



## Chief Executive's Report to Council - 6 March 2026

I am pleased to update Council on key developments since my last report on 13 February. Given the short period of time between meetings, this update is necessarily more concise. In that earlier report, I shared the positive outcome of our Ofsted inspection, the progress of major capital projects such as the Hereford Transport Hub, our strengthened partnership work across health and the wider public sector, and our county-wide Expression of Interest for UK City of Culture 2029.

February has also seen momentum in our economic development work. The launch of **Invest in Herefordshire**, our new investment-facing campaign and website, marks an important step in strengthening the county's profile to prospective employers and investors. This modern platform highlights our key sectors, business strengths and development opportunities, and is complemented by targeted marketing in areas such as defence and cyber-security, which are central to our growth ambitions.

Herefordshire Council has invested £50,000 in **grassroots community projects** across the county, supporting 56 local initiatives through the Small Sparks Fund, delivered in partnership with the Herefordshire Community Foundation. The fund, which offers grants of up to £1,000, received an overwhelming 98 applications and has enabled a wide range of community-led schemes to move forward - from improving green spaces and supporting youth activity to tackling loneliness and social isolation. The initiative reflects the Council's commitment to empowering local communities and strengthening wellbeing, connection and resilience across Herefordshire.

Our commitment to creating opportunities for young people has been particularly visible in recent weeks. We joined partners and employers at the Herefordshire Apprenticeship Awards, celebrating the achievements of apprentices across the county. I was delighted that colleagues from both our Children and Young People's Directorate and Community Wellbeing Directorate were recognised, with children's social worker **Jake Fosterjohn** named Apprentice of the Year (Degree Level) and adult's social worker **Daniel Kent** receiving a Highly Commended award.

This celebration of skills and aspiration coincided with the release of a new video marking the first anniversary of our **Youth Employment Hub**, which has already supported more than 300 young people into training, careers guidance and employment support.

Our focus on supporting vulnerable young people continued through the **Care Leavers' Marketplace** at Maylord Orchards, which brought together council services and partner agencies to help care-experienced young people navigate the transition to independent adulthood. This event demonstrated the value of joined-up working across social care, housing, careers, employment support and our wider partnership network, ensuring young people receive the right help at the right moment.

Families also benefitted from our latest **Big HAF Day**, held at Whitecross School and attended by more than 470 children and parents. The event showcased a full day of engaging, inclusive activities for families during half-term.

Alongside these community-focused initiatives, we continue to deliver essential infrastructure and public realm improvements. This month has seen **sustained highway works** across the county as part of the council's major investment in roads, including resurfacing and drainage repairs on key routes such as Stonebow Road near Hereford Hospital. This work supports our wider commitment to improving road safety, reducing reactive repairs and ensuring the network is resilient during periods of severe weather. It is important to note that the council is repairing

approximately 150 road defects a day, with more 3000 repairs being carried out since the start of the year.

It has been an important few weeks for **safeguarding leadership** with key appointment processes underway. We interviewed candidates to become new Chair of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Adults Board, an important independent, strategic leadership role, helping to ensure local agencies work together to protect vulnerable adults from abuse or neglect. I also chaired the interview panel for the next Independent Scrutineer of Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, a key senior level appointment who provides assurance in judging the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. We saw strong candidates for both roles, and I confident we will continue this vital partnership work with robust, committed and highly experienced people in place.

At a national level, Government has confirmed that areas outside existing devolution arrangements may now apply to become **Foundation Strategic Authorities**, and we have begun exploring what this could mean for Herefordshire in practice. While Local Government Reorganisation does not directly affect us as an established unitary authority, we continue to monitor developments closely following the announcement of formal consultation on potential unitary models in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire.

Finally, I would like to thank colleagues across all services for their professionalism, energy and care during a period of ongoing pressure but visible progress. Whether supporting young people, keeping the county moving, delivering essential services or advancing our long-term ambitions, their work continues to demonstrate the resilience and values that underpin this council's service to the community.

I ask members to note these updates and the positive direction they represent, and I remain happy to provide any further detail.