

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Thursday 25 June 2026 at 2.30 pm

Cabinet Members Physically Present and voting:	Councillor Jonathan Lester, Leader of the Council (Chairperson) Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairperson) Councillors Graham Biggs, Barry Durkin, Carole Gandy, Dan Hurcomb, Philip Price and Pete Stoddart
Cabinet Members in remote attendance	None <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	Councillors Hitchiner (substitute for Cllr Harvey and online), Simmons (online), Proctor (substitute for Cllr James and online). Councillor Davies attended for the Risk Management Update Quarter 4 2025-26 item only
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Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance	Councillors Stark (online), Councillor Fagan (online)
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Officers in attendance:	H Hall, J Hobbs, C Porter, R Sanders and P Walker S Gregory (secretary) and M Evans (democratic services)
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OPENING REMARKS

The Leader of the Council paid tribute to Paul Walker at his final Cabinet meeting, recognising his significant contribution to Herefordshire Council over the past five years. It was noted that Paul had undertaken his role diligently and prudently and had recently been involved in a number of public appearances and speeches ahead of his departure.

The Leader highlighted the scale of Paul's achievements and contribution to both the Council and the county, acknowledging his role in supporting Cabinet and Full Council decision-making and helping the authority grow from strength to strength. Particular recognition was given to Paul's determination, skill and ambition for Herefordshire.

On behalf of the Cabinet and all 53 councillors, the Leader expressed sincere thanks for Paul's service and dedication.

Group Leaders (or their representatives) were invited to offer their own tributes, after which Paul was invited to make some closing remarks.

Councillor Hitchiner paid tribute to Paul's leadership and contribution to the Council, referencing the principle that organisational culture is key to success. He noted that Paul was leaving the Council with a much stronger and more positive organisational culture than when he arrived, where staff enjoy working and feel able to make a difference.

Councillor Hitchiner attributed this improvement in part to the leadership demonstrated by Paul during his time at the Council. He thanked Paul for his commitment and service, wished him a happy retirement, and expressed appreciation for the significant contribution he had made to the authority.

Councillor Simmons expressed the Group's gratitude to Paul for his leadership and support during a period of administrative change. She thanked him for the assistance he had provided to officers, Members, the public and stakeholder groups, noting that his positive impact and commitment had been evident from the time he joined the Council.

Councillor Proctor expressed the Group's gratitude for Paul's service and leadership. He described Paul as consistently professional, with a strong understanding of and respect for the democratic process and noted that he had provided impartial advice and support to all Members and political groups. Councillor Proctor remarked that Paul should be proud of the positive impact his leadership had made on the Council and the residents of Herefordshire and wished him well in his retirement.

Paul Walker thanked Members for their support and reflected on the importance of local democracy and public service. He noted the valuable role elected Members play in supporting their communities across all political groups and emphasised that the Council's achievements had been made possible through the combined leadership of Members and officers.

He highlighted improvements made during his tenure, including a stronger financial position, transformed children's services, improved performance of key services, and progress in growth and regeneration. Paul thanked Members for both their support and constructive challenge, describing it as a privilege to have served as Chief Executive of Herefordshire Council.

96. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Bramer and Powell

97. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

98. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

99. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 11 - 16)

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

100. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

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

101. REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no reports from scrutiny committees for consideration at this meeting.

102. Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT

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

Cabinet received a report on progress against the Council Plan 2024-2028 and Delivery Plan 2025/26. Members noted that 184 of 255 milestones had been completed during

the year, representing a 72% delivery rate, with 60 milestones to be carried forward into 2026/27 and 11 discontinued.

Progress was reported across the Council's capital programme, including the Hereford Transport Hub, Holme Lacy Road Active Travel Improvements, phosphate mitigation projects, school expansion and maintenance schemes, and improvements to council estate assets.

Under the People theme, Members noted 67 of the 87 milestones were completed, 8 were rolled over 26/27, 8 were parked as waiting on other interdependent activity and rolled over 26/27 and 4 were discontinued.

