



## UPDATE ON ACTIVITY TO DELIVER IMPROVEMENTS IN GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS DURING 2025/26

Core Principle	Area for Improvement	Activity in 2025/26
<b>Core Principle A:</b> Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	<p>We will continue to promote a culture of accountability and strong ethical values through additional training to Officers to support the documentation of evidence-based decision making and reporting, aligned to the revised Risk Management Strategy and Risk Appetite Statement.</p>	<p>Training to strengthen the consideration of equality impact assessments will be delivered to Service areas as part of the development of the 2026/27 budget. This training will include information on sources of diversity data to support EIAs (Herefordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, population and census data) and guidance in respect of the consultation process.</p> <p>Risk management training has been delivered to Cabinet and the council's Leadership Group and tailored support is provided to risk owners and Service and Directorate teams as part of routine risk management activity.</p> <p>Mandatory training for employees in 2025 includes 5 modules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information Access &amp; Information Governance</li> <li>• Information Security</li> <li>• Health &amp; Safety and Fire Safety</li> <li>• Display Screen Equipment (DSE)</li> <li>• Equality, Diversity &amp; Inclusion (EDI)</li> </ul> <p>Risk management training will be delivered to all Members as part of the mandatory training programme in 2025/26.</p>
	<p>Improvements to the process for declaring employee interests will be delivered in 2025/26 to enable simplified reporting and updating by employees and support improved oversight by managers.</p>	<p>The Employee Code of Conduct and supporting Employee Interest Policy and Employee gifts and hospitality Policy set out rules for dealing with employees' interests. Each employee is required to make an annual return with regard to personal interests, in addition to declaring any gifts and hospitality or interests as they arise.</p> <p>Improvements to the process for employees to declare interests are under review.</p>
	<p>Incorporation of equality considerations in service planning templates to improve ownership of equality within each service area.</p>	<p>Training to strengthen the consideration of equality impact assessments will be delivered to Service areas as part of the development of the 2026/27 budget. This training will include</p>

		information on sources of diversity data to support EIAs (Herefordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, population and census data) and guidance in respect of the consultation process.
<b>Core Principle B:</b> Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	Arrangements to enhance and strengthen governance, internal challenge and oversight of the council's major and capital projects will be implemented in 2025/26 with the establishment of a Major Projects Forum. This body will provide oversight with representation from a variety of stakeholders across the council to provide internal check and challenge.	<p>A Major Projects Delivery dashboard has been developed during 2025/26 and a monthly update is provided to Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet. The dashboard highlights the key dates and decisions as well as Lead Officers, planned activity and RAG status in respect of each of the council's major projects. This process ensures additional oversight of risks in the delivery of projects.</p> <p>This is in addition to the individual project boards and Member and Officer project specific working groups.</p> <p>An independent review has been commissioned to provide assurance of the capacity and capability of the council to deliver the major projects. This will include a detailed review of 7 individual projects with a further review of the capital programme and interdependencies.</p>
	A further layer of assurance will be provided via a Corporate Services Gateway board to be chaired by the Deputy Monitoring Officer and Deputy S151 Officer to provide an opportunity for cross-cutting legal, financial, governance issues and risks to be considered separately for upward reporting to the Major Projects Forum.	<p>Corporate Services Officers representing Procurement, Finance, Legal and Risk elements within projects have met outside of project board meetings during 2025/26 to consider thematic issues and risks, led by the Director of Finance (S151 Officer).</p> <p>The newly appointed Deputy S151 Officer took up post in October and Terms of Reference for the Corporate Services Gateway Board will be agreed in October 2025.</p>
<b>Core Principle C:</b> Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits	Development of an updated Carbon Management Plan and associated action plan.	<p>A Cabinet Task &amp; Finish group was established to update the Carbon Management Plan (CMP) and action plan to improve focus and consistency of the council's emissions reporting and targeted actions.</p> <p>A draft CMP including action plan has been completed and will be subject to review by the Service lead prior to review and approval by the Cabinet Task &amp; Finish Group. It is expected that the plan will be implemented from 1 April 2026.</p>
	Continued work with strategic partners, residents and local organisations to develop a revised countywide carbon dioxide reduction strategy aspiring for carbon neutrality by 2030.	The Herefordshire Climate and Nature Board has met three times since April. Officers have worked on carbon budget modelling for energy, buildings, domestic, land use and agriculture and waste management and transport to inform the Board's priority actions.

