

**DRAFT - Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Thursday 26 March 2026 at 2.30 pm**

<b>Cabinet Members Physically Present and voting:</b>	<b>Councillor Jonathan Lester, Leader of the Council (Chairperson) Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairperson)</b>  <b>Councillors Graham Biggs, Harry Bramer, Barry Durkin, Carole Gandy, Dan Hurcomb, Ivan Powell, Philip Price and Pete Stoddart</b>
<b>Cabinet Members in remote attendance</b>	<b>None</b>  <i>Cabinet members attending the meeting remotely, e.g. through video conferencing facilities, may not vote on any decisions taken.</i>

Group leaders / representatives in attendance      Councillor Liz Harvey (in person)  
Councillor Toni Fagan (online) as substitute for Councillor Simmons  
Councillor Ben Proctor (online) as substitute for Councillor Terry James

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance      Councillor Louis Stark (online)

Officers in attendance:      S Gregory, H Hall, J Hobbs, C Porter, R Sanders, D Thornton and P Walker

**70. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies from members of the cabinet.

There were apologies from Councillors James and Simmons.

**71. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**72. MINUTES**

**Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 February be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.**

**73. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 17 - 24)**

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 1 to the minutes.

**74. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS (Pages 25 - 26)**

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 2 to the minutes.

**75. REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

The Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan was presented to the Environment and Sustainability Committee on 2 March 2026. The Chair of the committee, Cllr Stark welcomed the plan but raised concerns about a lack of structure and clarity, noting that the Local Transport Plan (LTP) objectives should be more clearly promoted at the outset as they drive

the plan. He also queried how active travel priorities were assessed, suggesting that safety and cohesion should carry greater weighting, and was uncertain whether the council could take the proposals forward.

Overall, the committee welcomed the plan and agreed that the recommendations would help improve it.

## **76. LOCAL CYCLING, WALKING AND WHEELING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN**

Councillor Price cabinet member for transport and infrastructure introduced the report

It was noted that this represented the next key step in the Council's wider integrated approach to transport planning for Hereford. The Local Transport Plan was adopted in December 2025 and that set out the overall direction for the Council's transport network and how they want that to evolve. Work has been undertaken to align all the Council's transport policies to reflect that strategy and priorities that communities have told the council mattered the most. The Local Cycling, Walking, Wheeling Infrastructure Plan (LCWWIP) is a crucial piece of work and provides clear evidence based plan for improving walking, wheeling and cycling across the county.

It was noted that formal adoption of the plan was a key step in delivering the council's integrated approach to transport planning. It enables projects to be prioritised and delivered efficiently. It complements major infrastructure schemes, ensuring all transport investments form a coherent, integrated network, and supports joined-up improvements across all modes of travel.

### **Comments from cabinet members:**

It was confirmed that the projects identified through consultation were not funding commitments or priorities at this stage. The plan contained a long list of potential schemes that can be drawn on in the future, with priorities to be set as and when funding and grant opportunities become available.

It was emphasised that the LCWWIP supports greater choice in transport across the county and is closely aligned with parish councils' environmental priorities. The plan is presented as a non-prescriptive framework that encourages individual travel choices which improve health and wellbeing, reduce carbon emissions, and support short local journeys. It highlights the integration of green infrastructure, access to green spaces, and high-quality design, with sustainability running as a core principle throughout delivery, including commitments to energy efficiency, waste minimisation, and environmental standards within contracts.

### **Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:**

*Group Leader for Independents for Herefordshire outlined their views and noted that:* Welcomed the plan and noted the assurances provided that the document will be treated as a live document. However, clarity was sought regarding how that would happen, the process and the frequency. Concerns were highlighted that the canal towpath may not be clearly recognised, possibly due to the document format making it difficult to search. They stressed that the canal and its towpath have significant potential to provide an off-road walking and cycling route across the county. Although this infrastructure did not currently exist, they strongly felt it should be acknowledged and safeguarded within the LCWWIP as a future transport asset.

*The Liberal Democrat Group outlined their views and noted that:*

The need to maintain a strong and active focus on delivering walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure, rather than allowing the plan to sit unused was stressed. The importance of meaningful engagement, not only when identifying schemes but also

during detailed design, was emphasised. It was noted that poor past cycling infrastructure could have been avoided with better consultation. It was highlighted that active travel investment should be presented as benefiting everyone, not just active travellers, by reducing congestion and encouraging safer, healthier travel choices across the county.

*The Green Group outlined their views and noted that:*

The Group welcomed the plan and the extensive public consultation behind it, noting strong engagement and inclusion of scrutiny recommendations. They emphasised the importance of keeping the plan as a live document, with ongoing member involvement in shaping schemes and priorities. Concerns were raised that some projects had not been fully considered by members or had been delayed, including schemes funded through Section 106, despite their importance for safety in growing residential areas. While welcoming the plan's focus on safety, they highlighted issues around perceptions of safety, connectivity, and cohesion, particularly where cycling routes are fragmented. They also expressed concern that investment was concentrated in Hereford, with market towns and rural areas such as Ledbury, Bromyard and Kington appearing underrepresented, despite their importance to residents, the local economy and tourism. Overall, they supported the plan but stressed that it must benefit the whole county, not just the city.

**In response to comments made the cabinet members noted that:**

The Cabinet Member reflected on the extensive consultation involved in developing walking and cycling schemes, noting that perceptions varied depending on users' experiences. Drawing on personal examples, the cabinet member highlighted how unsafe conditions discouraged cycling and walking, reinforcing the importance of improving safety to increase take-up. The cabinet member reported encouraging evidence from recent observations which showed a significant proportion of journeys already being made by walking and cycling, demonstrating the potential for modal shift.

It was noted that improving perceptions of safety was critical to increasing participation, and that better connectivity within market towns was achievable, although linking towns across rural highways presented greater challenges. The comments about the canal were acknowledged, and it was confirmed there had been discussions with the Canal Trust, noting that while restoration may not be feasible, the towpath could have future potential for active travel.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussions. Councillor Price proposed the recommendations and the Leader seconded for the decision before them which is that Cabinet:

**That:**

- a) the new Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWWIP) for Herefordshire be adopted;**
- b) delegated authority be given to the Chief Operating Officer for Economy and Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure to take all operational decisions to deliver the LCWWIP**

**The recommendations were unanimously approved.**

## **77. Q3 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Councillor Stoddart cabinet member for finance and corporate services introduced the report

The Cabinet Member presented the Q3 Performance Report for 2025/26, covering progress against the Council Plan 2024–28 and Delivery Plan 2025–26, for the period October–December 2025.