Members noted progress in improving early years support and school readiness, successful foster carer recruitment resulting in performance above the national average, strengthened domestic abuse partnership working, co-production of the carers annual report, and the awarding of grants to improve community facilities across the county.

Under the Place theme, Members noted 57 of the 89 milestones were completed 57, 10 were rolled over to 26/27, 19 were parked as waiting on other interdependent activity and 3 milestones had been discontinued.

Progress was noted in community infrastructure programmes, parish-led highways and drainage improvements, River Wye restoration and catchment partnership working, and development of the county's Nature Recovery Strategy, with publication deferred to allow full consideration of consultation responses.

Under the Growth theme, Members noted of the 39 milestones, 27 were completed, 4 were rolled over to 26/27, 4 were parked as waiting on other interdependent activity and 4 milestones had been discontinued.

Members noted progress in delivering affordable housing, including plans for the Merton Meadow and Essex Arms sites, refurbishment of a city-centre property to provide affordable homes, and ongoing work on the Buttercross development in Leominster. While the refurbishment tender had been delayed until April 2027, the additional time would support the development of a well-designed scheme and help ensure high-quality outcomes.

Under the Transformation theme, it was noted 33 of the 41 Milestones were completed, 2 were parked as waiting on other interdependent activity and 5 were rolled over into 26/27.

Members noted strengthened governance arrangements with Hoople Ltd and preparations for review of the Service Level Agreement. The development of a local Outcomes Framework, aligned to the Government's Local Government Outcomes Framework, was also reported, with implementation planned from Quarter 1 2026/27.

Performance against key indicators was reviewed. Positive performance was reported in children's social care assessments, children in care reviews, planning application processing, affordable housing delivery, business grant support and staff sickness levels. Challenges remained in relation to supporting a small cohort of long-term rough sleepers and in maintaining people at home following discharge from hospital.

In conclusion, Cabinet noted the overall delivery rate and the commitment to progress outstanding milestones during 2026/27.

Comments from cabinet members:

Members received an update on the winter night shelter, which operated for 177 nights until April 2026 and provided accommodation for 74 individuals at risk of rough sleeping. The shelter, managed by Care in Communities Partnership supported by other agencies and voluntary organisations, accommodated up to 16 people per night, including emergency pod provision.

All service users received needs assessments and support from a range of partner organisations. Members noted the positive outcomes achieved, with approximately 66% of shelter users moving on to alternative accommodation and no longer rough sleeping. Ongoing support continued for several individuals through outreach services.

Thanks were expressed to the organisations, volunteers and partners who supported the shelter, including those who provided meals, wellbeing support and practical assistance. It was noted that the level of usage demonstrated the ongoing need for the service and the value of the collaborative approach taken.

Members thanked the Public Rights of Way and Flood Risk Management teams for successfully delivering the Parish Council Grant schemes, recognising the value of directing funding to local priorities and community-led projects.

It was also noted that, by the end of the financial year, over 100 miles of road had received resurfacing or surface dressing treatments, representing approximately 5% of the county's highway network. Members recognised this as a significant achievement in the delivery of the highways maintenance programme.

Members noted that construction of the new Peterchurch Primary School was progressing well and remained on schedule for completion in autumn 2026. The new facility was welcomed as a significant investment that would provide enhanced educational provision for Peterchurch, the Golden Valley and the wider surrounding area.

Members noted that the 255 delivery plan milestones should be considered in the context of the Council's responsibility for delivering more than 800 services across a wide range of areas, including highways, children's services, adult social care and support for carers. Recognition and thanks were given to the Council's workforce for their continued commitment and contribution in delivering services for the benefit of the residents of Herefordshire.

Members noted that the awarding and mobilisation of the new Public Realm contract represented a major achievement, involving approximately two years of preparation and significant work across multiple council teams. It was reported that, three weeks into the contract, implementation had progressed smoothly, reflecting the dedication and hard work of officers involved in its delivery.

Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:

The representative for Liberal Democrat Group outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Acknowledged the success of the Council's fostering programme, highlighting the approval of 37 new fostering households and the placement of 69% of children in foster care. However, concerns were raised that, while the report demonstrated significant activity, several key projects remained delayed, including alternative education provision, active travel schemes and the development of a new central library.

Concerns were also expressed regarding changes made during the year to the rough sleeping performance indicator and target. It was suggested that performance reporting

should remain clear, consistent and transparent, with any amendments to indicators fully explained to Members to support effective scrutiny and accountability.

The Green Group Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

A Member recognised and thanked officers for their work in delivering the Council Plan milestones. While acknowledging progress made during the year, concerns were raised regarding the 60 milestones carried forward into 2026/27, which were considered indicative of delays in areas including homelessness, transport, road safety, commissioning, digital services, climate action, capital projects and support for children with disabilities.

The Member expressed concern that active travel, road safety and bus-related projects had not been prioritised to the same extent as major road schemes and noted that a significant proportion of planned public realm investment in market towns would be carried forward into the next financial year.

Further concerns were raised regarding delays to environmental initiatives, including carbon reduction measures, electric vehicle charging infrastructure and wider environmental strategies. The Member suggested that these delays could have implications for economic growth, health outcomes and inequalities, and called for greater transparency in reporting both achievements and areas where progress had not been made as planned.

The representative for Independents for Herefordshire outlined the views of their group and raised that:

It was noted that the overall delivery rate of 72.16% was broadly comparable to previous years and suggested that, given the Council's ambition, some milestones were always likely to be carried forward. While acknowledging progress made, the Member expressed disappointment that several major capital projects remained in progress or delayed and hoped to see these completed in the coming year.

The Member congratulated the fostering team on its strong performance and welcomed the increase in foster care placements. They also commented that many of the report's achievements were described qualitatively and suggested that more measurable outcomes would strengthen performance reporting.

Questions were raised regarding governance arrangements with Hoople Ltd, including the timetable for agreeing a new Service Level Agreement. Clarification was also sought on the Local Government Outcomes Framework, including the targets against which performance would be measured.

Concerns were expressed about the increase in residual household waste and the reasons for the variance between forecast and actual affordable housing delivery figures. The Member also queried the revised rough sleeping indicator and sought clarification on its rationale.

The Member noted the length of stay of some users of the winter shelter and suggested this could warrant further examination by Scrutiny to better understand the circumstances involved.

The Administration's achievements were acknowledged but highlighted several areas of concern regarding delayed or undelivered projects.

Concern was expressed that funding allocated to reduce flood risk had been carried forward, and it was requested that this investment be progressed as quickly as possible.

Questions were raised regarding the Southern Link Road Full Business Case, including when it would be available for public and Member consideration, the timetable for Political Group Consultation, and the release of supporting papers. A request was also made for the underlying traffic data to be provided separately and for clarification as to whether the business case would include assessment of induced traffic impacts on the wider road network, including routes through Madley and Clehonger.

Further clarification was sought regarding changes to phosphate permitting arrangements involving Welsh Water and the potential implications for housing development in the north of the county.

Concerns were also raised about highway improvement schemes that had not yet been delivered, with a request that priority be given to progressing these projects.

Finally, concern was expressed about further delays relating to the procurement of a city centre building (John Venn building), with the view that continued delays reflected poorly on the Council.

The True Independents Leader outlined the views of their group and argued that:

Did not attend for this item.

In response to the comments made:

It was noted that significant progress had been made across a large number of projects and milestones. While some projects remained in progress and had not yet been completed, this reflected the complexity and timescales involved rather than any lack of commitment.

Cabinet reaffirmed its commitment to delivering key projects and addressing longstanding challenges facing the county. It was acknowledged that all Members would wish to see projects delivered as quickly as possible, but that major initiatives require time to implement. Assurance was provided that the administration remained fully committed to progressing and delivering these important projects, with its resolve unchanged.

In response to questions regarding homelessness reporting, it was explained that the revised indicator focuses on individuals sleeping rough who have been offered support but are not engaging with services. It was considered that this measure provided a more accurate reflection of the cohort presenting the greatest challenge and was therefore a more appropriate performance indicator.

