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The Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028



Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028

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(Ross-on-Wye) Ben - stock.adobe.com

Vision

***Delivering the best for Herefordshire
in everything we do.***

Leader's foreword



This plan sets out how the council will make its contribution to achieving a better and more successful Herefordshire and is the beginning of a much longer ambition that is centred on the drive for improvement.

We are fortunate in Herefordshire to live in such a beautiful county which is defined by its people and places.

We want to deliver the best for Herefordshire in everything we do. We want children to have the best start in life. We will work to increase prosperity for all, protect the environment and provide those services that people need.

We want to develop a council that engages with the communities it serves, and we are committed to working with partner organisations to make people's lives better.

Our priorities are focused on: People, Place, Growth and Transformation.

People - We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and benefit from communities that help people to feel safe and supported.

Place - We will protect and enhance our environment and ensure that Herefordshire remains a great place to live. We will support the right housing in the right place and do everything we can to improve the health of our rivers.

Growth - We will create the conditions to deliver sustainable growth across the county. We want to attract inward investment, create more jobs, enable housing development and provide the right infrastructure to keep Herefordshire moving forward.

Transformation - We will be an efficient council that embraces best practice, delivers innovation through technology and demonstrates value for money.



Herefordshire is a wonderful county. It is blessed with beautiful rural areas and rivers, unique market towns and villages, and a historic cathedral city. It is a great place to live. Our communities are friendly and full of innovation. Life expectancy is higher than the national average. Herefordshire is a hub for farming, business activity and tourism, and we are a county with true entrepreneurial spirit. We have a strong educational offer and this is a great place to raise a family.

We have a focus on working with our partners and are determined to ensure that Herefordshire achieves its ambitions. We will be an organisation that is efficient and able to address the challenges we face.



We must move forward in ways that embrace change. We will work hand in hand with our partners to improve the way we do things. Our residents, businesses, and the voluntary, community and public sectors, all have a vital role to play in Herefordshire's success. I am confident that we can all thrive together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Lester". The script is cursive and fluid.

Councillor Jonathan Lester
Leader Herefordshire Council

Herefordshire Council

Introduction to the council's role

We are responsible for a wide range of services including:

- economic development
- education
- environmental health and animal welfare
- highways
- housing
- leisure and culture
- local tax collection
- passenger transport
- planning
- public health
- social care (adults and children)
- strategic planning
- trading standards
- transport planning
- waste collection and disposal

We are responsible for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the county. The council is the 'corporate parent' to children and young people in its care.

Many of the services we provide are statutory, meaning we must provide the service in line with the policies of central government. Some services are discretionary, meaning we have a degree of choice over the type and level of service to provide.

Structure of Herefordshire Council

We operate a leader and cabinet model of governance. We have 53 councillors who are elected every four years and meet together as a full council to set the policy framework, agree the budget and spending plans, set the Council Tax, elect the leader of the council and make constitutional decisions. It is also a forum for debate on major issues affecting the council and the county.

The leader of the council appoints and chairs the cabinet. Each cabinet member has a specific area of responsibility, called a portfolio.

The portfolio areas are:

- Adults, health and wellbeing
- Children and young people
- Community services and assets
- Corporate strategy and budget
- Economy and growth
- Environment
- Finance and corporate services
- Roads and regulatory services
- Transport and infrastructure

We employ over 1,000 staff who are responsible for delivering the council's policies and for the day-to-day operation of the organisation. We also work in partnership with and commission organisations to deliver our services.

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/council/herefordshire-council>

[https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/8993/how_the_council_works#:~:text=As%20a%20unitary%20authority%20Herefordshire,care%20\(adults%20and%20children\)%2C](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/8993/how_the_council_works#:~:text=As%20a%20unitary%20authority%20Herefordshire,care%20(adults%20and%20children)%2C)

Overview of Herefordshire

Herefordshire is big hearted, welcoming and friendly. We have strong and independent communities and idyllic countryside, situated in the South West Midlands and bordering Wales. The county sits between Worcestershire and the Malvern Hills to the east, and Bannau Brycheiniog (the Brecon Beacons) in Wales to the west. Historically Herefordshire has been the gateway to the Marches.

We embrace partnership working. We are a member of the Marches Forward Partnership, which is a cross border collaboration between Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Powys and Shropshire who are collectively working to secure funding to invest in the region.

