

Minutes of the meeting of Council held online on Friday 17 July 2020 at 10.30 am

Present: Councillor Sebastian Bowen (chairperson)
Councillor Kema Guthrie (vice-chairperson)

Councillors: Graham Andrews, Paul Andrews, Polly Andrews, Jenny Bartlett, Chris Bartrum, Christy Bolderson, Dave Boulter, Tracy Bowes, Ellie Chowns, Pauline Crockett, Gemma Davies, Barry Durkin, Toni Fagan, Elizabeth Foxton, Carole Gandy, John Hardwick, John Harrington, Jennie Hewitt, Kath Hey, David Hitchiner, Bernard Hunt, Helen I'Anson, Terry James, Peter Jinman, Tony Johnson, Graham Jones, Mike Jones, Jim Kenyon, Jonathan Lester, Trish Marsh, Bob Matthews, Mark Millmore, Jeremy Milln, Felicity Norman, Roger Phillips, Tim Price, Paul Rone, Alan Seldon, Nigel Shaw, Louis Stark, John Stone, David Summers, Elissa Swinglehurst, Paul Symonds, Kevin Tillet, Diana Toynbee, Ange Tyler, Yolande Watson and William Wilding

Officers: Chief executive, Director for children and families, Director for economy and place, Director for adults and communities, Chief finance officer, Director of public health, Solicitor to the council and Democratic services manager.

58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Liz Harvey and Phillip Howells.

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

60. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

61. CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Council noted the Chairman and Chief Executive's announcements as printed in the agenda papers and the supplement published on 16 July containing details of an emergency decision taken after the publication of the agenda for the current meeting.

The Chairman introduced his announcements and provided his thanks for the work of all Council staff during the coronavirus outbreak. He referred to a visit undertaken to the Hillside care centre and a flag raising ceremony at the Suvla barracks.

The Chief Executive introduced his announcements and provided an update on actions taken in response to the outbreak of coronavirus among workers on a farm in Mathon. The council had worked with public health West Midlands and other local agencies and partners and there was no indication that the infection had spread beyond the farm.

Members raised the following points and questions on the Chief Executive's announcements:

- Clarification was requested concerning the status of care homes referred to in the Chief Executive's announcements; whether the absence of confirmed cases concerned private care homes. *The Chief Executive confirmed that council did not run the 89 care homes in the county but had provided support including the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE).*
- Queries were raised regarding the preparations that had been put in place to deal with potential outbreaks of coronavirus at other locations throughout the county and forms of accommodation housing farm workers. *The Chief Executive explained that the response to the outbreak at Mathon had provided valuable learning to the council as well as the government. The learning would inform the response of the council to future outbreaks. The council had written to all residents, businesses and farms to provide a reminder of the need for covid-safe practices during the easing of the lockdown.*
- It was queried whether the police had been consulted on the proposed 20 mph zones in the emergency active travel measures to ensure that they would be enforced. *The Director Economy and Place explained that the proposals had been subject to consultation with the police and would be enforceable by the police.*
- The reopening of the Hillside centre was queried including the occupancy of the centre and whether reopening costs had been recouped through the Bellwin scheme. *The Director Adults and Communities explained that there were 22 beds at the centre which was used as a step-up facility; currently the centre was being used to support people with coronavirus and with discharges from hospital. An amount of £38k had been recovered from the Bellwin scheme for the redevelopment of the centre and further support through the covid fund would also be accessed.*
- The suspension of food safety inspections was queried. *The Director Economy and Place explained that close work with the Food Standards Agency had taken place and flexibility had been given to councils with respect to hygiene inspections. The suspension of visits was intended to reduce officers accessing businesses and redeploy staff to the response to the outbreak. The suspension was temporary until 30 September.*
- The contribution of seasonal workers to the county was raised and it queried whether testing for coronavirus could be conducted on farms. *The Director of Public Health explained that mobile testing on farms was being investigated.*
- Funding from central government to support the response of the council to coronavirus was queried. *The chief executive explained that central government was being approached to provide funding to the council, it was expected that the local MPs would assist in these efforts.*
- It was suggested that a press release should be provided to explain that recent reports of coronavirus infections in the workforce at Avara were historic reports. *The chief executive explained that this would be looked into. The Director Public Health explained that there was no outbreak at Avara. The response of Avara to cases of coronavirus had been examined by the council to assist learning from good practice.*
- Reports that workers had left the Mathon farm after the outbreak were raised. *The Chief Executive and Director of Public Health confirmed that Public Health England had traced the individuals and they were understood to be self-isolating.*

A copy of the public questions and written answers, together with supplementary questions asked at the meeting and their answers, is attached to the Minutes at Appendix 1.

63. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (Pages 11 - 18)

A copy of the Member questions and written answers, together with supplementary questions asked at the meeting and their answers, is attached to the Minutes at Appendix 2.

There was a brief adjournment at 12:00 noon. The meeting reconvened at 12:15 p.m.

64. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Council considered a report by the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee which contained amendments to the constitution including the membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board and appeal arrangements for pavement licensing.

The Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee proposed the report and recommendations. In introducing the report he explained that the Audit and Governance committee had considered the outcomes of a review of the Health and Wellbeing Board and had recommended a change to its membership. The solicitor to the Council had advised that changes to the constitution were also required to take account of pavement license legislation introduced in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Councillor Christy Bolderson seconded the recommendations in the report as the Vice Chairperson of the Audit and Governance Committee. The Committee had considered the changes to the health and wellbeing board membership but had been unable to consider the changes to the right of appeal for pavement licenses due to time pressures. Both constitutional changes were felt to be routine and were commended to Council.

A point was raised that the functions of the Health and Wellbeing Board should include reference to holding providers to account and that the balance of the membership on the Board was weighted towards representatives of providers. It was queried whether the functions of the Board could include reference to holding providers to account and the membership could be amended to include a greater number of patient representatives from rural and urban areas and from the market towns. *The Solicitor to the Council explained that such proposals would need to be considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Audit and Governance Committee before it could be determined by Council. It was noted that the Committee would undertake a review of the Board in 12 months time which could consider these proposals.*

The amendments to the constitution were put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: That –

- (a) the amendments to the constitution in appendix 1 of the report are agreed with implementation immediately; and**
- (b) the monitoring officer is authorised to amend the constitution to include a right of appeal for pavement licenses to the licensing subcommittee in the committee's functions.**

65. LEADER'S REPORT TO COUNCIL

Council received and noted the Leader's report on the activities of the Cabinet since the meeting of Council on 6 March 2020 as contained in the supplement published on 16

July containing a corrected version of the report. The Leader introduced his report and provided a correction to paragraph 13 to include mention of Staffordshire as a member of the Shire Leaders. The Leader also referred to the announcement from government that the Council would receive an extra £1.5million to assist in the response to coronavirus.

The Leader received the following questions:

- If the capital programme was amended to release money for flooding repairs can you confirm that no projects to benefit rural areas would be cut? *It was hoped that more money would be forthcoming from government to fund the flooding repairs, if cuts to the capital programme were required this would be a decision of the full Council. It was hoped that any cuts would not affect the investment identified for market towns.*
- The intervention of the MP for North Herefordshire in efforts to secure funding from government for flooding repairs was welcome but was there concern that only minor influence had been brought to bear. *It was hoped that the MP retained influence with the government. The Leader regularly wrote to ministers in the government and copied his correspondence to the MP.*
- It was queried why there was no mention of the £7.6 million funding from the Department of Transport (DfT) for highways bringing total grant funding up to £20 million. *The Leader explained that this funding was part of the capital programme and was committed to potholes although its purpose had been updated by government to include mention of recovery from flooding. The administration was intent on using the whole fund for potholes and accessing other capital funding to pay for repairs to flooding damage; this would be a collective decision of the Council.*
- The revenue implications of the purchase of the Maylords Centre and the Hillside centre were queried. *It was confirmed that the Maylords Centre had a positive cash flow and the reopening of the Hillside centre was undertaken as an emergency measure in response to the flooding of a care home in the South of the county.*

The meeting was adjourned at 12.50 p.m. due to technical problems. The meeting was reconvened at 1.20 p.m.

- The community working arrangements with partners during the coronavirus was very valuable and it was asked whether the council could commit to retain the links established. *It was important to not lose the links and Talk Community could work with local communities to sustain the arrangements established.*
- The non-profit principle behind the acquisition of the Maylords Centre was queried. *It was explained that there was not a profit incentive attached to the purchase of the centre which allowed the council to explore options with the local community to realise its social value.*
- As the existing freeholder of the site the purchase of the Maylords Centre concerned the acquisition of 145,000 sq ft of retail space only. *The purchase provided the Council with control over the whole site to develop its use in the future.*
- The delay to the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was raised and an update requested. *An update was contained in the papers for the meeting which explained that the core strategy review would address the potential adoption of CIL but this had been delayed by the pandemic.*
- The timescale for the nutrient management plan for the Lugg and Wye catchment was queried. *A decision was currently being prepared to invest £2 million on the integrated wetlands project. Following the commencement of the work on the wetlands a determination would need to be made as to whether planning permissions in the catchment could begin to be granted. Work was being*

undertaken with Powys County Council where the rivers rose and with the local MPs.