Clarification was also provided regarding the winter night shelter. It was noted that the shelter operates seasonally, typically from November to April, although it can open earlier in response to adverse weather conditions. Individuals can stay each night throughout the operating period if required. It was emphasised that the shelter has not been classified as temporary accommodation.

Suggestions that the report presented an overly positive view of performance were rejected by cabinet members, stating that reporting was undertaken accurately, transparently and truthfully, with both achievements and areas of delay clearly identified. It was emphasised that where projects had been delayed, the administration accepted responsibility and reported this openly.

It was reiterated that the administration's role was to deliver for the people of Herefordshire, noting that alongside the 255 Council Plan milestones, the Council continued to provide more than 800 services across the county.

Example of progress was set out under the Transformation Programme, which comprised of three themes including 'Customer', 'The Way We Work' and 'Fix the Basics'. Examples of completed and ongoing initiatives included the Children's Improvement Plan, garden waste service improvements, digitalisation of children's and licensing services, online registrar booking systems, Public Rights of Way process reviews, support for working-age adults, predictive and preventative care models, virtual homes implementation, the Youth Employment Hub, Household Support Fund delivery, and work to support inclusion of neurodiverse children in schools.

It was highlighted that the Council would not be complacent and would continue to pursue service improvement and excellence.

In response to questions regarding highway improvement schemes, it was explained that one delayed scheme involved a trial reduction in the speed limit, undertaken at the request of local residents. The delay reflected the Council's decision to carry out the trial and review its effectiveness before implementing permanent measures.

Regarding flood risk investment, it was noted that when the current administration took office in May 2023 there was one officer within the flood risk team, compared with four officers currently. Members were advised that additional capacity had enabled increased investigation and response work following flooding events in 2024.

It was further noted that £2m had been allocated within the capital programme for flood mitigation measures. However, it was considered important that investment decisions be informed by appropriate evidence and assessment, including consideration of downstream impacts, effectiveness of proposed interventions, and opportunities to secure external funding from organisations such as the Environment Agency and DEFRA.

Members were advised that Section 19 flood investigation reports were being completed to inform future investment decisions and ensure funding was allocated fairly and effectively across the county.

Reference was also made to the Parish Drainage Grant Scheme, through which £1m had been invested in local drainage improvements, including measures to address surface water and highway flooding.

Assurance was given that the administration remained committed to progressing flood mitigation projects while ensuring that investment was targeted to areas of greatest need.

Members were advised that progress on the third integrated wetland scheme had been affected by two factors: changes to flood zone classifications by the Environment Agency and tighter discharge permit requirements. These changes affected the viability of the proposed wetland, as sufficient water flow and phosphate levels are required to generate phosphate mitigation credits, and the updated cost-benefit assessment no longer supported delivery of the scheme.

It was noted that work was continuing to identify alternative solutions. Regular engagement was taking place with housebuilders, private mitigation schemes were being pursued, and discussions were ongoing with Natural England regarding a broader range of phosphate mitigation measures as part of wider environmental development

plans. It was anticipated that this work would provide a wider range of options to support future development and phosphate mitigation across the county.

A Member expressed disappointment that the discussion had focused heavily on delays rather than the overall scale of delivery being undertaken by the Council. It was noted that, given the breadth and complexity of the Council's programme, not all projects could be delivered simultaneously.

In response to comments regarding active travel schemes, it was explained that the Aylestone route had been postponed because it could not be delivered concurrently with the Cadent gas works. The delay was therefore a practical consequence of coordinating major infrastructure projects.

The Member emphasised the importance of taking a strategic approach to infrastructure planning, particularly considering future housing growth requirements in Hereford. Members were encouraged to work collaboratively to ensure that appropriate infrastructure is delivered to support sustainable development and meet the needs of communities across Herefordshire.