The quality of Herefordshire's natural environment is recognised through a number of sites being classified as 'National Landscapes' (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), Sites of Special Scientific Interest or Special Areas of Conservation. Such recognition speaks to the heritage, cultural features,

biodiversity and landscape quality of the sites which are considered to be of national and international significance.

The River Wye has been voted the nation's favourite river, and it's easy to see why. The river and tributaries across the county provide vital habitat to a wide array of species.

Hereford is a walled medieval cathedral city surrounded by five distinctive market towns: Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross-On-Wye. The county is a popular tourist destination.

Herefordshire is a famously rural county. With a population of 188,700 it has the fourth lowest population density in England and there is a strong sense of pride, community and belonging. It is a great place to live, work and visit.

Source:
<https://understanding.herefordshire.gov.uk/>
<https://www.talkcommunitydirectory.org/talk-community-directory-news/herefordshire-community-wellbeing-survey/>
www.herefordshire.gov.uk



STRENGTHS

Herefordshire has many strengths. We will work with residents, communities, businesses and partners to build on them.

- The county's landscape and natural environment is a huge benefit for our residents. Living and working in such beautiful surroundings supports residents to live healthy lives both emotionally and physically.
- Herefordshire is known to be a great place to live, raise a family and grow older.
- Employment rates are high across the county and a high proportion of people are employed locally.
- The number of businesses in Herefordshire is steadily increasing with a greater number per head of population than the West Midlands.
- Entrepreneurial talent is flourishing with 90% of businesses being small and a higher than average number self-employed than the West Midlands.
- Levels of employment in agriculture and manufacturing are higher than nationally.
- Herefordshire is amongst the safest counties in the UK, and has strong, close communities.
- Overall Herefordshire has low levels of deprivation, although there are pockets of deprived areas.
- Herefordshire has highly effective schools. Most pupils attend a good or better Ofsted rated setting.
- Herefordshire has an excellent higher, vocational and further educational offer, with a range of specialist faculties.
- Life expectancy for both males and females is higher, and mortality rates are lower, than the national average.
- We have a vibrant community and voluntary sector with over 2,300 organisations.
- Herefordshire is a wonderful and growing tourism destination with a strong, renowned cultural and heritage offer.

CHALLENGES

Herefordshire faces a number of challenges. We will work with residents, communities, businesses and partners to address them.

- Housing affordability is an issue. High house prices together with low average earnings make it difficult for people to get on the property ladder.
- Average earnings in the county are significantly below the national and regional averages.
- The rural nature of the county makes it difficult to deliver cost-efficient services.
- Poor transport connectivity impacts on inward investment, travel and economic growth.
- The condition of the road infrastructure across Herefordshire has significantly deteriorated.
- The decline in the condition of both the River Wye and River Lugg has led to a halt to house building in the Lugg catchment.
- Young people leaving the county creates a skills gap in the workforce.
- Flooding across the county causes significant disruption.
- Herefordshire has an ageing population. Providing the right care, to the right people, at the right time and at the right place, is key.
- Health inequalities are felt across the county. Improvements are needed in areas such as dental health, mental wellbeing, diet and inactivity.
- Around 19.2% (c.16,300) of households in Herefordshire were in fuel poverty in 2021: a higher proportion than in England (13.1%) and the West Midlands (18.5%).
- In 2019 32% of homes in Herefordshire were poorly insulated and in need of retrofitting to improve their energy efficiency.
- Unprecedented growth in demand for social care and the challenging national economic environment continue to impact on the council's financial position and resilience.

What you told us

The council's plan has been developed with residents, partners and stakeholders across the county.

We consulted widely to gather feedback on our priorities for the next four years. We held in-person and online events, along with a survey on the council's website.

Nearly 1,000 people took part in the consultation over 20 direct engagement events including voluntary and community groups, parish and town councils, the sixth form college and a wider range of groups.

Top five objectives

The top five objectives that participants felt should be responded to most urgently were:

- 1. Support people to feel safe and respected in their communities.
- 2. Ensure that residents can live healthy lives within their communities.
- 3. Value nature and uphold environmental standards.
- 4. Tackle inequality and facilitate social mobility by focusing on early intervention and prevention activities that enable people to live independent and fulfilling lives.
- 5. Expand and maintain the transport infrastructure network in a sustainable way to improve connectivity across the county.