It was highlighted that 200 of 250 milestones (80%) due by Q3 were either completed or on track for delivery by year-end (Appendix A).

The highlights of the Capital Programme were noted. There was continued progress on major schemes including Hereford Transport Hub, Holme Lacy Road Active Travel, Phosphate Mitigation Integrated Wetlands, Western By-Pass, Employment Land at Ross Enterprise Park, and multiple schools capital projects. Most schemes also remained on track, with some experiencing managed delays.

Regarding the Council Plan Themes:

People:

Of 87 milestones: 35 completed, 29 were on track, 16 were at risk, with a small number not started, discontinued or at significant risk. There was ongoing work to strengthen multi-agency safeguarding, particularly around child sexual exploitation, with targeted actions being developed.

Continued progress on joint commissioning for children with complex needs, despite national system challenges. Development of the Prevention in Adult Social Care Strategy was noted as nearing completion, with strong stakeholder engagement.

Place:

Of 89 milestones: 52 were on track, 19 were completed, 12 were at risk, 2 had not yet started, 3 were paused and 1 was at risk of not being completed by the end of the financial year. It was highlighted that cabinet approved the Public Realm contract in December 2025 which supported the continued delivery of high quality sustainable local services. Development of a new Cultural Strategy in partnership with the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership was ongoing. Delivery of the public EV charge point remained red due to external provider delays, and it was confirmed that year-end targets will not be met.

Growth:

Of 39 milestones: 18 were on track, 12 were completed, with a small number at risk or not started. Progress on a new skills and employment strategy was ongoing, informed by national policy changes. There was continued collaboration with NMiTE, particularly focused on opportunities within the defence and security sector, though progress had been slower than planned.

Transformation:

Of 40 milestones: 20 were on track, 15 were completed 3 were at risk and 2 were paused.

There were successful pilots of AI solutions, including Magic Notes in social care and M365 Copilot, with work ongoing to support wider adoption. The revised Hoople contract was also completed in November 2025. A first draft Herefordshire Outcomes Framework, aligned with the forthcoming Local Government Outcomes Framework was in development.

Members were directed to Appendix A for the full status of the Q3 Delivery Plan milestones.

**Comments from cabinet members:**

The Cabinet Member for adults, health and wellbeing reported that rough sleeping numbers were higher than expected, with 12 individuals across three sites, some on private land with landowner consent and others on public land. Despite daily outreach efforts, engagement has become increasingly difficult where individuals did not wish to

accept support, although some have accessed Lee's Place. It was also noted that affordable housing delivery has exceeded targets, with 193 homes provided and 383 families housed. In relation to public health, health checks have been carried out for homeless people and families in temporary hotel accommodation, demonstrating the council's commitment to supporting vulnerable residents.

The Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure noted that the electric vehicle charging points project was currently rated red due to challenges beyond simply installing units, including reliance on external partners and the likelihood that additional investment will be required. Ongoing safety concerns around Peterchurch Primary School was raised and it was queried if a zebra crossing on the main road outside the school, as planned, still formed part of the project.

The cabinet member for Children and Young People commented on the funding arrangements across health, education and social care. It was explained that the Integrated Care Board now operates across a larger four-authority cluster, creating capacity and decision-making challenges, particularly for children's safeguarding and continuing healthcare. While an agreed and efficient process for shared funding decisions has not yet been established, cases are currently being resolved through escalation, which is not seen as sustainable. The council is developing a case study to evidence these issues and will share it with the Integrated Care Board and partner authorities, with the aim of jointly challenging and improving the current funding decision-making process.

The cabinet member for economy and growth reported that the Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park has now been launched, with contractors on site clearing land and making the first four plots available. They highlighted the importance of supporting businesses beyond site development by bringing them together through day-to-day engagement. It was also noted that a business hub has opened in Leominster, work is underway to find a similar location in Ledbury, and support is being provided for a hub in Ross-on-Wye, with the County BID team also operating from that office.

The cabinet member for Local Engagement and Community Resilience reported that a recent parish council summit provided useful insight into local engagement, highlighting the importance of working closely with parish councils and ensuring funding was accessible and targeted appropriately. They also referenced the launch of a new scheme for the year ahead and encouraged engagement with it.

### **Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:**

*Independents for Herefordshire outlined their views and noted:*

It was raised that previously identified issues remained unresolved and had been relabelled or deferred instead. It was raised that residents judge the council on real-world outcomes, such as road conditions, planning decisions and access to care, rather than reports and performance metrics. The commitment of officers and external pressures were acknowledged but noted that the report focused too heavily on presentation, colour-coding and narrative, with little clarity or tangible impact. Concerns regarding unspent budgets, routine delays, deferred environmental targets, reactive highways management and poor communication were raised.

*The Liberal Democrat Group outlined their views and noted that:*

The transformation programme was criticised for focusing too heavily on delivery status rather than real impact, questioning why some elements were marked as complete when the underlying model appears unresolved. Concerns were raised about the growing housing crisis, noting increasing numbers of families in temporary accommodation and insufficient progress on delivering new housing, alongside limited engagement with city ward councillors. Weaknesses in performance reporting was noted and requested

'indicators' to show trends over time to better understand progress. It was noted that the "discharge from home" indicator remained static despite being close to target, unlike other areas such as children's social work assessments which showed clear improvement, and questioned whether further improvement is realistically achievable

*The Green Group outlined their views and noted that:*

It was acknowledged there was some progress but stressed that significant work remained, particularly in relation to alternative provision for young people, which was a critical need in the county. Concern was expressed about the discontinuation of the preschool project, recognising this was linked to government funding but emphasising its importance. Ongoing concerns were also raised about joint funding arrangements with the Integrated Care Board and the impact on vulnerable families. The decision to remove the Hoople arrangement from the scrutiny agenda was commented on and it was raised it should be brought back for review. A call for stronger cross-council engagement was made which would involve all councillors rather than Cabinet-level oversight.

**In response to comments made the cabinet members noted that:**

It was noted there were many positive performance indicators, and it was curious for others to comment negatively and imply there was a false narrative. Regarding these positive performance indicators, it was highlighted that the council had spent record levels on road resurfacing and maintenance, which was having a positive impact on communities across the county. Children services had dramatically improved and the outstanding management and leadership that Ofsted graded the council was highlighted. It was raised that the council was in a financially robust position compared to other authorities requiring exceptional financial support. Lastly, the council had also launched 'back the bypass' campaign because it was improving the infrastructure of the county and the transport infrastructure.