A Member highlighted the significant progress being made at Ross Enterprise Park, noting that the project had been awaited for around 20 years and that construction was now underway. It was reported that six businesses had already expressed interest in the site and that planning for a second phase was underway. The development was described as an important opportunity to support employment growth and create higher-paid jobs within the county. Members also noted ongoing master planning work for Ross-on-Wye, including provision for schools, healthcare and other infrastructure needed to support future growth.

In response to concerns about delays to the city centre building (John Venn building) it was explained that progress had been affected by issues relating to securing the freehold of a flat within the building and changes in legislation. It was noted that these matters had been resolved and that while the project had been delayed, such schemes are often complex and can take time to progress.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussions. Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations, with the Leader seconding. The Leader directed that the decision to be put before Cabinet is:

That Cabinet:

- a) review performance for Q4 2025/26; and**
- b) agree any outstanding key milestones from Delivery Plan 2025/26 (see Appendix A) are carried forward to the Delivery Plan 2026/27**

The recommendations were unanimously approved.

103. RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE QUARTER 4 2025-26

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

It was noted that effective risk management was essential to delivering the priorities set out in the Council Plan, including the commitment to strengthen corporate and directorate-level risk management through the Corporate Risk Strategy.

Members were advised that the updated Risk Management Strategy 2025/26 and Risk Appetite Statement were approved in June 2025. The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) reviewed the Corporate Risk Register as at 31 March 2026, considering risk scores, controls, mitigations, and any emerging risks and opportunities linked to the Council Plan 2024-28. No new corporate risks were identified for inclusion at Quarter 4.

The Committee noted that all nine corporate risks had been reviewed. Risk 7, relating to the council's ability to respond to a significant emergency, increased from a score of 9 to 12 due to the growing threat posed by cyber security risks and the potential impact on service delivery, public confidence, and finances.

It was reported that CLT is continuing to embed the revised risk management approach across the organisation. The 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan had been reviewed to align with the updated Risk Management Strategy and Corporate Risk Register and was approved by the Audit and Governance Committee in September 2025.

It was noted that risk management arrangements will continue to be monitored through the council's governance framework, with relevant matters to be reported through the 2025/26 Annual Governance Statement to the Audit and Governance Committee.

The report and its recommendations were commended for approval.

Comments from cabinet members:

None

Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:

The representative for Independents for Herefordshire outlined the views of their group and raised that:

The clearer presentation of changes within the risk register was welcomed and asked whether future reports highlight amendments more clearly.

There was an outstanding issue regarding member training on the Corporate Risk Register.

Questions were raised about whether there was evidence that the Corporate Risk Register was improving decision-making across the council, acknowledging that the benefits of risk management can be difficult to measure. The member invited Cabinet's views on the effectiveness of the register in supporting informed decisions.

Particular concern was expressed regarding Risk 4 (*Failure to deliver capital and major projects within identified resources and planned timeframes resulting in significant overspend and reduced project outcomes*), which the member considered to be the most significant threat facing the council. Clarification was sought on the actions and mitigations that had been implemented since the previous report, noting changes to the narrative and references to external support and project assurance activity. The member queried whether the reported actions were sufficiently addressing the risk and whether progress could be demonstrated over the reporting period.

The member also invited Cabinet members to comment on which corporate risks they regarded as the most significant and which posed the greatest concern to them.

The representative for Liberal Democrat Group outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Risk R8 (*Risks within the West Mercia community area*) was highlighted, and it was asked whether Cabinet would review, with partner organisations, the county's preparedness to respond to significant heat events and ensure that appropriate mitigation and response plans are in place both for the council and across the wider county.

The Green Group Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Concerned was expressed that the Corporate Risk Register did not appear to fully reflect the risks arising from delays and slippage in the delivery of major programmes and projects. Particular concern was raised regarding Risk R4, with the view that the register should more accurately capture the potential financial and delivery risks associated with significant capital projects and the borrowing required to support them. It was suggested that the current risk profile may understate these challenges.

The True Independents Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Was present for this item but had no comments.