What Herefordshire will look like in 2028

We asked people to describe the Herefordshire they would like to see in 2028 in three words. Safe, happy and healthy were the words most commonly used by respondents.



• • • • • **People** - Helping the most vulnerable is important - help those who need it

• • • • • **Place** - Tackling pollution of the River Wye, making the built environment more attractive

• • • • • **Growth** - Road infrastructure needs to happen before employment land is developed to enable growth in a sustainable way

• • • • • **Transformation** - Departments working better together, for the customer

Our priorities

Our priorities for the next four years are described in this plan.

They are arranged into four interdependent areas - People, Place, Growth and Transformation:

PEOPLE



We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and to be part of great communities that support each other. We want all children to have the best start in life.

PLACE



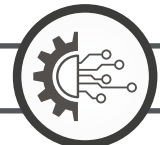
We will protect and enhance our environment and ensure that Herefordshire is a great place to live. We will support the right housing in the right place and do everything we can to improve the health of our rivers.

GROWTH



We will create the conditions to deliver sustainable growth across the county; attracting inward investment, building business confidence, creating jobs, enabling housing development and provide the right infrastructure.

TRANSFORMATION



We will be an efficient council that embraces best practice, delivers innovation through technology and demonstrates value for money.

UNDERPINNING THEME - PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Partnership working is central to Herefordshire Council's success and to delivering the best results for our residents. We are stronger together and the council will always work to build strong, effective partnerships to ensure our county is much more than the sum of its parts.

PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

PEOPLE

We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and to be part of great communities who support each other. We want all children to have the best start in life.





We want the best for all people in Herefordshire.

We will be focused on how best to respond to their needs and do so in a way that is appropriate and proportionate.

We want to support children and young people to thrive, be safe, and for families to be supported. We believe that children and young people are best supported in their family networks and within highly effective schools and flourishing communities. Our children are the future.

Sometimes children and families need our help. We are committed to improving children's services and providing support to families who need it.

We will work to help residents stay healthy, and encourage them to be economically, physically and culturally active.

The evidence is clear that there is a strong link between income, health and wellbeing. We will tackle inequalities and make the most of opportunities so everyone has the chance to fulfil their potential and live their best life.

We are fortunate to have a range of great voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations. There are over 2,300 community organisations reaching over 100,000 residents.

We will work with the voluntary and community sector to help residents stay independent for longer, improve their wellbeing and reduce inequalities.

PEOPLE Objectives

We will:

- Support all children to have the best start in life.
- Support all residents to live healthy lives within their communities.
- Tackle inequality and improve social mobility through timely intervention and prevention activities which allow residents to live independent and fulfilling lives.
- Enable people to support themselves and each other by providing the right help at the right time.
- Work with residents and partners to build connected and resilient communities.
- Support people to feel safe and respected in their communities.



PLACE

We will protect and enhance our environment and ensure that Herefordshire is a great place to live. We will support the right housing in the right place and do everything we can to improve the health of our rivers.





Herefordshire has a rich cultural heritage and boasts a varied environment. Who we are, our sense of place, and our landscape, villages, high streets, town centres and rural areas are all deeply intertwined.

Hereford provides regionally important employment, retail, leisure, healthcare and learning opportunities. We will work with others to create the transport network that the county needs.

We want to provide more homes, reduce congestion and increase employment opportunities. We will work with others to create the transport network that the county needs. This will include active travel, rail connectivity and improved road infrastructure.

Herefordshire has a remarkable and rich range of cultural, arts and heritage activities, buildings, organisations, and natural assets. Our plans for an innovative museum, art gallery and library will put learning and culture at the heart of the county.

Herefordshire Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019. We will endeavour to meet our commitment to reach net zero by 2030/31. Mitigation and adaptation measures will be central to how we become more sustainable. We will work with others to support county-wide reductions in greenhouse gas emissions

and support communities to become more resilient.

We will continue to work with partners to support communities to adapt to climate change, and further investment will be made to improve drainage and infrastructure, including nature based solutions (natural flood management).

