



How the council works

Set out below is a summary of how the council operates within Herefordshire. Links are provided to the constitution, or to web pages where further detail can be found.

What is Herefordshire Council responsible for?

As a unitary authority Herefordshire Council is 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. It also has an overarching 'local leadership' role being responsible for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the county. The council is also the 'corporate parent' to children and young people in its care.

Many of the services are mandatory, meaning the council must either provide the service itself or commission others to do this on its behalf; some of these mandatory areas of service delivery are subject to a high degree of regulation and control from central government. Other services are discretionary, meaning the council has a degree of choice over the type and level of service to provide.

Who is responsible for what?

Herefordshire Council operates a leader and cabinet model of governance.

The council's 53 members meet together as [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.

Once elected, the leader of the council appoints and chairs the cabinet, sometimes called the executive. Each cabinet member has a specific area of responsibility, called a [portfolio](#), and takes decisions relating to their own portfolio as well as meeting collectively as the cabinet to take decisions on the most significant issues or those that cut across more than one portfolio.

The different service areas or activities the council is responsible for are called functions and the law determines whether decisions about a function are the responsibility of full Council (or one of its committees), an individual officer, or of the executive. This is explained in detail in part three of [the constitution](#)

The council's employees, often called officers, are responsible for delivering the council's policies and for the day-to-day operation of the organisation. Officers have a duty to support the whole council, are not accountable to individual councillors or to the political group in control of the council and must remain politically neutral. The chief executive is the head of the paid service and responsible for setting the management structure for the organisation. The chief executive works closely with the leader of the council and elected members to help the council achieve its priorities. There is a code within the constitution which governs [member and officer working relationships](#) and this provides the framework for members to promote equality, and respect the impartiality and integrity of employees.

Decision making takes place at a wide range of levels across the council. The constitution defines the various roles of officers and members. Broadly:

- Council (all 53 members): approves the constitution, the budget and the main policies and priorities for the council; it delegates much of its day to day decision-making (such as planning and licensing) to a number of committees, or to officers
- Cabinet (the executive): is responsible for all decisions which the law, or Council, does not require to be taken by others; and agrees policies and actions to implement the budget and policies set by Council
- Officers: take decisions in order to put agreed policies and strategies into effect and to deliver services efficiently
- Overview & scrutiny: scrutinises decisions and advises the cabinet and Council

The council also works in partnership with a range of organisations from the public, business, and voluntary and community sectors in order to deliver the best services as efficiently as possible for the county. We have agreed a [partnership governance framework](#) to ensure that our partnership activities are open and accountable so that people can understand what activities these partnerships may carry out on our behalf.

The diagram which follows shows our governance model on a page.

Governance Model