In response to the comments made:

In response to questions about whether the correct risks had been identified, it was stated that the council was satisfied that the Corporate Risk Register appropriately captured the key corporate risks and that risks were kept under continual review. Assurance was provided that these risks remained at the forefront of decision-making and project delivery.

Regarding major incidents, including flooding and severe weather events, it was noted that established emergency planning arrangements are in place, including Gold and Silver command structures and joint working with the relevant emergency services and partner organisations.

It was clarified that Councillor Proctor was referring to R7 (*Inability to respond adequately to a significant emergency affecting ability to provide priority services*) in their comments and was requested to provide details of any incidents outside of the meeting.

It was noted that the council's nine corporate risks had been reviewed and validated, with independent assurance from Kerry Diamond that nine risks represented an appropriate number for a Corporate Risk Register and reflected the council's highest-level strategic risks.

It was further confirmed that issues relating to extreme heat events would be considered within the scope of Risk R7 as part of ongoing risk monitoring and review arrangements.

Members were advised that risks were continually monitored and reassessed, with the council remaining alert to emerging issues. It was also explained that risk management plays an important role in informing decision-making across the organisation and was regularly used to support the delivery of council priorities and projects.

In response to comments regarding the brevity of the discussion, it was explained that Cabinet members had already considered and discussed the Corporate Risk Register in detail prior to its presentation at Cabinet and that risk management is reviewed regularly. Members were therefore asked not to view the length of the discussion at the meeting as a reflection of the importance Cabinet places on risk management.

The relative significance of the corporate risks was commented on, noting that Risk R4 was not considered the most concerning risk. Instead, Risk R2 (*Demand for client-based*

services continues to increase resulting in increased budget pressures and poor outcomes for those people in receipt of our services), and the resulting budget pressures, was highlighted as a major area of concern due to rising demand, particularly in adult social care, and insufficient government funding.

Further concerns were raised regarding the financial pressures associated with the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit and the requirement to deliver significant savings targets. It was stated that, collectively, these financial and service demand pressures represented a greater risk to the council than potential cost increases associated with major capital projects.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussions. Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations, with the Leader seconding. The Leader directed that the decision to be put before Cabinet is:

That Cabinet

a) Approves the updates to the Corporate Risk Register and actions to mitigate identified risks at Quarter 4 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.

The recommendations were unanimously approved.

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

The meeting ended at 4.05 pm

Chairperson

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

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1.	Peter McKay, Leominster	The Street Works Register still shows few, if any, of our unadopted highways, i.e., those not being maintained at public expense, with them filling many gaps in highway record connectivity, subject of the 2007 Regulations as referenced in your reply to my question 16 May 2024, and I seek your assurance that you plan to show those you are aware of, before putting onus on Parishes to report any omissions, and when this could be expected?	Councillor Hurcomb
Response: The Council publishes its Street Works Register as an online map and this contains all unadopted highways that it is aware are subject to recorded public highway rights. Members of the public and Parish Councils are welcome to submit applications under the Councils Highway Records Protocol for any routes which they have evidence are subject to public highway rights.			
Supplementary Question: Do you have any formal process, e.g. guidance, application form, example, for a parish to follow that considers that a hitherto unadopted highway should now be adopted and added to the List of Streets ?			
Supplementary Response: The information can be found via this link: Amendments to the highway records - Herefordshire Council			
PQ 2.	Amanda Martin, Hereford	In the Q4 Performance Plan Appendix A at p9, I note that the Council has postponed presentation of the Full Business Case (FBC) for the Southern Link Road (SLR), Phase 1 of the Western Bypass, from this meeting until September. However, the documentation appears to indicate that the Council would contemplate entering into a binding construction contract before the FBC has been considered and approved.	Councillor Price

