



Title of report: Healthwatch Herefordshire

Meeting: Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Monday 24 November 2025

Report by: Chief Executive, Community Power

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All wards

Purpose

To provide the committee with an overview of Healthwatch Herefordshire and its work, Government proposals to abolish Healthwatch England and Local Healthwatch, and principles for future delivery of Healthwatch's functions.

Recommendation(s)

That the committee:

- a) Notes the report and**
- b) Prepares questions for Healthwatch Herefordshire based on this report.**

Alternative options

- 1. As the committee has asked for this report to be presented to the committee, no alternative options are presented.

Key considerations

- 2. The secretary of state for health & social care Wes Streeting MP announced in July that there would be health system reforms, including the abolition of Healthwatch England and Local Healthwatch. This was a recommendation of the DASH review of patient safety, to simplify the landscape of patient experience feedback.

3. At its work planning meetings, the Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee has noted the plans to abolish Healthwatch and has raised concerns that Healthwatch's role in advocating for patients may be lost in any subsequent reorganisation.
4. The committee has invited Healthwatch Herefordshire to attend this meeting to discuss the proposed changes, and to identify principles for future arrangements for the work currently carried out by Healthwatch.
5. Healthwatch Herefordshire have prepared a report for the committee, covering their work to date, the proposed legislative changes, and principles for a local champion for people using health and social care services.

Community impact

6. The scrutiny function supports community development by holding the executive and its partners to account and making evidence-based recommendations that it believes will strengthen policy and practice in Herefordshire.

Environmental impact

7. 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.
8. 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 ensure that Herefordshire is a great place to live'.
9. Whilst this is a report 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. Creation of an online-only briefing programme, 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

10. 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.
11. 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

12. 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.
13. As this report is primarily for information, there are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

Risk management

14. Effective scrutiny is a feature of the council's governance arrangements, where the council is operating executive arrangements. There are a range of 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-based 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.
15. To mitigate, tolerate or eradicate these 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 County Plan
 - g. access to and availability of robust data and intelligence and
 - h. good relationships with partners and providers.

Consultees

16. None

Appendices

Appendix 1 Healthwatch Herefordshire *The Value of Local Healthwatch*

Background papers

None

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	Danial Webb	Date 14/11/2025
Finance		Date
Legal		Date
Communications		Date
Equality Duty		Date
Procurement		Date
Risk		Date

Approved by	Date
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