The health of our rivers is of great importance. We will continue to do all within our powers to support their recovery and improve river health. We will work with governments, all neighbouring local authorities and the River Wye Nutrient Management Board and other partner organisations to achieve this aim.

Herefordshire Council has pioneered a nature based solution to the housing moratorium which also provides improved water quality to the river.

The council will be working with partners to maximise the potential benefits of biodiversity net gain.

These measures will ensure that we are able to deliver the housing and growth that Herefordshire needs.

PLACE Objectives

We will:

- Develop Herefordshire as a place for growth, prosperity and communities to thrive
- Expand and maintain the transport infrastructure in a sustainable way and improve connectivity across the county.
- Value nature and uphold environmental standards to minimise pollution and maximise biodiversity.
- Reduce waste, increase reuse and increase recycling.
- Work towards reducing county and council carbon emissions, aiming for net zero by 2030/31 and work with partners and communities to make the county more resilient to the effects of climate change.
- Support our local culture and heritage and make Herefordshire a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit.



GROWTH

We will create the conditions to deliver sustainable growth across the county; attracting inward investment, building business confidence, creating jobs, enabling housing development along with providing the right infrastructure.





Entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in Herefordshire. Rates of self-employment are higher than the regional and national averages. The county is home to roughly ten thousand enterprises, of which 90% are micro enterprises. It's encouraging to see independent and Herefordshire-based businesses line our high streets.

To support market towns to be vibrant hubs we will work collaboratively with businesses, local organisations and residents. We are committed to working alongside partner organisations to grow the tourism economy.

We want Herefordshire to be a connected county. This means enabling residents to move around the county as efficiently as possible with the expansion of the transport infrastructure. New infrastructure will facilitate growth through increasing opportunities for housing, inward investment and unlocking employment land.

We will accelerate work to further improve superfast broadband coverage to improve the digital experience for residents and help attract more businesses to the county.

To address the need for affordable housing across the county we will work with housing partners to meet the target of 16,100 homes being built by 2041. We will be building on the growth of the Hereford Enterprise Zone (HEZ) and Shell Store by continuing to increase the enterprise opportunities and infrastructure across the county, with prospects for an additional 1,000 jobs resulting from the growth plans of HEZ businesses.

Agriculture makes up a much larger proportion of the economy in Herefordshire than nationally. 77% of Herefordshire is farmed. The renowned Hereford cattle and cider industries have a world-wide reputation.

To ensure residents have the skills needed for the workplace, we will work with stakeholders to provide training opportunities. Herefordshire has a strong further education offer across a number of establishments.

GROWTH Objectives

We will:

- Develop employment land to unlock new business opportunities and generate local jobs.
- Support market towns and Hereford city to be vibrant hubs through working with residents, local organisations and businesses.
- Support residents to access skills development, training and employment opportunities.
- Work with partners to provide high quality and affordable housing to meet all needs.
- Enhance the rollout of improved broadband across the county towards a fully digital Herefordshire.
- Work with our partners and businesses to facilitate growth across the county.



TRANSFORMATION

***We will be an efficient council that
embraces best practice, delivers innovation
through technology and demonstrates
value for money.***





We want to deliver the best possible services for our residents, businesses and communities. To do this we need to have better systems and ways of working.

We will work with those who use our services to improve their experience and increase satisfaction.

We believe partnership working is key to achieving the best results. We will work with our residents and partners so that communities can come together to help themselves and each other. We will provide resources to manage the need for services, while protecting services for those who need them.

We are on a transformation journey to be a sustainable, modern and fit for the future council. We have already started this work and we need to continue delivering with pace, energy and enthusiasm in the coming months and years.

We will invest in our staff who work so hard on behalf of our residents, communities and businesses. We want them to stay with us, have a strong sense of pride in the organisation and build careers in the county.

We will modernise how we interact with our customers and improve our channels of contact to add more value to the customer experience.

We will embrace new technologies, test ideas and develop a culture of innovation to improve services and deliver value for money.

We will provide our staff with the digital tools to enable them to be connected, informed, supported, and engaged in an effective and proactive way which empowers them to conduct business and obtain information when and how they need it.

To support the transformation we will rethink our approach from strategies and delivery models through to data and performance management, to become an intelligence-led organisation.

We want to be a council which thrives, is resilient and excels when meeting the challenges we face.