- *It was queried what the drainage team would do to address a complex drainage issue on the C1125. The cabinet member infrastructure and transport explained that the capacity in the drainage team had been reduced due to the reduction in central government funding. The £7.6 million funding from the DfT was intended to resolve such highways issues and clarification from government over the use of the funding for flooding repairs was being sought. The cabinet member would contact the member to discuss.*
- *The inclusion of waste management plans in agricultural based planning applications was raised and a public awareness raising exercise to inform the public of their responsibility to reduce water pollution. The administration was keen to raise the profile of such issues and would look to consider in the integrated wetlands decision.*
- *The work of practitioners with children during the lockdown was raised. Tribute was paid to teachers and officers who worked with children and the manner in which they had adapted to circumstances under the lockdown and the use of new ways of working.*
- *The influence the acquisition of the Maylord centre could exert over the regeneration of Hereford was raised and the cultural and community opportunities it presented. The centre could be converted for social, cultural use or commerce. Ownership of the site meant that there might be the opportunity for the development through the Towns Fund if the Board managing the fund allocated investment to the site. The cabinet member commissioning, procurement and assets explained that no concerns regarding the purchase had been raised with the portfolio holder, the acquisition had not been called in and the decision had concerned the acquisition of the leasehold of the site. The social value of the site included the role it could play in the health and wellbeing of Herefordshire residents, promoting tourism, cultural initiatives and providing retail space for small business.*
- *Will the council consider other, similar opportunities to the purchase of the Maylords centre as they become available in Hereford city centre and would they be 'not for profit'? The council was not seeking to become a property company particularly as the capital budget was stretched but there may be merit in the purchase of other individual sites. The term 'not for profit' implied a charitable arrangement; the Maylord centre was commercially viable but the council had placed an emphasis on the social value of the site.*

66. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDERS

Motion 1 – Tree Strategy

In moving the motion Councillor Christy Bolderson made the following points:

- *The motion would assist the council in moving to net zero carbon emissions and enhance the natural environment for the benefit of local residents. It supported efforts at the council to address the climate emergency.*
- *The motion called for the increase in tree coverage and improvement in arrangements for the management and protection of trees in the county.*
- *Similar tree planting strategies existed in other local authority areas including Surrey, Cornwall and Bristol.*
- *Trees absorbed carbon dioxide and water. Tree planting would contribute to efforts to reduce carbon and protect against flooding.*
- *Trees had beneficial health and wellbeing impacts.*
- *A draft strategy from 2014 existed which together with the consideration of the steering groups could form the basis of a strategy.*

- The motion was timely with an England tree strategy under consultation.
- Planning policies at the council needed to be strengthened to take account of the protection of trees.

The following principal points were raised during the debate:

- The motion was supported but action was required in place of words.
- The enthusiasm for planting trees in the motion was welcomed and the executive would work with the mover of the motion to implement the proposals.
- The motion outlined the need for tree protection as well as tree planting which was an important complement.
- It was important to acknowledge the wider ecological challenge; the proposals in the motion were a positive contribution but would not address the challenge alone.
- A tree planting programme was planned for winter 2020.
- It was important that appropriate trees were planted in the right places.
- Council land could be used to plant trees but a consideration of the cost of maintenance was required.

Councillor Christy Bolderson, as the mover of the motion, closed the debate and explained that there was overall enthusiasm to plant and protect trees.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried by a simple majority.

RESOLVED: That

We call upon the executive to expedite the delivery of a detailed tree strategy for the county. A 2014 draft document exists that might provide the basis for a new strategy which will reinforce our commitment to the environment and align with our declaration of a climate emergency.

The Government is currently consulting on an England Tree Strategy and we ask for the council to respond to this consultation.

Furthermore, in the interim and as a matter of urgency, we ask the executive to consider what can be done to protect existing trees and to take immediate action by planting, maintaining and protecting trees in order to have established growth by 2030.

