

Supplement to the agenda for

Council

Tuesday 2 February 2021

2.00 pm

Virtual Meeting

3. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Pages

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Agenda item no. 3 - Questions from members of the public

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mrs Protherough, Birch Hill	I very much appreciate all the hard work and consideration which has contributed to the Transport Review and note the commitment to providing an affordable, safe and secure transport system for all sectors of society, and to follow the principles set out in the governments 'Inclusive Transport Strategy' 2018. Taking into account that older and disabled people probably make up a quarter of our population how is this going to be achieved for this sector of society in an inclusive and well informed manner?	Cabinet member Infrastructure and Transport
<p>Response:</p> <p>As is referenced in the question, the review process has taken into account inclusivity and this formed an important component of the assessment framework which assisted cabinet in determining its preferred strategy and the importance of increasing investment in public transport.</p> <p>Ongoing development of the preferred strategy will be informed by government guidance including its Inclusive Transport Strategy, public and stakeholder consultation and reference to local demographic information which includes information on age and disability. We will of course seek to ensure that we capture information in our consultation and engagement which enables us to understand the specific views of people with protected characteristics and particularly those with limited transport choice at present.</p>			
PQ 2	Ms Stace, Leominster	Herefordshire Wildlife Trust (HWT) supports cessation of all work on southern link road and western bypasses but remains opposed to the concept of an eastern bypass. This would have severe detrimental consequences on the environment, including the Lugg Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the River Lugg SSSI and Special Area of Conservation and breeding curlews, a Red Data Book bird. We are also concerned about future pressure that such development might have on land north of the A428, including Lammas meadows owned and managed as Nature Reserves by HWT and Plantlife. Given the recent declaration of Climate and Ecological Emergency, and previous rejections of this eastern route on environmental grounds, how could the Council justify investing further funding to develop such a proposal. Will the Council therefore also reject Package E on the grounds on unacceptable environmental damage?	Cabinet member Infrastructure and Transport
<p>Response:</p> <p>I understand the concerns raised by the questioner in respect of the important environmental assets to the east of Hereford. I can confirm that the development of an eastern link between Rotherwas and the A438 Ledbury Road will include the appropriate assessment of all potential impacts and this will inform the process of identifying, initially, a corridor and then route options followed by identification of a preferred route. This process will include consultation and engagement with all relevant stakeholders and statutory bodies. It is important to note the entire Cabinet remains opposed to an 'Eastern Bypass' but recognises the resilience driven need to fully consider an Eastern crossing, going no further than the Ledbury road.</p>			

PQ 3	Mr Morfett, Breinton	The South Wye Transport Package is now clearly a zombie project with no prospect of funding in the remaining term of this Coalition Council. If it was never-the-less retained in the capital budget would it hamper the Council's emergency response to Climate Change introducing modern sustainable transport solutions, by adding further delays on improvements to existing roads, road/rail bridges, cycle networks and new electric bus services?	Cabinet member Infrastructure and Transport
<p>Response: Removing the SWTP from capital programme does not free up any capital funds for alternative projects as the funding for this scheme has already been withdrawn following the termination of the funding agreement by the Marches LEP.</p> <p>In general terms however, not progressing the southern link road and the western bypass will allow all available resources to focus on the alternative transport measures included in our preferred strategy. These were set out at the cabinet meeting of 3 December 2020 and have been summarised in the report to council at paragraphs 22 to 24.</p>			
PQ 4	Mr Palgrave, Hereford	The Hereford Transport Review's assessment framework was based on four key themes - Economy, Society, Environment and Climate Emergency - which underpinned the appraisal of an initial long-list of 18 possible interventions. Two interventions included the Southern Link Road as a component part of bigger schemes (Option 14, full Eastern bypass, and Option 18, full Western Bypass). The long-list did not include a standalone Southern Link Road nor a combination of the SLR with the proposed short Eastern Link between Rotherwas and the A438 in Tupsley. Can the Cabinet Member confirm that if Council decide to reject Cabinet's decision and vote to keep the SLR - either standalone or combined with Eastern Link - that the same comprehensive assessment using the Transport Review methodology would be required to inform a decision whether to proceed or not with the SLR?	Cabinet member Infrastructure and Transport
<p>Response: Cabinet was not bound by the 6 package combinations looked at in the final stages of the review and determined to select a blended package which identified a combination of interventions not specifically assessed as a single package in the review. As such I do not believe that we would need to undertake a re-run of the review if council determined not to support the stopping of the southern link road and/or the western bypass but as identified by Mott MacDonald in the peer assessment of the prior SLR assessment and consultation process, national policy has changed and we would, particularly in relation to ecological, environmental and climate emergency factors, as far as I understand, need to rerun those elements of the work previously done. If council does not support the stopping of the two schemes cabinet would need to consider how to proceed and take advice from the statutory officers.</p>			
PQ 5	Mrs Palgrave, Hereford	Would the Cabinet member for Infrastructure please confirm the position regarding the provisional allocation of money from the Marches LEP Local Growth Fund for the South Wye Transport Package (SWTP). The arrangement as I understand it was that release of the £27m from Marches LEP was conditional on Department for Transport review and approval of a final business case, which I believe was not completed. Has the Marches LEP Local Growth Fund allocation for the SWTP now been irrevocably withdrawn?	Cabinet member Infrastructure and Transport