It was raised that the current road conditions were the result of underinvestment by the previous administration, noting that the council was now spending significantly more on road maintenance amid damage from severe weather. It was noted that in 2022, during the last full year of the previous administration, 7 miles of road were resurfaced and 9 were surface dressed. Whilst, in 2025, the council had resurfaced 64 miles of road, and 58 miles were surfaced dressed.

It was highlighted there would be an allocation of small discretionary budgets to all ward members to address local issues. It was acknowledged that challenges remain, but it was emphasised that the council was delivering improvements across the county. Strong performance in children's services was highlighted, noting good and outstanding management and delivery under budget, contrasting this with previous approaches. It was highlighted that effective delivery depended not only on funding but on strong leadership, difficult decision-making and focusing on outcomes for residents.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussions. Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations and the Leader seconded for the decision before them which is that Cabinet:

**That Cabinet:**

**a) review performance for Q3 2025/26**

**The recommendations were unanimously approved.**

## **78. Q3 2025/26 BUDGET REPORT**

Councillor Stoddart cabinet member for finance and corporate services introduced the report

The cabinet member set out the Quarter 3 (December 2025) forecast revenue outturn for the 2025/26 financial year.

It was noted that the forecast outturn position showed an overall overspend of £6.3m (2.7% of the net revenue budget), which was expected to reduce to £4.4m because of planned management and recovery actions.

It was noted that the Council's approved net revenue budget for 2025/26 was £231.5m, inclusive of £3.9m of planned savings, and that detailed explanations of variances by Directorate and Service area were set out in Appendix A to the report.

It was noted that continuing in-year cost pressures were being experienced, particularly in relation to social care, temporary accommodation, and Special Educational Needs (SEN) home-to-school transport.

It was reported that the Quarter 3 revenue position for 2025/26, prior to management action, showed a forecast variance of £6.3m. This comprised of £4.7m of in-year net cost pressures and £1.6m of savings targets brought forward and assessed as at risk at Quarter 3.

It was noted that the 2025/26 approved budget included a £1.4m contribution from reserves to the Children & Young People Directorate to support the delivery of Year 2 savings within the extended Three-Year Financial Plan, with repayment originally planned for 2026/27 and 2027/28. The forecast Quarter 3 position showed an underspend of £2m within the Directorate, reflecting robust expenditure management and full delivery of planned savings. As a result, it was reported that it was proposed to repay the £1.4m reserve contribution in the year ending 31 March 2026, one year earlier than planned.

It was noted that the combined effect of £3.3m management and recovery actions, together with the early repayment of £1.4m reserve contribution, resulted in a revised forecast overspend of £4.4m as detailed in Table 2 of the report. It was further noted that any overspend remaining at 31 March 2026 would be required to be funded from the Council's available reserves.

It was noted that the forecast outturn position by Directorate, prior to recovery action, was summarised in Table 1 of the report.

It was reported that recovery actions expected to further reduce the forecast overspend during Quarter 4 included:

- the proposed £2.8m allocation from the Budget Resilience Reserve;
- continued review of the Council's contract arrangements and shareholding in Hoople Ltd; and
- ongoing challenge of forecast and planned expenditure through Directorate expenditure control panels.

It was confirmed that expenditure controls were introduced in 2023/24, remained in place and would continue for the remainder of the financial year to support financial recovery and maintain robust control over spending.

It was noted that the Budget Resilience Reserve, established in 2024/25 to manage in-year cost pressures, had been reduced from £11m to £7m following a £4m allocation in 2024/25. The proposed £2.8m use in 2025/26 would reduce the balance to £4.2m at 31 March 2026.

It was further noted that, in accordance with the 2026/27 Revenue Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Treasury management strategy, the remaining £4.2m balance was to be transferred to the Contract Inflation Fund in 2026/27, resulting in a nil balance on the Budget Resilience Reserve by 31 March 2027, as confirmed by the Annual Review of Earmarked Reserves reported to Cabinet on 5 February 2026. In relation to savings, it was noted that of the £3.9m savings approved for 2025/26, £1.6m (40%) had been delivered at Quarter 3, with the remaining £2.3m (60%) assessed as on target for delivery within the financial year. Therefore, no savings were currently assessed as at risk. A breakdown of savings were detailed in Table 3 of the report.

The delivery of the revised savings which totalled £11.9m were reviewed and revised plans agreed. By Quarter 3, £8.6m (72%) had been delivered, £1.7m (15%) was forecast to be delivered in year, and £1.6m (13%) remained at risk, with mitigation actions ongoing. An external review of home-to-school and SEND transport was commissioned to address cost pressures, with savings of £0.5m expected across the 2025/26 academic year.

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) cumulative deficit was reported at £20.0m at 1 April 2025 and forecast to rise to £38.2m by 31 March 2026 due to pressures in the High Needs block.

Government confirmed the High Needs Stability Grant would cover 90% of historic DSG deficits up to March 2026, subject to eligibility, with the remaining balance to be managed by the council. The 2025/26 capital programme budget was revised from £155.2m to £115.1m following reprofiling, carry-forwards, project removal and additional grants. Forecast spend at Quarter 3 was £94m, with the majority of variance relating to slippage into future years. Capital projects continued to be monitored, particularly those expected to mitigate revenue pressures.

The report highlighted key risks relating to demand pressures, SEND provision, delivery of savings and capital projects, and overall financial sustainability. The Cabinet was invited to endorse the report and its recommendations.

#### **Comments from cabinet members:**

Reassurance was requested regarding the variance of £2.3m for revenue outturn for economy and environment for residential services, SEND and Home to School Transport, as this was growing against a budget of £12.7m. It was confirmed that actions being taken needed to be managed sensitively as it involved children and young people but the plans in place will make a significant impact on this area. It was confirmed that this work was being conducted very carefully and in co production with parent carer voice.

#### **Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:**

*The Independents for Herefordshire outlined their views and noted that:*

Concern was expressed that, while actions were being taken to address financial pressures, progress remained slow and largely reactive. It was argued that repeated reprofiling and deferral within the capital programme amounted to under-delivery against commitments on infrastructure, including roads, schools and community facilities. Reference was made to the Quarter 3 position, with capital spend significantly below both the original and revised budgets, resulting in continued delays to projects affecting residents.

Concerns were also raised about the council's treasury position, including rising borrowing costs, high interest rates and an increasing debt burden, which were said to reduce the proportion of council tax income available for services. It was noted that

council tax had increased by nearly 5% in 2025/26, while residents were not seeing commensurate improvements in services. The presentation of the budget as “balanced” through use of reserves was questioned, and a call was made for greater transparency, realism in forecasting, improved delivery capacity, and a clearer assessment of what the council can afford. The council was urged to take responsibility for managing local pressures and to focus on accountability, discipline and delivery.