Motion 2 – Building back better; a green and fair recovery from coronavirus

In moving the motion Councillor Chowns made the following principal points:

- The motion was intended to unite the Council around principles to help respond to the pandemic.
- The motion acknowledged the devastating impact of coronavirus.
- The motion also looked forward to the type of recovery that the Council sought on green and fair principles.
- Residents had spoken positively about the community spirit that had been in evidence during the lockdown and a desire that this was sustained during the recovery.

In seconding the motion Councillor Alan Seldon explained that the recovery should be swift, economically viable and environmentally sound.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED: That

In light of the coronavirus crisis of recent months, we:

- **Fully recognise, and express our deep sorrow over, the devastating impact of coronavirus on local people's lives and livelihoods;**
- **Express our heartfelt thanks to all who have worked so hard to care for others and keep essential services going;**
- **Reaffirm our determination to improve the lives of all Herefordshire residents, based on the three County Plan pillars of environment, community, and economy;**
- **Welcome the recent commitments to the principles of 'building back better' and a 'green recovery' that have been expressed across the political spectrum, including by central government and its local representatives;**
- **Ask the executive to integrate these principles into all its decisions; and to work with all parts of the community to promote a green and fair recovery;**
- **Recognise the need to ensure that partnerships are strengthened across all sectors in public life in Herefordshire so that all partners are engaged in working together to achieve this common goal, because we cannot do it alone;**
- **Urge central government to provide the resources needed to sustain local services and to invest in Herefordshire's green recovery as we work together to build back better.**

The meeting ended at 2.30 pm

Chairperson

Appendix 1 - Questions from members of the public and supplementary questions

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mr Willmont, Hereford	The Council have/are about to commission One Creative Environments Ltd to progress a master plan for development of the North Magazine. In preparing this masterplan what account will be taken of the remaining former munitions factory structures in the area. These include the Blast Walls (and their access paths that remain), the above ground air raid shelters and the loading dock. These are, notwithstanding that they are not Listed Buildings, historic structures which should be preserved as the last remnants of the ROF. Please confirm that there will be a public consultation process once the masterplan is produced?	Cabinet member environment, economy and skills
Response: One Creative Environments Ltd have been commissioned to advise on how best to build out the development platform that has already been created at the North Magazine site at Hereford Enterprise Zone. This is primarily about engineering the infrastructure – such as access roads, utilities and drainage – that is needed to open up the site for businesses to invest and build. One Creative Environments Ltd have full knowledge of the presence and location of the former munitions factory structures at the North Magazine and the importance that Hereford Enterprise Zone and the Council has put on them remaining. They know that none of the infrastructure solutions that they propose are permitted to impact on those structures – which are all situated outside the development platform area that is the focus of this project. Given that all the structures are to the north of the site and the infrastructure will need to connect in from the south, this should be straightforward to achieve. It is not intended to carry out further public consultation on this technical piece of work required to enable the development of this large industrial site.			
PQ 2	Mr Peel, Hereford	In 2019 the newly elected Herefordshire Council delayed plans to build a Bypass that, after years of planning and deliberation, would have finally taken traffic away from the City Centre setting up the conditions that could realise a cycle and walking friendly City Centre. Since then the Administration has provided little regarding how it intends to remove traffic from the City Centre less suggesting introducing cycle lanes. Now all the funding opportunities for a Bypass have been lost and removing sections of road to create cycle lanes will compound the longstanding congestion issues. What is the Council's plan to remove traffic from the City Centre now the Bypass will not be built and traffic will continue to be reliant on the route through the City Centre using the single road bridge over the river Wye?	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
Response: Thank you for your question Mr Peel. Your definition of bypass 'plans' is an interesting one, as is your understanding of our City's traffic congestion. For clarity, when we arrived as a new administration, after 12 years of Conservative control – a period which saw no measurable improvements in congestion as far as I			

and many others could see – we were not in a position to start building any new roads and we had no completed business cases for either the SWTP or HTP. There were matters that prevented immediate progression, even before you consider the electorate mandate we were given at the ballot box to consider alternative approaches to local transport networks and congestion. It is also important to note that latest figures show that only 7% of traffic through Hereford is completely through traffic with an origin and destination outside the city. All other trips have either an origin or destination within the city and 40% of traffic is entirely internal.

I took the decision last year to pause and review the bypass project because I was concerned that the road scheme as part of the Hereford Transport Package was not compatible with the climate change challenge and the previous Conservative Council's declaration of a climate emergency. It is my view that there are other options that could deliver transport (including congestion) and growth objectives and given the lasting impact of major road schemes I believe it is imperative that these should be considered. Therefore I authorised a review to commence earlier this year which is anticipated to finish in the Autumn.

