

**Minutes of the meeting of Environment and Sustainability
Scrutiny Committee held at Conference Room 2 - Herefordshire
Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Monday 2
March 2026 at 10.00 am**

Present: Councillor Louis Stark (chairperson)
Councillor Justine Peberdy (vice-chairperson)

Councillors: Elizabeth Foxtton, Robert Highfield, Nick Mason, Rob Owens and Richard Thomas

In attendance: Councillor Philip Price (Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure),
Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst (Cabinet Member Environment).

Officers: Simon Cann (Committee Clerk/Democratic Services Manager), Gemma Dando (Chief Operating Officer Resident Services), Ffion Horton (Transport Services Planning Manager), Dr David Land (Head of Transport and Access Services), Nicola Percival (Waste Management), Danial Webb (Statutory Scrutiny Officer).

152. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence had been received.

153. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

No named substitutes had been received.

154. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

155. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were received.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

156. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No questions had been received from members of the public.

157. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

No questions had been received from members of the council.

158. WASTE RECOVERY CONTRACTING

The Chair took the report on Waste Recovery Contracting as read and opened the item up for debate. The key points of discussion included:

1. Members asked about the council's landfill target and current performance. The officer explained that the target had been to send no more than 1% of waste to landfill, a level the council had achieved consistently for years. Landfill had been used only for materials that could not be treated otherwise—such as asbestos—or during planned maintenance when the energy-from-waste facility had temporarily been unable to accept waste.
2. Members queried whether future waste disposal contracts (post-2029) would maintain the same landfill reduction targets. The officer confirmed that the council intended to retain similar environmental commitments, although the landfill site was due to revert to the contractor in 2029, meaning the council would no longer directly control landfill capacity.
3. Members asked whether the single end-to-end contract could be replaced with multiple contracts and whether risks of fragmentation had been considered. The Cabinet Member said the council had been exploring various procurement options and that fragmentation might have posed challenges but also offered flexibility, particularly in light of national policy changes such as extended producer responsibility and deposit return schemes.
4. Members questioned whether higher recycling rates might have reduced inputs to the energy-from-waste facility and affected revenue. The officer noted that the forthcoming Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), due from 2028–29, was expected to introduce carbon costs, encouraging waste minimisation, and that the facility could accept waste from commercial sources or other councils if required.
5. Members expressed concern that the facility required consistent feedstock and might have created a need to source waste. Officers confirmed that a continuous supply had been required for efficient operation but noted that this waste need not have come solely from council collections and could be sourced from other authorities or commercial operators.
6. Members asked if the garden waste subscription service was on track to break even. The officer said forecasting uptake had been difficult but noted that other councils had seen 4–15% first-year uptake. Herefordshire had approximately 3,700 subscribers, with numbers expected to rise during spring and summer.
7. Members asked how private providers might have affected subscription levels. The officer noted that private services operated on rolling contracts, meaning residents can switch to the council's competitively priced service as their contracts expired.
8. Members asked how early-stage financial pressures had been managed. The officer explained that the council had agreed reduced operational resources with the contractor while subscriber numbers remained low and had established a financial reserve to mitigate early financial risk.
9. Members sought assurance about introducing a separate food waste collection. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the council had remained committed under the Environment Act 2021, but highlighted that expected government funding had not been provided and that implementation—estimated at £2.6 million per year—would have required new funding and governance arrangements.

10. Members suggested that separating food waste could have reduced odours and allowed longer intervals for residual waste collections. The Cabinet Member agreed, adding that food waste separation could have raised public awareness of food waste and supported behavioural change.
11. Members asked whether the council could have supported community fridges or food-sharing schemes. Officers said such schemes were typically run by community organisations, though the idea could be explored through local hubs.
12. Members asked whether recycling centres could have facilitated the reuse of items. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that many items taken to recycling centres might still have been usable but said current practices prioritised recycling, and once placed in recycling containers, items could not generally be removed; reuse opportunities could be considered in future contracts.
13. Members asked about further segregation of recycling materials. The Cabinet Member said any changes would have needed to consider public acceptance, as introducing too many new bins too quickly might have discouraged participation, making a phased approach more suitable.
14. Members asked how the council planned to meet new requirements for collecting flexible plastics. The officer said legislation required collection from April the following year, though markets were still developing; one option had been to use a durable plastic bag within the existing system to separate these materials without needing additional collection vehicles.

At the conclusion of the debate the committee discussed and agreed the following recommendations.