*The Liberal Democrat Group outlined their views and noted that:*

It was noted that significant cost pressures were arising in areas where they had been anticipated, suggesting potential weaknesses in forecasting growth and the need for more conservative assumptions. Given that Quarter 3 outturn pressures were emerging after the budget was set at Quarter 2, it was questioned whether assumptions for the forthcoming financial year should be revised accordingly.

Concern was expressed that the focus on managing day-to-day spending risked limiting opportunities to invest in preventative and transformational activity that could reduce costs over the longer term. The example of home-to-school transport was cited as progress in alternative service delivery, though it was acknowledged that such changes take time to implement and would ideally have commenced earlier.

*The Green Group outlined their views and noted that:*

It was acknowledged that delivering savings against current pressures was challenging, particularly due to ongoing demand in adult social care and wider instability within the NHS. Concern was expressed regarding whether sufficient provision had been made for the forthcoming financial year to address these pressures.

Positive comments were made on the improvements within Children and Young People’s Services, noting that increased service stability had contributed to a stronger financial outturn, and officers were commended for this work.

The collaborative approach being taken on home-to-school transport was welcomed, including member involvement, exploration of alternative delivery models and engagement with parents and carers. It was noted that external factors, including geopolitical issues and rising travel costs, were likely to increase pressure in this area, making the council’s proactive approach particularly important.

Further clarification was requested on the causes of the Corporate Services overspend and how these pressures might be mitigated.

Concerns were raised about the council’s capacity to deliver the capital programme, including risks of under-delivery and potential grant clawback, and the longer-term impact of capital projects on the revenue budget.

Finally, concerns were expressed about the ongoing use of reserves, with a request for greater focus on how reserves would be protected given the likelihood of continued financial pressures.

**In response to comments made the cabinet members noted that:**

At Quarter 3 there was only £4.5m variance against a total budget of £231m and this was positively highlighted as demonstrating the scale of the budget and the level of control being sought. The importance of strong financial planning, disciplined budget management and tight control of expenditure throughout the year was emphasised as central to achieving this position.

The council’s financial position with neighbouring authorities was compared, noting that Shropshire and Worcestershire had applied for significant Emergency Financial Support,

resulting in substantial annual interest costs, while this council had not sought such support. It was highlighted that Shropshire and Worcestershire had set council tax increases of 8.99%, compared with this council's increase of 4.99%, which was stated to be in line with central government expectations under the Fair Funding and Funding Power Reviews.

It was acknowledged that all local authorities were operating in a highly challenging financial environment. The member outlined improvements in demand forecasting, including increased use of data analytics and modelling to better anticipate future demand beyond traditional forecasting methods. It was stated that demand planning would continue to improve ahead of the 2026/27 budget.

The budget approved by Full Council in February 2026 was informed by the available data, cost information and activity trends at that time. The council was said to be actively seeking efficiency opportunities while recognising the human impact of service delivery and the need to meet both statutory and moral duties sensitively.

In response to comments on the council tax increase, it was noted that criticism of the 4.99% increase was challenged, with reference made to higher precept increases made by Ledbury Council.

Reference was made to the capital budget recently reviewed, highlighting actual expenditure across key areas. It was noted that £3.263m had been spent on highways infrastructure improvements, £3.5m on estates, and £11.186m on school improvement works. It was stated that these figures demonstrated delivery within the capital programme and were presented as evidence of investment in priority infrastructure.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussions. Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations and the Leader seconded for the decision before them which is that Cabinet:

#### **That Cabinet**

- a) Reviews the financial forecast for 2025/26, as set out in the appendices A-D, and identifies any additional actions to be considered to achieve future improvements; and**
- b) Notes the proposed early repayment of reserve contribution by the Children & Young People Directorate; and**
- c) Notes the management action identified to reduce the forecast outturn position for 2025/26; and**
- d) Agrees the continuation of management actions to reduce the forecast overspend as identified in this report.**

**The recommendations were unanimously approved.**

#### **79. RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE QUARTER 3 2025-26**

Councillor Stoddart cabinet member for finance and corporate services introduced the report.

The Quarter 3 review of the Corporate Risk Register was in line with the Risk Management Strategy 2025/26 and Risk Appetite Statement approved by Cabinet in June 2025. The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) reviewed the register (appendix A) at 31 December 2025 to update risk scores, assess the effectiveness of controls and mitigations, and

consider emerging threats and opportunities. No new corporate risks were identified at Quarter 3.

All nine corporate risks were reviewed by their Risk Owners with CLT oversight. One risk score change was reported at Quarter 3: Corporate Risk R3 (SEND placement sufficiency) reduced from 16 to 12, reflecting additional capital investment approved for 2026/27, government announcements on DSG deficit funding, and wider SEND reforms.

The report confirmed that corporate risks continue to be monitored throughout the year by CLT and Cabinet, alongside Directorate, Service and Project risk registers. The Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26 was aligned to the refreshed Risk Strategy and approved by the Audit and Governance Committee in September 2025. Further planned activity includes risk management training, updates to guidance and intranet content, development of dashboard reporting, and inclusion of risk management arrangements within the Annual Governance Statement.

The report demonstrated strong governance and transparency in the management of corporate risks. Members were invited to endorse the report and its recommendations.

**No comments from cabinet members.**

**Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:**

*Independents for Herefordshire outlined their views and noted that:*

Introduction of more regular risk reporting was welcomed and congratulated officers for strengthening the council's risk management processes, including the oversight provided by the Audit and Governance Committee. However, concern was expressed that recent Internal Audit findings highlighted inconsistencies and weaknesses in officers' understanding and application of risk management, particularly in relation to large capital projects.

Assurances were sought that all officers fully understood the current risk assessment framework, the actions required of them, and how this understanding was being tested and assured.

Concern was also raised regarding the timing and consistency of the risk assessment, noting that the Quarter 3 Corporate Risk Register reflected risk reductions linked to government announcements regarding the DSG deficit, which was made after the Quarter 3 reporting date. Clarification was requested on whether the risk register reflected a fixed Quarter 3 position or included subsequent developments, and how this approach was applied consistently.

*The Green Group outlined their views and noted that:*

It was positively noted that the risk for 'SEND placement sufficiency' was reduced from 16 to 12 and it was important to monitor the risks the council was facing as it moved through these challenging times

*The Liberal Democrat Group outlined their views and noted that:*

No comments.