We are looking forward with confidence, ready to do our best for the people and places of Herefordshire.

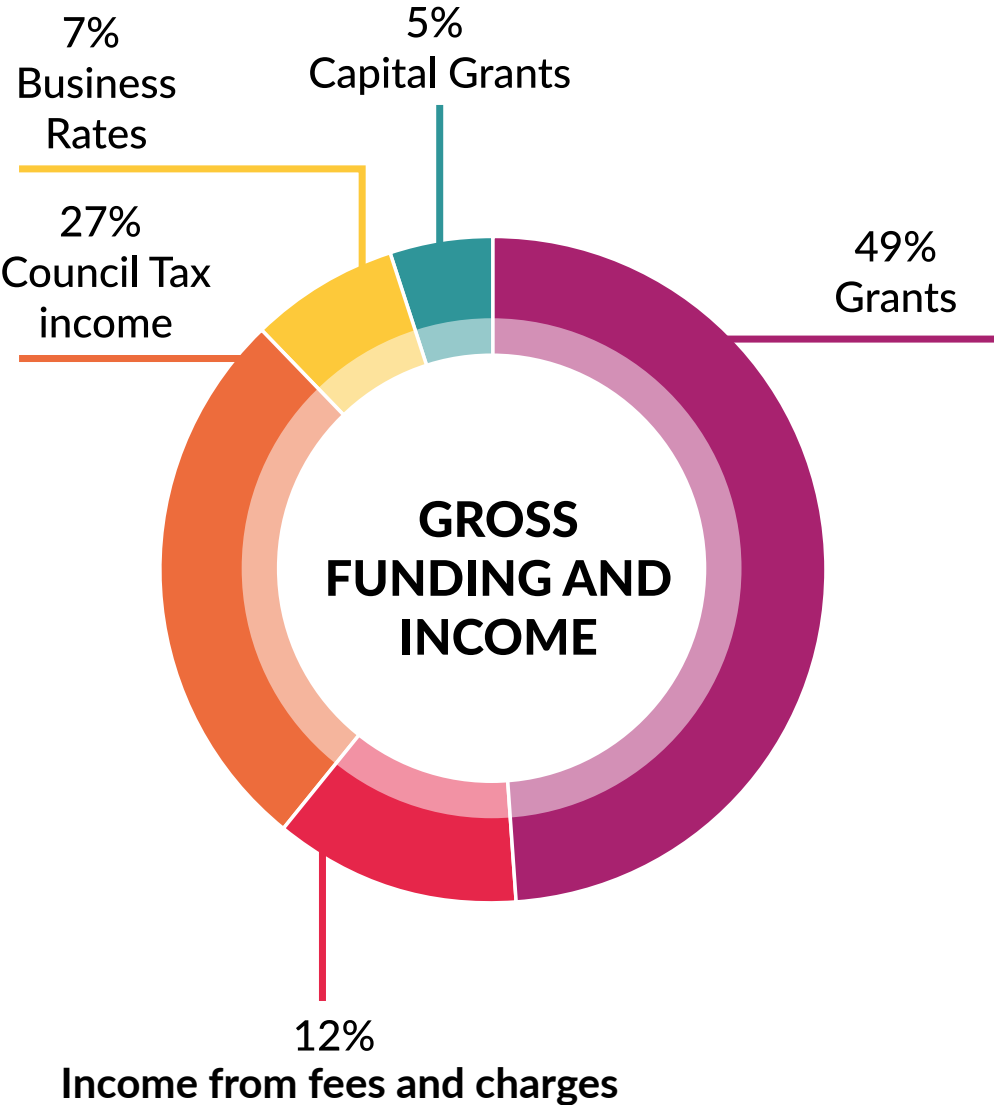
Transformation

We will:

- Change and transform the organisation to be fit for the future and work efficiently.
- Attract and retain an excellent workforce through effective approaches to recruitment and retention.
- Work collaboratively with our residents, communities and businesses to achieve the best results together.
- Improve the way we use technology across our services.
- Strengthen the council's strategy ensuring alignment and delivering the future vision.
- Build a data and intelligence led culture to inform decisions, improve efficiency and manage demand.

Where our money comes from

The council has an annual budget of £210m and receives funding from five main sources. The chart shows the funding that will be received in 2024/25.