		Would the Council contemplate entering into a construction contract before the Full Business Case is approved?"	
Response: No, the Council will not enter into the construction contract until the FBC has been published and reviewed by Cabinet which is planned for the September meeting.			
Supplementary Question: Can the Cabinet member for Transport and Infrastructure also confirm that no construction contract would be let for Phase 1 before all necessary land acquisition has been completed?			
Supplementary Response: Thank you for your question. We will know in due course about whether or not the full contract is awarded and the negotiations with private land owners remain subject to strict commercial confidentiality. The position will be updated in the next report to Cabinet in September 2026.			
PQ 3.	Kate Seekings, Hereford	In the Q4 Performance Plan Appendices I note that the Council has delayed presenting the Full Business Case (FBC) for the SLR ("Phase 1 of the Western Bypass") from this meeting till September's. Does the Council constitution allow a binding construction contract to be entered into before and if a FBC is approved, before the Council has acquired all the land it needs to build the SLR, and when planning conditions remain undischarged?	Councillor Price
Response: The Council will not enter into the construction contract until the FBC has been published and reviewed by Cabinet which is planned for the September meeting. The report to Cabinet for the September meeting will set out the current status of land acquisition and the discharge of planning pre-construction planning conditions so that Cabinet are making a fully informed decision.			
Supplementary Question:			

What will Cabinet do if the contract cost for SLR construction exceeds the allocated budget, including contingency?			
Supplementary Response: Cabinet has set the delivery of Phase One has a priority and it is the first stage in unlocking future economic growth and unleashing Hereford's potential. Currently there is sufficient contingency to deliver the scheme within available budgets. Officers have also been developing value engineering options should they be required to keep the scheme costs within available budget. The council also continues to engage with the Government over the possibility of gaining grant funding to support the project.			
PQ 4.	Barry Jenkinson, Hereford	In the Q4 Performance Plan Appendices, I note that the Council has postponed presentation of the Full Business Case (FBC) for the Southern Link Road (SLR), described as Phase 1 of the Western Bypass, from this meeting until September. What legal advice has been given to the Council regarding the risks it would face were it to enter into a construction contract for the Southern Link Road ("Phase 1 of the Western Bypass") without delivering and first approving a Full Business Case?	Councillor Price
Response: No legal advice has been sought as the council does not intend to enter into a construction contract without first having published and approved the FBC. This is planned for the September Cabinet meeting.			
Supplementary Question: Has the Council acquired all the land it needs to build the SLR?			
Supplementary Response: Sam answer as provided for Question 2.			
PQ 5.	Jeremey Milln, Hereford	In my Hereford Central ward both the Museum & Art Gallery and the Library & Learning Centre projects are red flagged for delivery (purple flagged for c/fwd in the Delivery Update sheet at Appendix A to the Q4 Performance Report at agenda item 7). These are supported substantially by the Stronger Towns Fund which has extended the deadline for delivery from March 2025 to March 2028.	Councillor Bramer

		It is understood these projects are at risk of running into the sand financially and are significantly delayed. In £ terms what exactly is the financial requirement for these two projects, how will the shortfall be addressed and when might we expect completion?	
Response: The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government extended the deadlines for all 100+ Stronger Towns areas across the country to 2028, it was not a local request. For both the Hereford Museum and Art Gallery and Shirehall project we are working through respective Pre-Construction Services Agreement periods with the selected contractors to finalise designs and costings which are commercial in confidence at this stage. As with any historic building project, there are significant challenges and costs associated with bringing these building's back into use. We are working through these challenges with the contractors, design teams and external funders at this stage. We are aiming to be able to say more about the next steps and timescales over the next few weeks.			
Supplementary Question: I asked what in £ terms is the financial requirement for the overdue Museum & Art Gallery and the Library & Learning Centre projects, how will the shortfall be addressed and when might we expect completion? The response evades this on the pretext of 'commercial confidentiality' around services agreements and selected contractors about which I had not asked. It is tedious to have to use my supplementary to ask the question again but in doing so you have the opportunity at least to demonstrate you do know the answer. Therefore please answer the question and do so in an open, honest and transparent way consistent with the Nolan Principles.			
Supplementary Response: We explained in the previous answer that we are working with contractors to finalise costings with these projects, and our various funding partners. The final financial requirements are therefore not known until we complete this process. The costs are commercial in confidence as they are subject to tender processes, contract arrangements with private businesses, and the detailed costs provided by their supply chains. Thank you.			
PQ 6.	Mrs Morawiecka, Hereford	With the “School Run” being the biggest cause of significant congestion at peak times on the urban road networks & with the Government focussing funding on active travel between schools, home and work, will the Cabinet be looking to expand safer routes to schools and colleges, so that the children who have benefitted from Bikeability can apply their skills to cycling to & from home	Councillor Price