**In response to comments made the cabinet members noted that:**

It was confirmed that the risk register had been delivered to officers. Regarding the Quarter 3 reporting date, this was a valid point however it was considered that the impact of the DSG announcement in February 2026 was so significant, it was felt appropriate to include it in this update.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussions. Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations and Leader seconded for the decision before them which is that Cabinet:

**That Cabinet**

- a) **Approves the updates to the Corporate Risk Register and actions to mitigate identified risks at Quarter 3 2025/26**
- b) **Notes the activity to embed the revised risk management strategy to strengthen risk management activity across the council at Corporate, Directorate and Service levels.**

**80. DELIVERY PLAN 2026/27**

Councillor Stoddart cabinet member for finance and corporate services introduced the report

The Cabinet considered the Delivery Plan 2026/27 (appendix A), the third of four annual plans aligned to the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024–28 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The Delivery Plan sets out how the council's priorities and objectives will be delivered over the next 12 months and meets the council's constitutional requirement for annual delivery planning. Members were reminded of the Council Plan vision: *"delivering the best for Herefordshire in everything we do."*

The Delivery Plan was developed following consultation with political groups and individual councillors. It included both outstanding milestones from 2025/26 and new actions for 2026/27, structured around four pillars: People, Place, Growth and Transformation.

Under the People priority, 45 milestones support six objectives; under Place, 6 deliverables and 27 milestones support nine objectives; under Growth, 10 milestones support five objectives; and under Transformation, 19 milestones support five objectives.

Progress against the Delivery Plan will be monitored through quarterly performance reports to Cabinet, quarterly budget monitoring reports, monthly reporting to the Corporate Leadership Team, annual service plans and individual performance and development plans. Financial monitoring will continue alongside delivery monitoring. Cabinet were also reminded that projects within the Delivery Plan would seek to minimise environmental impact and identify opportunities for environmental improvement.

The Delivery Plan was described as ambitious but deliverable, and Cabinet was invited to endorse the report and its recommendations.

**Comments from cabinet members:**

It was noted that in the comments submitted by the Independents for Herefordshire a portfolio lead or a strategic officer should be identified as part of the Delivery Plan and this was considered a sensible approach. Noting that roles and responsibilities can sometimes be confusing, and that clearer identification of responsibilities would be helpful for all councillors. The group also welcomed the inclusion of continuity plans, stating that these addressed previous concerns raised about infrastructure resilience and provided reassurance about ongoing arrangements.

**Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:**

*Independents for Herefordshire outlined their views and noted that:*

All councillors shared a common objective of improving outcomes for residents and that the Delivery Plan should be judged on its real-world impact. Concern was expressed that the draft Delivery Plan had been made available with limited time for consideration and without the level of consultation suggested.

While the document was described as well-structured and similar to the previous year's plan, it was considered unclear in terms of the tangible changes it would deliver for residents.

It was noted that, as the third year of a four-year Council Plan, the Delivery Plan did not sufficiently demonstrate the cumulative impact of delivery to date. The absence of clear, measurable outcomes, timelines and accountability was highlighted and stated that residents were more concerned with practical issues such as service responsiveness, local SEND provision and environmental improvements than with additional strategy documents.

Greater transparency, use of plain language, the inclusion of clear performance measures and dashboards, and stronger links between delivery commitments and budget allocations was requested. Cabinet was urged to defer approval of the Delivery Plan in order to address these gaps, strengthen accountability and ensure the plan clearly explained how agreed actions would improve outcomes for communities.

*The Liberal Democrat Group outlined their views and noted that:*

It was commented that broader input from councillors and external stakeholders could have strengthened the Delivery Plan when the budget was considered.

Clarification was sought under the objective relating to high-quality and affordable housing, noting that the only referenced action related to temporary accommodation and that the planned approach to delivering affordable housing remained unclear.

The development of a Youth Strategy was welcomed as a positive step, though it was noted that the strategy itself did not constitute delivery. The member suggested that town and parish councils should be more fully involved in shaping youth services, highlighting that successful partnership models existed elsewhere and that closer collaboration could strengthen outcomes.

Questions were raised within the Transformation section regarding the proposed Strategic Commissioning and Commercial Strategy, including whether this related to the previously drafted Commercial Strategy or if it represented new work, and what the status of the earlier draft was.

Finally, regarding proposals to strengthen partnerships, references to the voluntary and community sector were limited. It was suggested that a stronger, more strategic relationship with the sector beyond commissioning and grant-funding could enable more flexible and responsive service delivery for residents.

*The Green Group outlined their views and noted that:*

There was general support for the objectives within the Delivery Plan but raised concerns that the document lacked clarity on how objectives would be delivered and within what timescales. Examples were cited, including the Aylestone School expansion project, where potential delays arising from the judicial review were not reflected in the plan, raising questions about how risks, dependencies and slippage would be identified and managed.

It was noted that the plan would have benefited from scrutiny review prior to Cabinet consideration. Reference was also made to the Shirehall and library proposals, with

concern that changes to earlier plans had resulted in continued delays to delivery of a permanent library for residents.

Concerns were raised about the absence of clear milestones and delivery dates, making it difficult to assess progress or likely completion. However, the proposal to produce a child-friendly version of the Delivery Plan and the intention to engage children and young people through developing participation groups, was seen as a positive step in improving understanding and involvement.

**In response to comments made the cabinet members noted that:**

Regarding linking of funding, it was considered but as it was already reported through the quarterly budget reports it was not considered to add any further value.

It was noted that council activity operated at a highly detailed level across departments, making it challenging to capture the full scope, rationale and ongoing nature of work within a single document. It was stated that the Delivery Plan represented a snapshot of activity for one year rather than a comprehensive account of all departmental work and continuing programmes.

It was explained that the Delivery Plan was intended to be more tactical in nature, with detailed output-based information provided through the quarterly performance reports. These reports will include clear information on outputs and progress, presented via annexes that set out the status of individual actions using RAG (red, amber, green) ratings and highlighting key issues for attention.

It was emphasised that the intention was to provide clear, meaningful information for members and the public rather than replicating detailed project management logs. The reporting approach aims to be accessible and avoid jargon, and it was stated that feedback from parish councillors had been positive, with the reports providing a clear and useful overview of progress.

It was noted that the council has a strong connection with the voluntary sector and they were vital to enable council to deliver its services.

Regarding housing delivery, it was noted that work was progressing through cross-party working groups and that capital investment decisions were being considered carefully to avoid undue pressure on the council's financial position. It was highlighted that a range of council assets were being used more strategically to support development and delivery across priority areas, with a coordinated approach being taken to maximise impact. Also, a successful meeting took place with registered providers regarding social housing.