...and how we spend it



Charges per month (average Band D property)
2024/25 monthly Council Tax receipt

** Local government running costs **	
* IT, Council Tax and Benefits admin, invoices and payments	9.79
* Insurance and property maintenance	3.48
* Election, governance and legal services	3.48
* Organisational administration	3.36
* Capital financing	11.05
** Daily life **	
* Schools and education	128.07
* Waste, Cleansing	12.62
* Public, School and community transport	5.62
* Roads and bridges	4.37
* Environmental Health and public spaces	3.24
* Libraries, records and customer services	1.63
** Looking after Adults **	
* Vulnerable adults	64.63
* Health improvement (Public Health nursing, health checks, smoking cessation)	5.25
* Lifestyles services (substance abuse, sexual health)	1.91
* Housing	1.06
** Looking after children **	
* Children in care	29.8
* Child protection	11
* Children with special needs	6.69
** Economic growth **	
* Economic development and regeneration	1.36
* Broadband – rural rollout	0.12
* Planning	0.14
	308.68

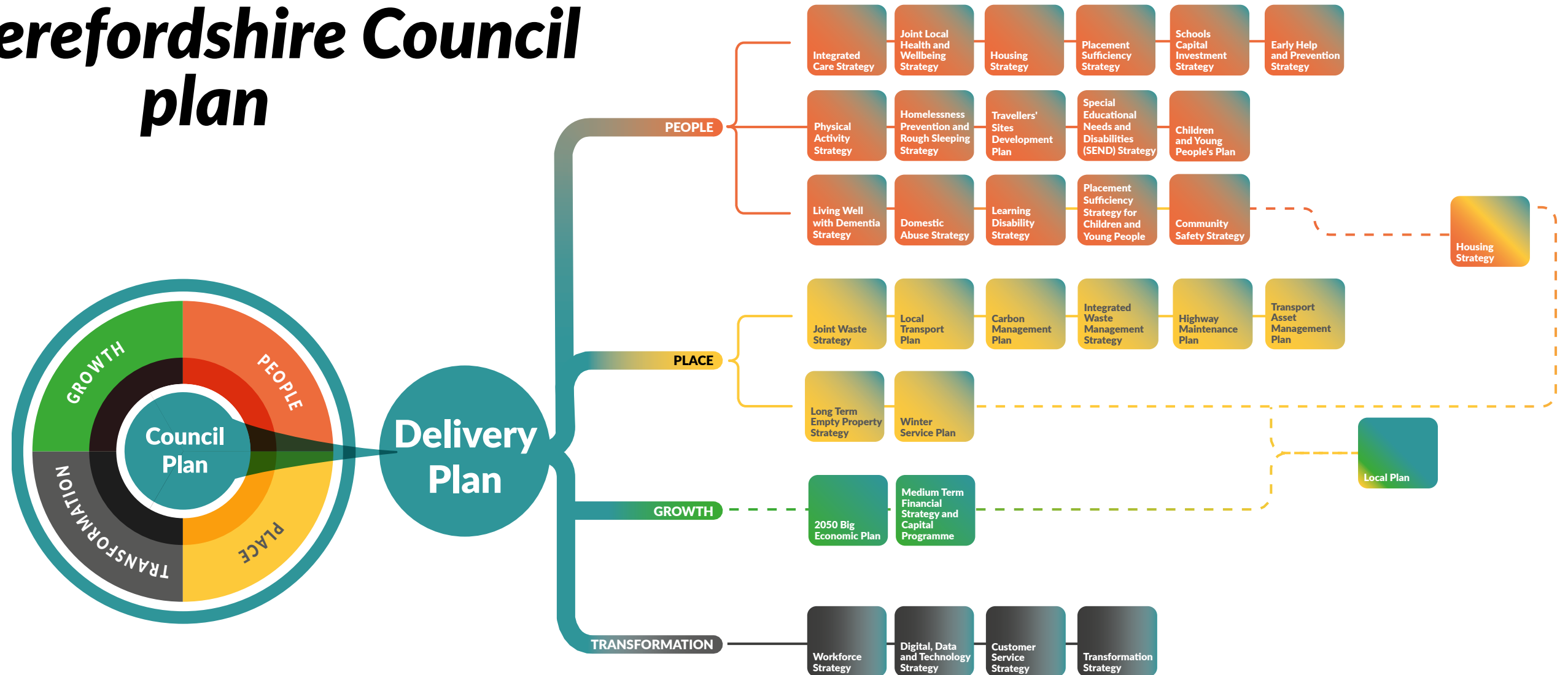
VOUCHER	
** Other income to supplement council tax **	
* Public Health Grant	-7.57
* National education funding (schools)	-127.56
* Other Income	-17.24

