

Minutes of the meeting of Council held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Friday 10 October 2025 at 10.00 am

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

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

Officers: Director of Governance and Law and Director of Finance

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chris Bartrum, Harry Bramer, Pauline Crockett, Mark Dykes, Robert Highfield, John Stone, Elissa Swinglehurst, and Allan Williams.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Barry Durkin declared an interest in relation to agenda item no. 9, motion - Protecting Community Safety in Herefordshire - Opposing Cuts to PCSO Hours, as a member of the Police and Crime Panel.

Councillor David Hitchiner declared an interest and outlined the dispensation granted in relation to agenda item no. 8, Leader's Report, as a local resident to the proposed Southern Link Road.

Councillor Liz Harvey declared an interest in relation to agenda item no. 9, motion - Protecting Community Safety in Herefordshire - Opposing Cuts to PCSO Hours, as a member of the Police and Crime Panel.

20. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21. CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

22. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (PAGES 7 - 10)

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.

23. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

There were no questions from members of the Council.

24. ELECTORAL REVIEW: PROPOSING THE NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS PER WARD

Council considered a report by the Democratic Services Manager regarding the Electoral Review: Proposing the number of councillors per ward.

The Leader proposed the Electoral Review report recommendations and introduced the report.

Councillor Liz Harvey seconded the report's recommendations.

The Electoral Review: Proposing the number of councillors per ward was put to a vote and was carried by a simple majority.

RESOLVED

That Council:

- a) Resolves, by a majority vote, to retain its current electoral arrangements of one member per ward, and**
- b) Presents its resolution to the Commission stating the Council's position on its preferred electoral arrangements**

25. LEADER'S REPORT

Council received and noted the Leader's Report which provided an update on the activities of Cabinet since the previous meeting of Council on 25 July 2025.

Council questioned the Leader and the following actions were raised:

- In response to a question regarding whether the title of the Domestic Abuse Strategy should highlight prevention, it was proposed that the matter be referred to the Health and Wellbeing Board for consideration.
- In response to a question about whether the Council holds data on ongoing dissatisfaction relating to children's service provision, it was confirmed that feedback from families will be shared with members.
- In response to a question about Ross Enterprise Park and that access will be created in this year, it was noted that members will be updated on the timeline of works.
- In response to a question about assurances over issues around opening up an access to the Ross Enterprise Park development site in relation to the logistical issues around the siting of fibre-optic communications cabling, it was noted that an update would be provided.
- In response to a question regarding litter concerns around the Enterprise Zone at Rotherwas, it was noted that officers would be asked to liaise with colleagues who run Skylon Park to see what the issues are and how they can be addressed.

- In response to a question regarding whether Herefordshire Council will undertake a Section 77 appraisal to assess the impact on the River Lugg catchment area in relation to the original planning decision for the Buttercross flats, it was confirmed that clarification would be provided.
- In response to a question about consultation with officers regarding the Merton Meadow Urban Village Programme, it was noted that clarity would be provided with regard to which officers the member had spoken to ensure regular updates have been received.
- In response to a question regarding the City and Market Town Public Realm Investment, and whether written confirmation would be provided to confirm that the £1.2 million allocation will be carried over into the next financial year in the event of over-runs or delivery delays, it was confirmed that this would be done.
- In response to a question regarding whether a briefing or workshop for all members would be held prior to the public consultation stage of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), it was confirmed that this will be arranged.

Councillor Jim Kenyon left the meeting at 11:19 a.m.

26. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDERS

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

Motion - Protecting Community Safety in Herefordshire - Opposing Cuts to PCSO Hours

Councillor Owens proposed and introduced the motion.

Councillor Tillett seconded the motion.

Council debated the motion. The motion with alterations (to include mention of the Chief Constable in the motion) was agreed by the proposer of the motion.

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

FOR (44): Councillors Andrews, Baker, Bartlett, Biggs, Boulter, Carwardine, Cole, Cornthwaite, Clare Davies, Dave Davies, Durkin, Engel, Fagan, Foxton, Gandy, Gennard, Hamblin, Harvey, Heathfield, Hitchiner, Hurcomb, James, Lester, Mason, O'Driscoll, Oliver, Owens, Peberdy, Phillips, Dan Powell, Ivan Powell, Price, Proctor, Simmons, Spencer, Stark, Stoddart, Taylor, Thomas, Tillett, Toynbee, Tully, Rob Williams, and Woodall.