Response:

Yes. The local growth funding agreement for the South Wye Transport Package was terminated and funding withdrawn by the Marches LEP following a majority vote of its Board at its meeting of 27 January 2020. The administration does not agree with the approach taken by the LEP and is strongly resisting the LEP's attempt to clawback the monies already provided and spent by the council on the package. A business case for this project was not completed and the procurement process for the tendering of the road building element to a contractor was not completed and was formally terminated.

PQ 6	Mr Franklin, Bromyard	The Critical Friend Review (Appendix D) highlights uncertainty introduced by Covid-19 and suggests that travel patterns may change considerably. It seems certain that local businesses have suffered with consequent losses of employment and erosion of the revenue base. We may also see erosion of public transport and greater car use with people finding employment further afield plus additional vehicles if the proposed housing developments go ahead. The Critical Friend Review suggests development of multiple scenarios in response to the uncertainties. Have alternative scenarios been developed which would enable Councillors to consider whether continuation with the SLR and Western Bypass, with consequent stimulus to development and employment, which will surely be badly needed, and avoiding the write-off of £11.8 million of reserves which may also be badly needed, should be re-examined in the light of the impact of the Covid emergency?	Cabinet member Infrastructure and Transport
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Response:

Firstly, as I understand it, the reduction in the usage of public transport is widely believed to be a temporary issue and directly related to concerns around safe distancing and COVID-19 infection potential. As the country is vaccinated this risk will decrease and the belief is that a return to greater use of public transport will follow, most likely within the next 12 months. Therefore it is entirely sensible and appropriate to consider what measures locally could drive an increase in bus service provision and usage' – ideally along a Herefordshire 'Hopper' model of collaboration. The focus of provision of an improved and larger local bus network is entirely in line with the direction from Central Government and the DfT, with the minister, Grant Shapps ascertaining that, "We will use our cars less and be able to rely on a convenient, cost-effective and coherent public transport network."

The Hereford Transport Strategy Review (included at appendix 3 of the council papers) identified the potential future trends and scenarios which might impact transport strategy requirements over the longer term (pages 33 and 34) advising for the need for an agile and flexible approach. Alongside current DfT forecasts for transport the review also included an assessment of a scenario in which long term effects of covid might see a sustained reduction in commuting traffic (page 96).