		<p>A Climate and Nature networking breakfast was held in May attended by c 60 key stakeholders. This was an opportunity for Board to update on the carbon budget modelling, priority actions and key themes.</p> <p>A buildings event to show case renewable energy and sustainable construction and demonstrations of Solar PV and battery storage rigs, and Heat Pumps is being planned for March 2026 by the Board's Buildings sub-group.</p> <p>The Greener Footprints communications channels and e-bulletin aims to support the county's response to the climate &amp; nature emergencies. It highlights schemes what the Council offer in that area e.g. Warm Homes Local Grant, Biodiversity and Nature grant scheme, community car clubs, biodiversity schemes for schools, Business energy grants etc as well as initiatives provided by other local organisations, and examples of carbon reduction initiatives in businesses, schools and homes.</p> <p>Over 50 schools have now signed up to Let's Go Zero and c 20 schools now have climate action plans. Three school climate action workshops have been held with a further three planned up until 31 March 2026.</p>
<b>Core Principle D:</b> Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	In addition to improvements in performance monitoring arrangements, the council has identified areas for improvements in the integration of social care case management and financial systems to support consistency and accuracy in data used to drive activity and financial forecasts.	Finance, Service and Performance teams are working together to identify improvements and strengthen links between activity and financial data in 2025/26.
	Improved links between All Age Commissioning and operational service areas to ensure joint understanding of commissioned services, to support service developments and enhanced financial management.	
<b>Core Principle E:</b> Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	The council's leadership development programme (@LeadHC) will be launched in 2025/26 to address gaps in the learning and development offer and strengthen leadership	Grow@HC is a new career conversation tool aimed at supporting career development at Herefordshire Council. The Innovate programme is a 5.5 day face to face programme aimed at senior, experienced leaders, or those aspiring to make

	skills and capabilities. The Lead@HC Programme will aim to develop inspirational leaders across four themes: Grow, Aspire, Empower, Innovate.	that career move, with or without previous leadership development. The first cohort in 2026. The Empower programme is a 4.5 day experiential programme, aimed at new and experienced operational line managers, with or without previous leadership training with training planned for the first cohort from November 2025 to April 2026. The Aspire is aimed at aspiring line managers and is delivered over a 2 day programme supported by wrap around learning. The first cohort is underway (September to November 2025) and the second cohort will receive training between January and March 2026.
	A review of the reporting tools available through the council's finance system (Business World) will be undertaken in 2025/26 to increase automation and simplification of financial information to aid budget management and decision making.	The Finance team continues to investigate opportunities to develop, tailor and simplify reporting outputs from the finance system to support budget holders and inform decision making. This work will continue over the course of the financial year.
<b>Core Principle F:</b> Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	Risk management takes place across the council at Corporate, Directorate and Service levels and activity will continue in 2025/26 to review the council's risk management framework which outlines the processes and activities by which risks are identified, evaluated, managed, monitored and reported, in line with the revised Risk Management Strategy. This activity will include engagement through the council's Leadership Group and training for risk owners at all levels within the risk management framework including elected members.	<p>The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Cabinet have undertaken quarterly reviews of the Corporate Risk Register to update risk scores, consider the adequacy of control measures and mitigating actions and identify new threats and opportunities to the delivery of the objectives and priorities of the Council Plan 2024-28.</p> <p>The council's 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan has been reviewed to ensure it is aligned to the refreshed Risk Strategy and risks identified in the Corporate Risk Register.</p> <p>A consistent Risk Register template to record and monitor individual Directorate, Service and Project risks has been developed with automated links and escalation flags; this template aligns risks to the council's approved Risk Strategy and Risk Appetite Statement. A SharePoint site and Teams channel has been established to share guidance, training and enable interaction between risk owners</p> <p>Training was delivered to the council's Leadership Group in September 2025.</p> <p>The risk management strategy will continue to be embedded in 2025/26; the risk management intranet page will be updated and risk management dashboard reporting will be developed.</p>

<p><b>Core Principle G:</b> Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability</p>	<p>A review of the council's Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26, following the approval of the updated Risk Management Strategy and Corporate Risk Register, to ensure that planned work provides adequate coverage of the council's key risks and control environment.</p>	<p>A review of the Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26 has been undertaken and was approved by Audit &amp; Governance Committee at the meeting held 25 September 2025.</p> <p>The revised 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan has been developed using a risk-based, assurance mapping approach, which is aligned to the council's corporate objectives and priorities and the key risks which may prevent them from being achieved. The Plan has been informed by a variety of sources including the Council Plan 2024-2028, Delivery Plan 2025/26, Corporate Risk Register, Risk Management Strategy, other sources of assurance including peer review and professional body inspections, engagement with Directorate Leadership Teams, benchmarking against audit plans of other local authorities and intelligence from previous audit and counter-fraud work.</p>
	<p>Integration of equality impact assessments at the initial stages of developing new strategic, policies, functions or services to understand the potential impacts on individuals, and groups, in our communities and ensure effective consideration of equality, diversity and cohesion in all key decision making.</p>	<p>Training to strengthen the consideration of equality impact assessments will be delivered to Service areas as part of the development of the 2026/27 budget. This training will include information on sources of diversity data to support EIAs (Herefordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, population and census data) and guidance in respect of the consultation process.</p>
	<p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training is included in the council's Mandatory Training Programme for 2025; opportunities to enhance and share information to strengthen consideration of equality impact assessments for staff and Members will continue in 2025/26.</p>	<p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training was one of the five modules of mandatory training in the council's Programme for 2025. As noted above, the development of the 2026/27 Revenue Budget includes tailored training and guidance for Directorates in respect of equality impact assessments.</p>