Further context on the work underway to deliver improvements for children and families, particularly in relation to early help, Family Hub reform and the national Families First programme was provided.

It was explained that many of the actions referenced in the Delivery Plan form part of a much wider partnership approach involving health, education and voluntary sector organisations, not just the council. Significant progress had already been made, including the publication of a new Early Help and Prevention Strategy in 2023 and the achievement of a "Good" Ofsted rating for children's services.

National reforms had introduced new requirements, including the Families First Partnership Programme and Working Together 2026, which placed a strong emphasis on early intervention and agencies working together to support children and families. These changes required meaningful transformation and were being implemented locally through established partnership arrangements and governance structures.

It was important to recognise the scale and complexity of the work, much of which sits across multiple organisations and programmes. Whilst the Delivery Plan identified key priorities and commitments, the detailed operational activity that underpinned delivery was managed through specialist plans, partnership boards and improvement programmes.

The findings of the most recent Ofsted inspection confirmed that children and families benefitted from effective early help, strong assessments and coordinated support from multiple agencies. These priorities were reflected in the Delivery Plan, with progress continuing to be monitored through existing partnership and performance frameworks.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussions.

Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations and the Leader seconded for the decision before them which is that Cabinet:

**That:**

- a) Cabinet approves the Delivery Plan 2026/27 as set out in appendix A; and**
- b) Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council to make minor amendments to the approved Delivery Plan 2026/27.**

**The recommendations were unanimously approved.**

It was confirmed the next meeting of cabinet was 23 April 2026 at 2:30pm.

The meeting ended at 4.50 pm

**Chairperson**



**Agenda item no. 4 - Questions from members of the public**

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1.	Mr Emil Morfett, Hereford	<p>The Hereford Bypass is to support the Western Urban Expansion of Hereford City adding 14,000 new houses. Thousands more houses will add 30-50% more traffic to and from Hereford on existing roads. This will also necessitate destruction of extensive natural capital and greatly expand the County carbon footprint.</p> <p>Unlike all new UK infrastructure plans, no foundational evidence-based analysis was presented by this Council to show the environmental and emissions impact of both Phases, no evidence on lifetime carbon budgets and none on easing congestion. Answers to public questions continue to lack any analysis of an evidence-base for this infrastructure development.</p> <p>Where are the missing keystone, foundation documents, to justify development on the environmental impacts of Phase I and congestion relief of Phase I and II?</p>	Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure

**Response:**

The Hereford Bypass will support the building of homes and creation of employment sites. In July 2024 all Council's in England were given new and increased mandatory targets by the Government. These new homes will of course require supporting infrastructure. It is right that the Council has infrastructure being delivered alongside the building out of these sites. The Council response to the challenge provided by the increased homes target will be guided through the emerging local plan and recently published Local Transport Plan (LTP 5).

It is accepted that development at the levels proposed will have an impact on the natural environment. The Council will continue to work on schemes that it develops itself and with developers on their projects they deliver to manage these impacts fully in line with current and future regulations.

In common with all UK Infrastructure that is being progressed, Phase One of the bypass has been through a full planning process and produced all necessary environmental information to support that application. The publication, in the coming days, of the Scheme Information Report, which provides a technical overview of context, impacts and assessment work will provide sufficient information in the development of the Full Business Case. This will be further substantiated with the publication of the Full Business Case which will be presented to cabinet in July 2026.

**Supplementary Question:**

The UK Road Infrastructure budgets now include Emissions Sources: Major impacts come from embodied carbon in steel, concrete, and asphalt, alongside operational emissions from vehicles. The Seventh Carbon Budget (2038–2042) necessitates dramatic cuts, with surface transport emissions projected to need an 86% reduction by 2040 from 2023 levels.

Despite this increase in National awareness and the declared Climate and Ecological Emergency in 2020 followed by the 2026 National Security Assessment on Global Ecosystems highlighting the impact of climate change on biodiversity, showing the risk of ecosystem collapse, degradation of our food, water, health and supply chains.

Why did this Council refuse to publish a full and updated traffic analysis, ecological impact analysis, emissions analysis and Lifetime Carbon analysis of its Phase I and Phase II infrastructure plans, prior to giving it the green light?

**Supplementary Response:**

In progressing with Phase 1 of the Bypass the Council has met all statutory obligations. The Council will in the coming days publish a scheme information report that will address several matters raised in the question. The FBC, due to be published in July, will include a full carbon management plan.

A contractor, Grahams, has been appointed, and they are working on the final stages of design. As an Achilles Carbon Reduce and PAS 2080 certified company (these certifications demonstrate a commitment to measuring, managing, and reducing carbon emissions across operations) the final design will include a full environmental assessment including carbon impact.

Phase 2 has yet to be designed to any level of detail and therefore it is not possible to start looking at any such detailed analysis on that phase.

<b>PQ 2.</b>	<b>Rhys Griffiths, Hereford</b>	<b>In the December meeting the council said the Whitehouse community hub building would be repaired so my question is have the council made any provision of funds in this years budget for the work to be done and what is the approximate time line for the work to begin, thank you.</b>	<b>Councillor Bramer, Community Services and Assets</b>
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**Response:**

There is currently an allocation of £184,000 within the 2026–2029 capital programme for the Whitehouse community hub building. This is intended to support works to the building, either through making good the existing facility or forming part of a wider redevelopment approach. At this stage, the position remains under review. We are continuing to investigate the condition of the building and develop options to ensure the most appropriate

long-term solution is delivered. This includes considering how the asset could be improved and potentially enhanced, while maintaining its community function. Any wider redevelopment options, and associated funding beyond the current allocation, are still to be confirmed.

In terms of programme, no fixed start date has been agreed at this point. The immediate focus is on feasibility and option development, which will then inform scope, funding, and delivery timescales. Which we will confirm with the Whitehouse community hub group.

Alongside this, we are continuing to engage with local community groups and partners to understand how the space could best be used in future to support local needs and activities. This will help ensure that future plans for the building support a sustainable, community-led offer and make the best use of the space for local residents.

**Supplementary Question:**

When the building is repaired what plan will be put in place to prevent this happening again?

**Supplementary Response:**

The current issues were as a result of the previous occupier undertaking unlicensed works which led to structural failure with the building. The council will ensure the repairs are structurally sound, comply with building control requirements, and we will continue to monitor the building moving. A future lease will explicitly require the council (as landlord) approval of any structural works.