With this in mind the cabinet selected a blended package which combines a range of different types of transport intervention including better walking and cycling infrastructure, behavioural change, shared mobility, mobility hubs, investment in public and school transport, demand management and some additional road building. This will provide flexibility as we move forward. Cabinet wished to consider if any new road building was required and the review allowed us to look at alternatives with and without new roads and ultimately enabled us to make a selection which we feel represents the best value for money, will improve choice and resilience and also support local growth. Whilst it will be important to maintain a focus for this strategy, which will provide a strong basis to develop clear and specific bids for external funding, we note the advice provided by the review to remain agile and flexible due to the acknowledged uncertainty of the future. We do not feel that this agility and flexibility should include ongoing uncertainty for people living in the vicinity of the western bypass and southern link road and do not see any value in maintaining these schemes as we pursue the preferred strategy.

PQ 7	Dr Geeson, Hereford	We read that the purpose of the review was to “ensure any major scheme has a positive impact on the county to address travel issues, such as congestion and air quality”. Building the Southern Link Road would mean a Traffic Regulation Order on the A465 Belmont Road to stop lorries using that, therefore adding to traffic on the A49. Even if an eastern bridge were built, there would be likely to be restrictions affecting HGVs on that route. So please can you confirm that building the Southern Link Road on its own would be likely to increase congestion and air pollution on the A49 Ross Road?	Cabinet member Infrastructure and Transport
Response: As per the evidence presented at the SWTP Compulsory Purchase Order Public Inquiry, autumn 2018, if the Southern Link Road was built on its own, traffic on some sections of the A49 Ross Road would increase and on other sections traffic would decrease. Most of the increases are adjacent to the SLR roundabout as traffic re-routes to use the new road. However, most of the links on the A49 corridor south of the River Wye are forecast to experience a reduction in traffic flow upon construction of the SLR. These are ‘net’ effects with some traffic diverting to the new route, thereby creating spare capacity on the A49, some of which has been partially filled by other traffic.			
PQ 8	Ms Sharp, Hereford	The school run increases congestion at peak times by over 50% on some key routes into Hereford. In particular the largest area of Hereford that generated the most traffic in the city, much more than any employer, is the North East quadrant of the City. By delivering on Safer Routes to School and improving school transport, how much could congestion be reduced at peak times?	Cabinet member Infrastructure and Transport
Response: I believe that Safer Routes to School and improving school transport can make a significant contribution to reducing congestion. Whilst the review did undertake assessment of safer routes to school and school transport as individual options (options 3 and 4 respectively with assessment summaries at 103 and 104 of the report at appendix 3 of the council papers) they were not options which could be specifically modelled in detail. As components of package A and B we do have an assessment of impact on various aspects of congestion and these include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15% forecast reduced delay at junctions across the city • 7% forecast reduced delay at junctions in the city centre • 2% reduction in journey terms along key corridors These figures relate to a comparison with do minimum (no new transport improvements) for the forecast year of 2026.			
PQ 9	Mrs Richards, Hereford	The Transport report makes mention that without new road infrastructure, strategic housing sites in Hereford may not be built out to the inflated housing levels planned in the Core Strategy. According to the Core Strategy, the City Link Road would help unlock land for 800 new homes in the Urban Village. How many new homes for local people, particularly affordable homes, have been delivered in the Urban Village since the road was completed and opened 3 years ago?	Cabinet member Infrastructure and Transport

Response:

The Core Strategy in policy HD2 proposes that around 800 new homes will be accommodated in Hereford City Centre over the plan period 2011-31, which includes development within the urban village.

Between April 2011 and April 2020 (which is the last monitoring period) there had been 372 housing completions in the central area 181 of which had been completed in the three years since 2017-18. In addition, there were 188 outstanding planning permissions as of April 2020.

In respect of affordable housing, 76 have been provided in the past three years in central Hereford with a further 74 anticipated to be delivered in the next few months.

Consideration is also being given to the opportunity to bring forward housing on Council owned sites in the vicinity of the city link road.