AGAINST (0)

ABSTENTIONS (0)

RESOLVED:

Council resolves:

- 1. Formally oppose the decision of the Chief Constable and supported by the Conservative Police and Crime Commissioner to limit PCSO evening working hours across Herefordshire.**
- 2. Request the Chief Executive to write to the Chief Constable and supported by the Police and Crime Commissioner, urging a reversal of this decision in**

recognition of the significant impact it will have on community safety and the visibility of policing in Herefordshire.

- 3. Request the Leader of the Council to communicate the Council's opposition to these proposed changes with both of Herefordshire's MPs and encourage them to raise the issue in Parliament, and to call for increased support and funding for neighbourhood policing in rural counties such as ours.**

Councillor Terry James left the meeting at 12:18 p.m.

Motion - Child Friendly Herefordshire

Councillor Fagan proposed and introduced the motion.

Councillor Proctor seconded the motion.

Council debated the motion. The motion with alterations (to include the word 'all' in the fourth bullet point) was agreed by the proposer of the motion.

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

RESOLVED:

- 1. To adopt a formal policy of Child Friendly Herefordshire, embedding the principle of putting children and young people's safety and wellbeing at the heart of all decisions.**
- 2. To ensure children and young people have meaningful opportunities to shape decisions that affect them, both now and in the future.**
- 3. To ask the executive to work with partners across public services, schools, health, business, transport, community groups, and voluntary organisations to create a county-wide partnership for Child Friendly Herefordshire.**
- 4. To ask the Leader to report annually to Council on progress towards making Herefordshire a county where all children and young people thrive.**

Motion - Improving access to employment, education and leisure for young people aged 16–19 through bus provision

Councillor Tully proposed and introduced the motion.

Councillor Engel seconded the motion.

Council debated the motion.

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

FOR (41): Baker, Bartlett, Biggs, Boulter, Carwardine, Cole, Cornthwaite, Clare Davies, Dave Davies, Durkin, Engel, Fagan, Foxton, Gandy, Gennard, Hamblin, Harvey, Heathfield, Hitchiner, Hurcomb, Lester, Mason, O'Driscoll, Oliver, Owens, Peberdy, Phillips, Dan Powell, Ivan Powell, Price, Proctor, Simmons, Spencer, Stoddart, Taylor, Thomas, Tillett, Toynbee, Tully, Rob Williams, Woodall.

AGAINST (0)

ABSTENTIONS (2): Councillors Andrews, and Stark.

RESOLVED:

1. **Support in principle the expansion of affordable, accessible bus travel for 16–19 year olds in Herefordshire to:**
 - a. **Improve access to education, employment, and training**
 - b. **Reduce social isolation**
 - c. **Enhance health outcomes**
2. **Request the executive prepare proposals for inclusion in the 2026/27 budget for: a. The provision of a pilot extension of the transport assistance scheme for 16-19yr olds in education to enable travel on evenings, weekends and holidays. This pilot would include evaluation of impact. b. Identification of potential funding sources, including BSIP revenue grant and the Local Transport Grant revenue allocation; anticipated savings in other service areas (e.g., Economy, Public Health); and bus operator partnership or sponsorship opportunities.**
3. **Request the Leader of the Council write to the Secretary of State for Transport, urging support for pilot schemes and action on the Transport Committee's recommendation to explore national free or discounted travel for young people, alongside long-term, devolved funding for bus services.**

27. FULL COUNCIL MEETING DATES 2026/27

Council considered and agreed the following meeting dates of Council in the 2026/27 municipal year:

24 July 2026 – 10:00 a.m.
9 October 2026 – 10:00 a.m.
4 December 2026 – 10:00 a.m.
5 February 2027 – 10:00 a.m.
5 March 2027 – 10:00 a.m.
21 May 2027 – 10:30 a.m.