<p><b>PQ 3.</b></p>	<p><b>Maggie, Setterfield Hereford</b></p>	<p><b>The LCWWIP shifts down cycling in priority by explicitly increasing other active travel measures and by putting the LTP literally in front of Cycle planning.</b></p> <p><b>Given projected increases in fuel costs we need good cycling and walking provision in place as we are nudged heavily towards active travel.</b></p> <p><b>Many question recent decisions to spend ear-marked cycle infrastructure funding where seemingly convenient to work rather than where most needed – eg the closure of Gt Western way causes inconvenience and real safety issues for hundreds of daily users, with poor signage of alternative routes and the frustration of seeing little progress.</b></p> <p><b>To minimise the use of expensive outside consultants would Cabinet please consider appointing a dedicated Cycling Officer for Herefordshire with appropriate infrastructure design experience &amp; capable of working well with users to ensure active travel moneys are more efficiently applied?</b></p>	<p><b>Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure</b></p>
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<p><b>Response:</b> Thank you for your question and for emphasising the importance of high-quality cycling and walking infrastructure in Herefordshire's approach to active travel.</p> <p>The Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan (LCWWIP) does not reduce the priority of cycling within the Council's long-term transport strategy. Instead, it supports the Local Transport Plan (LTP) by ensuring active travel is consistently considered in future transport decisions. The LCWWIP firmly places active travel within a balanced package of measures that support sustainable travel, climate commitments, health outcomes, and value for money.</p> <p>We recognise that rising transport costs make the provision of safe, attractive routes for cycling and walking more important than ever and we are committed to delivering improvements that enable more people to make everyday journeys by active modes.</p> <p>Regarding recent works on Great Western Way, we acknowledge the disruption caused by temporary closures. Safety and essential maintenance required these measures and we appreciate the feedback regarding signage and communication. Lessons from this scheme are already informing better management and public information for future works.</p> <p>On the suggestion of appointing a dedicated Cycling Officer, the Council agrees that strong in-house expertise is vital. A new Principal Integrated Transport Officer post has already been approved to lead delivery of LCWWIP priorities. Further strengthening cycling and active travel expertise. We value the contribution of cycling groups, local campaigners, and everyday users in shaping this work. Ongoing engagement will continue to shape our active travel programme to benefit Herefordshire's communities</p>			
<p><b>Supplementary Question:</b> None</p>			
<p><b>Supplementary Response:</b></p>			
<p><b>PQ 4.</b></p>	<p><b>Mrs Morawiecka, Breinton</b></p>	<p><b>I was advised in answer to my question at the last full council meeting re HGVs coming into Hereford from South Wales that "Initial analysis of draft traffic data modelling indicates immediate benefits in relation to HGVs in this area by delivering phase one of the Hereford bypass" . The data on which this answer was provided had incorrectly included all daily buses travelling back &amp; forth on the Belmont Road in the HGV count &amp; assumed, without evidence, that these would be rerouted onto the new Southern Link Road &amp; the A49. With public help, the traffic</b></p>	<p><b>Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure</b></p>

		<b>count data from Sept 2025 has now been corrected, so would the Cabinet member review his previous answer and, using origin &amp; destination traffic data, explain the claimed benefits of the £45million Southern Link Road?"</b>	
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**Response:**

Thank you for your question and for highlighting the corrected HGV data. As noted, the figures have now been updated, and we will continue to strengthen our quality assurance processes to ensure buses are not incorrectly counted within HGV classifications in future surveys. However, this does not change our analysis of the challenge and the benefits that the road will bring. The survey data shows that 435 HGVs still travel on Belmont Road.

Phase One alone provides a strong case for investment. Early indications assess the Benefit–Cost Ratio (BCR) at between 1.8 and 2.5, which represents medium to high value for money. Across the standard 60-year appraisal period, total monetised benefits are estimated at between £53.9 million and £77.4 million, including:

Around £47 million in travel-time savings, improving journey reliability for residents, businesses and visitors.

Improved access to the Hereford Enterprise Zone, enhancing its attractiveness to investors and supporting new jobs and economic growth.

Health and environmental benefits, including reduced traffic volumes through residential areas such as Belmont, Hunderton, Red Hill, Putson and Lower Bullingham—improving daily conditions for local communities.

Noise reductions for properties along key corridors, including more than 450 homes along the A465, as well as parts of Holme Lacy Road.

An estimated 18 accidents avoided, including 11 slight-casualty reductions.

A reduction of approximately 4,285 tCO<sub>2</sub>e, equivalent to around £0.95 million in greenhouse-gas benefits (2023 prices).

Further information and data will be provided at the Full Business Case stage later this year.

**Supplementary Question:**

Thank you for recognising the error in the traffic data relating to the Hereford Southern Link Road (SLR).

The corrected figure of 435 relates only to HGVs between Walnut Tree Avenue and the Railway Bridge with just 107 HGVs on the Belmont Road (location V Camera) - 18 travelling North East into Hereford (the HGVs most likely to reroute onto the SLR) and 89 heading South West, out of Hereford.

When validating the traffic modelling from September 2025, the Lidl Superstore was under construction. Does this explain the 328 extra HGVs travelled on the Belmont Road between Walnut Tree Avenue & the railway bridge, but not passing the V camera further along the Belmont road, and does Origin and Destination data support the assumption that HGVs by Walnut Tree Avenue will reroute onto the SLR outside of Hereford?

**Supplementary Response:**

Response at the cabinet meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026:

A written response will be provided.

Written response provided on 1 April 2026:

The Council does not have origin and destination data for this site on Belmont Road. However, looking at what data is available, there is a DfT's count site (Count Point 57225) on the A465 near to Pontrillas Sawmills which gives us a good indication of the levels of HGV traffic on the A465. This shows that there's typically 450+ HGVs a day on this section of the A465 and there has been even higher numbers in the past. Although they provide estimated data for every year, the last manual count was in 2022 and it shows a total of 478 HGV, with 230 traveling north toward Hereford and 248 traveling south away from Hereford. The DfT count site clearly shows a split between north and south bound traffic being consistently closer to 50%. As you have suggested, it appears that there was something unusual with the September 2025 traffic count and that the north bound HGV count was being affected by the roadworks. We will investigate this further and if needed we will run a fresh survey. Please have assurance the data was only used for comparison purposes and has not been used in the modelling work which supports the business case for Phase One.

