

**SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA FOR**

# **Council**

**Friday 12 December 2014**

**10.00 am**

**The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford HR1 2HX**

	<b>Pages</b>
<b>7. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC</b>	<b>3 - 4</b>
<b>14. FORMAL QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS TO THE CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRMEN UNDER STANDING ORDERS</b>	<b>5 - 6</b>



**Public questions to Council – 12 December 2014****Question from Mr M Sandaver, Herefordshire**

Question 1

**Council contractors**

Why are outside contractors used, instead of the council taking responsibility for employing their own staff to carry out these tasks?

**Answer from Councillor H Bramer, cabinet member contracts and assets**

Answer to question 1

The council's vision, as set out in our commissioning and commercial strategy is to be an innovative, agile commissioning organisation that secures better outcomes by commissioning the right services from the right provider, at the right time and at the right price.

Outside contractors, whether from the private or the voluntary and community sector, may be used where they will deliver better outcomes in the most cost effective and efficient way.

---

**Question from Mr P McKay, Leominster**

Question 2

**Determination of highway status**

At January 2014 Council meeting I was advised that *"Herefordshire Council is currently finalising a draft protocol for processing requests for Determination of Highway Status and it is anticipated that the draft will be available for consultation in March 2014. Mr McKay and other interested individuals and organisations will be able to comment on it at that time. Once adopted following consultation the protocol will be published on the Council's website."* The October LAF minutes advise that *"The Highways Draft Protocol needs some minor tweaks, and the Cabinet Member report needs to be written. This report will be submitted by the end of the year."*

Could you confirm that this is progressing and anticipated date by which this will be published on the council's website?

**Answer from Councillor P Rone, cabinet member transport and roads**

Answer to question 2

I can confirm this is progressing. The report will be ready for consideration in early January and, subject to approval, the final protocol will be available to view on the council's website by the end of January 2015.

## Public questions to Council – 12 December 2014

---

### Question from Mrs V Wegg-Prosser, Breinton

Question 3

#### The Local Plan Core Strategy Costs

Could the cabinet member responsible for the core strategy please provide the cost to date of the entire local plan process, dating from the finance year 2007/8 to the year 2013/14, broken down by year, and with spend to date for the year 2014/15, and an estimate of costs to this year end, March 2015?

#### Answer from Councillor P Price, cabinet member infrastructure

Answer to question 3

	<b>2007/ 08</b>	<b>2008/ 09</b>	<b>2009/ 10</b>	<b>2010/ 11</b>	<b>2011/ 12</b>	<b>2012/ 13</b>	<b>2013/ 14</b>	<b>2014/ 15</b>	<b>2014/ 15</b>
	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Actual to Date</b>	<b>Fore- cast</b>
	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>
Local Development Framework	291	132	345	131	221	255	199	139	330
Forward Planning	490	472	410	491	558	416	301	133	197
<b>Total Core Strategy</b>	<b>781</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>755</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>527</b>

Please note that a proportion of these costs has been supported by external funding. Forward planning costs relate to the staffing costs but it is not possible to specify which proportion is directly attributable to the local plan process.

**Members' questions at Council – 12 December 2014****Question from Councillor R Matthews****Customer contact**

- 1 *I am constantly receiving complaints from extremely irate members of the public who are concerned that they cannot make contact with the council by telephone, as they are frequently having to wait in excess of thirty minutes for their calls to be answered. Can you please inform members as to why this should be, and what you intend to do about this appalling and unacceptable situation?*

**Answer from Councillor P Morgan Cabinet Member Corporate Services**

## Answer to question 1

Councillor Matthews is well aware of the substantial savings that the council is having to make and our very clear priorities.

How people contact customer services is changing, so that we can use the resources we have to best effect. We are doing this because:

- the way people want to access services is changing with more demand for 24hr internet services.
- the service has seen 25% reduction in staffing since April 2013 as part of the budget reduction plan to direct resources to essential services.
- we want to reduce customer waiting and response times, and to make sure queries go to the right place to be answered

During October and November alone the customer services team handled a total of 44,673 telephone calls. Of those 13,964 had telephoned the general switchboard number; the average time calls to that number were queued being 32 seconds.

In terms of addressing both the volume of calls and the waiting times there are a range of actions already taking place:

- Transfer of customer contact for public realm queries to Balfour Beatty Living Places
- Comprehensive on-line council tax programme for customers to manage their own account and payments
- Programme of improved messaging relating to council tax to mitigate the need to call the local authority
- Current campaign for more people access services on-line who have the ability to do so
- Automated messaging for customers to use the extension number to divert their call directly to the person intended
- Increase of on-line reporting (e.g. pothole reporting direct to BBLP systems) and social media to pre-empt queries
- A concentration of resources when call volumes are at their highest (between 9-10am)

## **Members' questions at Council – 12 December 2014**

- Additional staff being drawn in from the services to deal with surges in call numbers, for example when individual electoral registration notifications first went out to residents or black bin delivery.

The support of Councillor Matthews and all ward members in helping to promote alternative self-help contact methods would be welcomed, and will ensure that those residents with no choice but to use telephone contact will be able to access the service more easily.