That the Executive:

1. **Consider in good time the risks emerging from legislative and industry regulatory changes to the viability of the energy waste facility in Worcestershire.**
2. **Publish a clear timetable for introducing a separate food waste collection service, including funding approach and dependencies.**
3. **Consider ways Herefordshire Council could minimise waste produced in Herefordshire.**
4. **Work with Talk Community to look at the possibility of community larders or fridges in rural locations.**

159. LOCAL CYCLING WALKING AND WHEELING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

The Chair took the report on the Local Cycling Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan as read and opened the item up for debate. The key points of discussion included:

1. Members asked what activities and users were meant to be included within the term “wheeling”, noting it might not be widely understood. Officers responded that it reflected national LCWIP terminology and broadly referred to the use of wheeled mobility devices such as wheelchairs and mobility scooters, with acknowledgement that further explanation could be added to the plan for clarity.
2. Members asked how accessibility for disabled users would be addressed and whether the council risked legal challenge if infrastructure did not accommodate

wheeled users, and officers explained that each scheme would undergo equality and environmental impact assessments and that, where full accommodation was not possible, the council would document constraints and consider mitigation, with proper equality consideration forming part of the justification for design decisions.

3. Members sought clarification on how schemes would be prioritised within the LCWIP and whether those supporting multiple forms of active travel would be favoured, and officers advised that prioritisation used a range of criteria and that schemes benefiting walking, cycling and wheeling were likely to score more highly
4. Members asked whether projects funded through different sources would need to support all active travel modes, and officers explained that Active Travel England-funded schemes were expected to support walking, cycling and wheeling, while council-funded schemes were strongly encouraged to adopt inclusive design though requirements could vary by project type.
5. Members questioned whether including reference to the Hereford bypass might be misleading given long-term delivery timescales, and officers clarified that the LCWIP functioned as a flexible, reviewable planning document and that the reference simply identified a possible future opportunity for active travel infrastructure rather than a near-term commitment.
6. Members asked whether the structure and content of the LCWIP could affect the council's ambition to achieve Active Travel England Level 2 status, and officers confirmed the authority was currently Level 1, that achieving Level 2 remained a priority for funding opportunities, and that adopting the LCWIP and maintaining engagement with inspectors would support progress.
7. Members queried the use of a 10 km threshold for analysis and whether it would limit route consideration beyond that distance, and officers explained that the threshold followed national guidance for modelling likely cycling journeys but did not prevent the inclusion of additional routes where locally justified.
8. Members asked whether the LCWIP contained enough detail for councillors and communities to understand which routes had been included, and officers stated that the document provided a strategic framework and that future updates and scheme development could be shaped through further engagement.
9. Members asked how councillors would be involved in future LCWIP reviews, and officers said the plan would be periodically updated and that opportunities for member engagement could be built into review processes.
10. Members asked whether the plan placed too much emphasis on cycling relative to walking and wheeling, and officers advised that the plan followed the national user-hierarchy prioritising pedestrians, with wheeled mobility users considered within that category and therefore appropriately prioritised.

At the conclusion of the debate the committee discussed and agreed the following recommendations to the Executive.

That:

- 1. Define "wheeling" clearly and ensure compliance with the definition (including Equality Act considerations) in all projects in the plan.**

2. **Ensure the LTP (Local Transport Plan) objectives are at the front of the LCWWIP.**
3. **Work with ATE (Active Travel England) to use the Department for Transport audit/prioritization methodology to give more weighting to safety and perceived safety when selecting routes and projects outside Hereford City.**
4. **Reintroduce a dedicated capital program line for crossings, dropped curbs, and other safety/cohesion measures, rather than relying solely on ATE or Section 106 funding.**
5. **Integrate and make best use of the extensive public rights of way network in upgrades and route choices, including first/last-mile links to public transport.**
6. **Ensure alignment across the suite of transport strategies (LCWWIP, bus strategies, etc.) and with active travel projects already in delivery; cross check against market town movement studies.**
7. **Balance the plan content and investment between walking, wheeling, and cycling, avoiding an emphasis on cycling infrastructure alone.**

160. WORK PROGRAMME

1. The committee noted that the objectives for the upcoming June meeting on land use management had been revised following a productive officer meeting, making them more specific to what the council could realistically deliver.
2. Members were asked to review the changes, and an informal work programme meeting would be scheduled to discuss the objectives and the overall programme leading up to the 2027 elections.
3. The Chair emphasised the importance of adding the Carbon Management Plan to the work programme, noting that the committee could not avoid addressing it given its central role in achieving the council's 2030 net-zero target. This addition might require adjusting the order of existing work programme items to ensure proper consideration within the year.
4. Flooding and drainage were also highlighted as issues requiring attention within the work programme, and the committee would need to determine where these topics fit best.

161. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 17 June 2026, 10am

The meeting ended at 12.58

Chairperson