PQ 5.	Mrs Jackie Morris, Hereford	The LCWWIP on page 135 highlights that routes with close proximity to schools can play an important part in enabling children & parents/guardians to walk, cycle or wheel. After much work with Council Officers for over 25 years, a proposed cycle route connecting Whitecross High & Stretton Sugwas Primary along the length of Kings Acre Road, away from the 40 mph road was ranked 4th in the council cycling infrastructure plan for funding, that was never forthcoming. Despite requested from Breinton Parish councillors during the LCWWIP consultation why has this route not been included in the LCWWIP for funding?	Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure
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**Response:**

Thank you for your question.

Feedback submitted during the LCWWIP consultation—including from Breinton Parish councillors—was considered by the project team, and the final plan was updated where evidence supported doing so. In this instance, although the route is recognised as a desire line, it did not meet the

threshold for inclusion in the first phase of LCWWIP priority corridors; the threshold assessment looks at viability, modal shift opportunities and cost/funding opportunities.

Importantly, the LCWWIP is a live document intended to support ongoing development of the network over time. The Council will continue to review opportunities for school-focused improvements through future updates, design development work, and as external funding becomes available. We remain committed to working with local communities, schools and parish councils to ensure that opportunities for improving safe access to education facilities are considered as part of future programme development.

**Supplementary Question:**

None

**Supplementary Response:**

<p>PQ 6.</p>	<p><b>Mr. Jeremy Milln, Hereford</b></p>	<p><b>It is appreciated that the LCWWIP public consultation at item 7 on today's agenda attracted 1648 visits and a healthy 760 contributions</b></p> <p><b>Westco's 40 page feedback report of February 2023 on the 2022/23 Hereford City Masterplan consultation, also using the Commonplace platform and interactive map, showed that 393 people responded to the survey and 627 to the interactive map with more than 2000 comments and suggestions helping to shape the final draft Plan published in March 2023 shortly before the new administration scrapped it.</b></p> <p><b>How many responses were received by the end of the latest Hereford City 2050 Masterplan consultation run over the Christmas/New Year period and why was the City Council, as the chief stakeholder, not consulted or even notified?</b></p>	<p><b>Councillor Biggs, Economy and Growth</b></p>
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**Response:**

The Council is in the early stages of developing the Hereford City Masterplan 2050, which reflects a renewed strategic approach shaped by the current administration's Council Plan, updated transport plan and wider policy framework, including a commitment to develop the Hereford Bypass. This sets out a vision for an economically stronger, healthier and better connected Hereford, enhancing the historic centre, maximising green space, supporting local businesses and improving how people travel into, across and around the city - whether by foot, bike, bus, car or train. It also aligns with commitments to improve air quality, reduce carbon emissions and plan for future homes and infrastructure needs. In developing the outline framework for the Masterplan 2050 some initial engagement was undertaken, including via the council website as well as face to face conversations. This occurred in Hereford City Centre and at local colleges, inviting residents, businesses and partners to share their views on key themes including culture, education, health, homes, movement and potential development areas across the city. In terms of responses received, the

online questionnaire returned 11 submissions. The in-person drop-in sessions generated approximately 80 suggestion slips. Full consultation will take place once Cabinet has reviewed the draft and any amendments have been made. This will include meaningful engagement with key stakeholders, such as the City Council, Hereford City BID, businesses, public bodies, and further public engagement, and we look forward to hearing their views.

**Supplementary Question:**

Historic England's influential urban Panel, visiting Hereford in 2007 and 2018, reminded us of the need for an overarching City area masterplan to realise Hereford's economic, social and environmental potential through good place-making. It had been a requirement of the Inspectorate examining the Local Plan.

The plan drafted in early 2023 ready for final consultation was the result of the input of many hundreds of people with more than 2000 suggestions. It had a broad democratic basis. Yet your administration, finding it did not like it, scraps it, wasting tens of thousands of pounds. Now we learn you are to draft a new plan based on just 11 on-line submissions, there being no meaningful consultation.

This is in clear breach of the Gunning Principles built in you your Code of Conduct which require consultation to be done conscientiously, at a formative stage and with adequate time. How do you justify breaching these principles and the waste of money in scrapping the previous plan?

**Supplementary Response:**

Thank you for your supplementary. Firstly, the previous plan was a draft plan. It was never adopted by this administration. What we are working on is a Master Plan that's good for everyone. When we talk about consultation, this original question was about consultation, and I'm reminded of Terry Wogan with his breakfast show, bless him, when the readers' letters or listeners letter that would come in and Lord Harbinger of Doom was a regular contributor to those letters, when you're doing consultation of this sort, what you must engage with, is everyone. That's not just naysayers, not just the critics but those that will enable and be positive around things. We need young people for the future, we need businesses, we need everybody to be involved. So, our consultation, we haven't done consultation so far, its pre consultation, we now have something to nearly consult on in terms of a draft piece, that, when its completed we'll engage with all stakeholders, we'll engage as wide an audience as possible to ensure we get all the feedback we need through there.

**Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from Councillors**

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 1.	Cllr Ben Proctor	<p><b>In response to a FOI request in January the council revealed that it does not hold the details of Public Space Protection Orders as polygons in a Geographical Information System but instead as manually annotations to static images.</b></p> <p><b>How does this approach align to the councils Digital Data and Technology Strategy?"</b></p>	<p><b>Councillor Stoddart, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services</b></p>
<p><b>Response:</b> This is not something that a Digital, Data and Transformation strategy would cover. The decision on how a specific service uses data is for the service and information asset owner(s). We are aware that there are several geographic information systems in use across the council and have suggested that this be an area for review by the relevant service areas and information asset owners. There is an opportunity to align this with key projects, going forward.</p> <p>We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters with you further.</p>			
<p><b>Supplementary Question:</b> I asked this question to highlight the challenge the council faces if it is serious about using data as part of its transformation. In 2026, data about place should be held in a geographic information system. We should be staggered to find an occasion when it isn't held that way. Though I was not in fact staggered to find that we hold geographic information as hand annotations on images. It's a necessary but insufficient step towards being able to ask questions of the data that you hold the data in a structured electronic format. The council's current DDAT strategy claims our data is a valuable and key organizational asset. But this is not how you treat key assets. Key assets are managed in line with corporate requirements and using shared standards and skills. In the data world, we often refer to this boring but important stuff as fixing the plumbing. How is the cabinet member going to ensure that sufficient resources invested in fixing our plumbing?</p>			
<p><b>Supplementary Response:</b> To address that very issue that Councillor Proctor's addressed we've now employed and got in place a chief digital information officer who as we've explained in the answer to Councillor Proctor we are addressing that as a matter of priority and the offer that we offered at the bottom to engage and welcome Councillor Proctor's participation in that stands out there, so if you'd like to assist us we're more than welcome come on board and help. Thank you.</p>			