PQ 10	Mrs Morawiecka, Breinton	Core Strategy Policy HD5 Western Urban Expansion allowed for a minimum 1,000 new homes, "a mix of market and affordable house sizes and types that meet the requirements of policy H3 and the needs identified in the latest version of the Herefordshire Local Housing Market Assessment". The developer informed Herefordshire Council that contributing to a Western Relief Road would make it unviable to deliver 35% affordable housing out of the 1,200 units in their planning application, 20% more homes than in the Core Strategy. This site is well linked to schools, employment and the city centre by flat cycling infrastructure and regular bus services, which could be enhanced further with developer contributions. Surely cancelling the Western Bypass is an opportunity to promote truly sustainable development, whilst delivering much needed affordable housing, designed around people rather than the car?	Cabinet member Infrastructure and Transport
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Response:

The question refers to an historic position taken by the developer of the site (HD5) which has been updated to confirm their intention to comply with the requirement for affordable housing.

As is set out in the report to council, we will need to continue working with developers to ensure that any planning applications comply with Policy HD3 of the core strategy on Hereford Movement and include robust assessment of their transport impacts and identify and contribute to any mitigation required for the development to proceed. In addition, policy H1 states that evidence of housing need and an assessment of viability of developments will be necessary where viability is questionable.

I agree that cancelling the Western Bypass is the right thing to do and the preferred transport strategy does indeed represent an opportunity to support sustainable development and for developers to bring forward such development, with significant investment in active travel measures and passenger transport.

PQ 11	Ms Smith, Hereford	We would like to know why Huntington Hamlet Association was not invited to attend a meeting with Herefordshire Council, Developers, Church Commissioners with reference to the proposed Western Bypass. The Consultants reports stated that 3rd party consent would be required from the Landowners with Riparian Ownership in Huntington Hamlet as the Yazor Brook, SINC,	Cabinet member
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		<p>flowed through their land forming a pond at Huntington House Grade II and Huntington Court Grade II with a lake flowing through 4 acres.</p> <p>All activities undertaken to build the Western Bypass and bridge over the Yazor Brook which cause water pollution, increase the water levels causing flooding further downstream to Huntington Hamlet without the consent of the Riparian Owners will result in legal action being taken against all persons responsible. The developers have already stated that they cannot guarantee 100% protection.</p>	Infrastructure and Transport
<p>Response:</p> <p>Technical meetings were held between the consultants progressing the HTP and consultants supporting the development of the Three Elms planning application to consider the delivery/impacts of delivering both projects. These were initial technical fact findings meetings not stakeholder events and these ceased at the point at which the HTP was paused.</p>			
PQ 12	Mr Price, Preston-on-Wye	<p>In response to public questions at Cabinet 21 Jan, Cllr Harrington said “. The Western Bypass package, is forecast to cost £261 million.”</p> <p>The technical review costs for HTP bypass including the SLR are estimated as £190m.</p> <p>The table at Agenda item 34 shows the total costs to date, of the HTP and SWTP as £17.764m with no revenue costs on the SWTP.</p> <p>Please explain how in one week the cost of the western bypass can change by £71m and the total cost of these projects to date aren't showing non-capitalised revenue spend for SWTP; what are the full costs that should be included in the table, and an explanation given as to what “earmarked” projects won't be delivered because of decapitalising these costs?</p>	Cabinet member Infrastructure and Transport
<p>Response:</p> <p>I can clarify that the cost of £261m refers to the full estimated cost of package A+C+D as assessed in the review. Package D is the western bypass and southern link road with a combined estimated capital cost of £190m. The difference in the two figures of £71m is the estimated capital costs associated with package A (active travel measures) and package C (demand management including bus priority).</p> <p>The table at paragraph 34 of the report shows the full costs of the Hereford and South Wye Transport Packages with final costs estimated to give an overall cost of £17.764m, including all revenue and capital spend. The tables are accurate and SWTP feasibility was treated as capital throughout as feasibility can be capital spend as there would potentially have been an asset created at the end of the project and therefore all costs included as capital. HTP was treated as revenue as per CIPFA guidance until a route was chosen as costs on option appraisal and options not being progressed is not eligible capital spend and at that point costs are then treated as capital included feasibility etc.</p> <p>The use of earmarked reserves to cover the decapitalisation costs of the HTP and SWTP does not impact any planned projects.</p>			