TOTAL TO PAY (per month)	156.31

The plans that will deliver the Herefordshire Council plan

Due to the cross-cutting nature of the plan there are a number of council strategies and plans that will support in delivering the priorities. The diagram shows these key documents.

Please click on these to find out further information.



Delivering the plan

Progress in delivering this plan across all areas of the council will be monitored through:

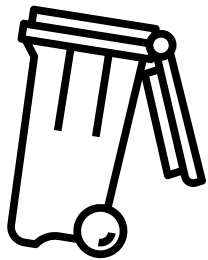
- Quarterly reporting into Cabinet.
- Routine financial monitoring against the approved revenue budget and capital programme, reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis.
- Monthly progress reporting to the corporate leadership team.
- Annual Service Plans outlining service area priorities and key areas of focus to achieve the objectives.
- Annual individual performance and development plans.

There will be scrutiny of performance at organisation and service levels as well as from elected members on a regular basis.

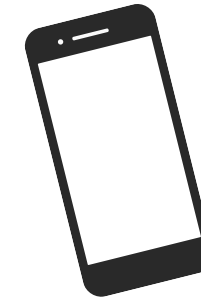
What the council achieved in 2020-24

In the previous County Plan (2020-2024) key priorities in the areas of environment, community and economy were outlined. As the new Herefordshire Council Plan (2024-2028) commences we reflect on what has already been achieved so that we can celebrate progress and refocus efforts moving forward.

Environment



- Produced a new Waste Strategy and procured a new waste strategy collection contract.
- 4 repair cafes started with grant funding and 6 operating across the county.
- Vouchers for reusable nappies provided to 350 families potentially reducing nappy waste by 270 tonnes.
- Introduced 100 ebikes and 125 extra pedal bikes as part of the Beryl Bike scheme.
- Free and impartial home energy advice delivered to 1,000 households through the Keep Warm service.
- The council has saved 2,786 Tonnes CO₂ equivalent in the timeframe 2020-2023.
- A Wetlands scheme is now fully operational at Luston with two additional sites securing planning permission. The Wetlands have unlocked 1,000 new and nutrient neutral homes.
- The electric vehicle charging infrastructure has been developed.
- Shift to using 100% renewable electricity across the council estate.



Community

- £109m total investment in the maintenance of Herefordshire's highway network.
- The Children's Help & Advice telephone line (CHAT) launched and is operational.
- The council achieved the Bronze award for the Sustainable Food Place and is now working towards the next standard.
- Almost 2,500 people used telecare to live safely and independently at home.
- 75 Talk Community Hubs opened across Herefordshire with 25,000 visits each year.
- Over 25,000 holiday activity fund (HAF) places booked supporting on average 1,500 children per programme.
- £2m Covid recovery grants provided to support the community to bounce back from Covid.
- The council facilitated £22.4m Stronger Towns funding to deliver 15 trailblazing projects transforming Hereford. Three projects are council led:
 - Hereford museum and art gallery redesign
 - New Hereford library and learning centre development
 - Greening the City



Economy

- Over 59,000 households signed up to the pre-paid card scheme delivered through a covid recovery grant seeing almost £1m spent in the local economy.
- Refurbishment of The Shell Store into a business centre.
- Herefordshire Council's adult and community learning service was awarded a 'good' rating by OfSTED in April 2023 and supported over 400 learners.
- Spirit of Herefordshire microsite created to attract skilled workers to the council.
- More than 95% of Herefordshire now has access to superfast broadband
- The Herefordshire County Business Improvement District secured £153,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to promote tourism in the county in 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- Provided accommodation for 178 students at Station Approach.

How to contact us

Our switchboard phone line is open:
Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm
(Closed weekends and bank holidays)
Telephone: 01432 260000

Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane,
Hereford HR4 0LE



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