measurements being taken in all of our market towns and if so how do they compare with Hereford city?</p>	Cabinet member environment
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**Response:**

Thank you for your question regarding air pollution monitoring and the actions taken in Hereford and other areas of the county. Over the past four years, the council has carried out regular air quality monitoring in Hereford using both an automatic monitoring station and a network of passive diffusion tubes. The automatic station, located in the city, records continuous real-time levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>), and finer particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), which are among the most significant pollutants affecting public health. In addition, passive diffusion tubes provide nitrogen dioxide readings at various roadside locations across the city. All results are reported annually in the council's Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR), which is publicly available on the Herefordshire Council website.

The data over the last four years shows that levels of nitrogen dioxide in Hereford have generally declined, with a noticeable drop in 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown and a gradual return to lower, more stable levels in subsequent years. Overall, the trend remains downward, and the most recent ASR confirms that pollution levels are currently below national air quality objectives. Particulate matter levels have also remained within the government's target thresholds, although these can vary depending on weather conditions and seasonal activity such as domestic heating.

To support air quality improvements, the council has implemented a range of measures over the past four years. These include investment in active travel infrastructure such as walking and cycling routes, the installation of electric vehicle charging points, and improvements to traffic management and public transport. The council's Air Quality Strategy sets out its longer-term approach to reducing emissions and protecting public health.

Within Hereford, the highest levels of pollution are generally recorded along busy roads, particularly the A49 corridor where queuing traffic and congestion are more common. The city centre has been designated as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) as a result of previous exceedances of nitrogen dioxide limits, and it remains a focus for continued monitoring and action. Addressing emissions from the A49 continues to be a key objective, and proposals to detrunk the A49 aim to reduce the volume of through traffic in the city centre. In the longer term, a bypass is also expected to support improvements in local air quality by diverting traffic away from the most polluted areas.

Outside of Hereford, air quality is also monitored in the county's market towns. In Leominster, an automatic monitoring station is in place which, like Hereford, measures NO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>, and PM<sub>2.5</sub>. Leominster also has an AQMA centred on the Bargates area due to past traffic-related pollution. In other market towns such as Ross-on-Wye, Ledbury, and Bromyard, monitoring is undertaken using diffusion tubes which track nitrogen dioxide levels.

The results from these towns have consistently shown lower pollution levels than in Hereford, and no AQMAs have been required in those areas to date.

In summary, Herefordshire Council continues to monitor air quality across the county and to take proportionate action where pollution risks are identified. The latest data indicates that pollution levels are improving and remain within national standards, but the council recognises that there is no safe level of air pollution and remains committed to ongoing efforts to reduce emissions and protect health.