The meeting ended at 1.01 pm

Chairperson

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

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mr Osborne-Brookes, Hereford	<p>"I'm glad that the Cabinet Member is, albeit reluctantly, continuing some of Hereford's active transport schemes which were started by the previous administration. These and public transport are not only more affordable, but far more effective at minimising traffic congestion, vehicle pollution, obesity, and environmental degradation than motor road schemes which worsen them.</p> <p>However, in the Budget report in today's agenda, he is clearly continuing on with the unnecessary bypass.</p> <p>How can the cabinet member justify raising council tax to fund the interest of the enormous borrowing for the bypass to those in Herefordshire who are already faced by the cost of living crisis and government cuts, and who will not benefit from this bypass, and why isn't he investing more in public and active transport as an alternative?"</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure

Response:

This administration very much recognises the importance of active travel - this is demonstrated in the upcoming adoption of critical policy documents such as the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the Local Cycling Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan (LCWWIP) as well as in the current delivery of schemes like the Transport Hub and Holme Lacy Road improvements and many others. In total the council is investing over £20m of grant funding into active travel. The council's strategic approach is to improve Herefordshire's transport network in every choice we make, offering residents integrated transport options suitable for their individual journeys.

Whilst active travel has huge benefits for health it is unlikely on its own to ever resolve the congestion issues that Hereford experiences on a daily basis having a major trunk road (A49) running right through the city centre. Active travel represents less than 4% of journeys and even with a robust cycling and walking network in place it is unlikely to ever replace car journeys in a rural authority like Herefordshire. Active travel is one part of the solution, but the bypass is the only way to really significantly reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality in the city especially given the predicted growth and housing numbers the government is now requiring. The severance that the A49 creates in the city centre is also a barrier to improving active travel and a bypass is the right solution to removing traffic and to providing resilience to Hereford's future. The two must go hand and hand.

The council continues to seek funding opportunities from government to support the development of the bypass. The council's commitment to capital borrowing to support phase one will help make the case for investment to government and the impact of this on the council's revenue budget position is minimal and will not directly result in the need for increased council tax. This is about investing in the future for Herefordshire's residents so that we are stimulating the housing and employment growth needed to meet our future needs and drive economic prosperity for the County.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you for your response to my question. In the response the Councillor says "The council's commitment to capital borrowing to support phase one will help make the case for investment to government and the impact of this on the council's revenue budget position is minimal".

However, in a previous letter to the government the council Leader said "Phase 1 construction is set to be funded through prudential borrowing, which will significantly impact our revenue budget".

Could you please clarify which one of these statements is true and why there seems to be a complete difference in judgement as to the impact on the council's revenue budget by the borrowing between the councillors?

Response to Supplementary Question:

Thank you for your supplementary question.

Both of these statements are in fact true.

The impact of the prudential borrowing required to fund phase 1 of the bypass, as previously reported, is £0.25m in 2026/27 rising to £1.5m per annum from 2028/29. £0.25m represents 0.1% of the council's estimated net revenue budget for 2026/27 (£1.5m is 0.5% of the estimated net revenue budget for 28/29) and therefore the impact of this individual project on the council's total revenue budget is minimal.

The letter sent to central government by the Leader highlights the council's overall financial position and the impact of the fair funding review on future funding allocations.

In this context, and in consideration of the council's wider financial position, the collective impact of prudential borrowing is significant. Work to develop the 2026/27 budget, capital programme and medium term financial strategy is currently underway and the impact of the fair funding review and requirements of the capital programme will inform our financial plans.

PQ 2	Ms Martin, Hereford	"Through a combination of capital allocation and borrowing, funding of around £40m is to be made available for the construction of the Southern Link Road, now phase 1 of the proposed western bypass. It's clear that this sum will not cover the cost. How is the shortfall to be met?"	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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Response:

The total budget available for phase one is £40.3m. This is made up of £10.3m of funding towards the development, design, land purchases and contingency for the project and £30m of funding towards the construction. The Council is about to start the tender process for the scheme which will better define the construction costs and budget requirements for the scheme.

Supplementary Question:

I've read Councillor Lester's letter to Heidi Alexander. If the DfT do not come up with a shortfall for funding this road, which we know will run into the tens of millions, will the shortfall be met by additional borrowing whatever the impact on council finances, services, and whatever the burden on local taxpayers?

Response to Supplementary Question:

At this point in time, we are requesting of government for support in the funding for the whole of the bypass. We are building the business case and we shall have a business case suitable to present to them by July of next year. That business case will then be considered in the context of what the government response is to us and what we then do to fund it. At that point, we should have a better estimate of what the costs will be and therefore, how we are going to fund it. At this moment, until we have a new bill of quantities for expected costs to deliver it, the finances are requests with government, and we will see what their response is.