		and activities, helping reduce the biggest cause of urban congestion?	
Response: Cabinet recognises that journeys to and from schools make a significant contribution to peak-time congestion on the urban and rural road network and that enabling more children and young people to walk, wheel and cycle safely can play an important role in reducing car dependency and therefore give a reduction to congestion. The council currently deliver Bikeability training to children and are recognised as a leading council in England in the number of children being trained. Additionally we also provide road safety education in schools along with partnership working with all emergency services The recently adopted Herefordshire Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5) includes commitments to improve active travel, promote school travel planning and deliver a programme of safer routes to school. It also identifies the need to reduce congestion, improve road safety for vulnerable users and increase travel choice. Public consultation on LTP5 highlighted strong support for safer walking and cycling routes to schools which is something Cabinet have prioritised. In addition, the council has recently completed its Herefordshire Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan (LCWWIP), which provides an evidence-based programme of walking, cycling and wheeling improvements and will help prioritise future investment opportunities. The LCWWIP supports the national objective of increasing the number of children travelling actively to school and identifies the delivery of connected, safe active travel networks as a key priority, this is support by the allocation of our Active Travel Grant for 2026/27 being entirely on a safer school route in Ledbury. The draft Parking Strategy recently consulted on also supports this approach by recognising the importance of reducing obstructive and unsafe parking, improving conditions for active travel and integrating parking management with wider transport objectives. Measures such as School Keep Clear enforcement, improved crossings and support for sustainable travel can help create safer environments around schools and colleges. Therefore, the Cabinet will continue to seek opportunities to deliver safer routes to schools and colleges where funding is available, drawing on priorities identified through the LCWWIP, LTP5 and future Active Travel England and Department for Transport funding programmes. This will help ensure that children who have benefited from Bikeability training are better able to put their skills into practice for everyday journeys, while also contributing to reduced congestion, improved air quality and healthier travel choices across Herefordshire.			
Supplementary Question: It's good the Cabinet recognises the "School Run" as a significant contribution to peak time congestion and that providing safer walking & cycling routes to school is a key priority. However, Cabinet's Budget priorities do not reflect the answer given.			

The answer says “the Cabinet will continue to seek opportunities to deliver safer routes to schools and colleges **where funding is available**”.

The Council are borrowing over £40million for a road, which their own report says will reduce walking and cycling (para 5.5.4), increasing fatal and serious accidents, all contrary to LTP5 policies.

Why then is the Cabinet not prioritising public borrowing for funding safer active travel routes to schools to effectively reduce urban congestion, improving health and safety of our young people and generating a better return on the investment than a new road?

Supplementary Response:

Cabinet does not accept the premise of the question. The council's investment programme is not a choice between supporting active travel and improving the highway network; both are important elements of the transport system and both are reflected within the priorities set out in the Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5).

As set out in LTP5 and the recently completed Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan (LCWWIP), the council is committed to increasing opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling, including the delivery of safer routes to schools, school travel planning, Bikeability training and measures that improve safety for vulnerable road users. The LCWWIP provides a long-term, evidence-based pipeline of active travel schemes that will be used to support future funding bids and investment decisions.

Funding opportunities for active travel infrastructure are typically delivered through specific Government programmes, including Active Travel England and Department for Transport grant funding. The council continues to pursue these opportunities alongside investment in the wider transport network. Through this approach we aim to reduce congestion, improve road safety, support healthier lifestyles and provide residents with greater travel choice. Ultimately, the objective of LTP5 is not to promote a single solution, but to deliver a balanced and integrated transport network that supports economic growth while increasing the proportion of journeys made by sustainable modes where that is a practical and attractive option.