This review is essential to ensure that the council's decision making is fully informed by the latest information and best practice. It is incumbent on the council to ensure that projects are consistent with the council's declaration of a climate emergency and will contribute to reducing the carbon output of the county whilst also addressing the transport problems of the city and supporting economic growth. Whilst the review is being carried out the council will continue to develop and deliver active travel projects to encourage a shift of travel mode and reduce congestion.

Supplementary question:

Thank you for the response, if the review into the proposed routes is due in Autumn, what date will the outputs be available and anticipating a negative view, in the meantime what other measures have been considered other than the removal of road space for cycle lanes?

Cabinet member response:

Many other measures have been considered to remove traffic from Hereford including initiatives to promote walking and cycling. A written response would be provided.

Appendix 2 - Questions from members of the council

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 1	Councillor Kema Guthrie, Sutton Walls	I was told by Balfour Beatty at the recent Members' Briefing that "If a Parish can fund a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) then we can start the process through Community Commissioning". Sutton St. Nicholas Parish Council have applied for a TRO and can demonstrate that they are able to fund the project but Balfour Beatty have only put them on a list! What's the problem, what's holding things up?	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
Response: <p>Thank you for your question Cllr. Guthrie. I appreciate that the matter of this TRO has been the subject of some discussion. As I understand the correspondence has to date covered funding of this order from developer contributions but this money has not yet been released for this purpose. The timescale for delivery is therefore limited until these funds are released and available. If the parish wish to progress this TRO using parish funds the Community Commissioning process would enable this but would require parish council funding to deliver in this way. I am advised that an application has not been made to progress in this way but if this is intended then a Community Commissioning request should be made to BBLP to begin this process and ensure delivery of the TRO is not further delayed until the developer funding is released. I am also happy to discuss with the parish either the Section 106 or Community commissioning route further asap.</p>			
Supplementary question: <p>The parish council have the funds to progress the TRO and are not reliant on section 106 contributions which was confirmed in an email to balfour beatty living places (BBLP) on 13 February. It was queried why BBLP had not started the process or sent the community commissioning forms to the parish council.</p>			
Cabinet member response: <p>There was some confusion concerning whether a technically correct application had been submitted. An officer would be in contact with the Councillor Guthrie to discuss the situation.</p>			
MQ 2	Councillor Louis Stark, Ross West	In February Cllr. Symonds' sensible motion for a £3m fund for investment in market towns' public realm, to address under-investment as a consequence of spending skewed to Hereford and busier A/B roads, was lost.	Leader

		<p>Since then, a cabinet support role has been created to work with town councils and parishes to enhance local services/assets, develop shared service partnership models, and enable parishes to have an active role in delivering and managing local priorities and assets. While laudable, what we have as usual is focused on Hereford, through the creation of a Hereford Town Deal Board to lead on a bid for £25m for Hereford city.</p> <p>In that light, can you confirm exactly what performance targets the cabinet support role has, including timescales for delivery and how market towns will be engaged?</p>	
<p>Response:</p> <p>Thank you Cllr Stark for your question which is very timely.</p> <p>Part of the support role is to work with town councils and parishes to enhance local services and assets, develop a shared service partnership model, and enable parishes to have an active role in delivering or managing local priorities and assets.</p> <p>Cllr Bartlett is especially qualified given her work over many years in Leominster. She worked with fellow Leominster Town Councillors in a number of ways including the challenges of taking on public toilets in two locations when they were closed by the previous administration, investing in a new Town Council multi hub premises and bringing the Tourist Information Centre in-house, taking on assets including public open spaces and play areas, investment in new play equipment through grant and Section 106 awards, grass cutting and planning for better biodiversity management of open spaces and appropriate verges. Leominster Council encouraged taking part in annual public consultation and participatory budgeting every year, to shape residents priorities for the town and parish of Leominster.</p> <p>Of particular note is the work she has done in securing the award of £1.8m of Heritage Action Zone funding to Leominster which will be the subject of a Cabinet decision at its meeting on 23 July. In appointing Cllr Bartlett I am hopeful that opportunities will be opened up for other Market Towns, drawing on her experience of pulling together the economic, social and environmental plans and aspirations Leominster has, into a coherent business case suitable for attracting grant and inward investment money.</p> <p>Your question refers to the Town Deal Board which is a project specifically for the City of Hereford. This is a central government offering. In November 2019 government selected 101 towns across England, including Hereford, for Stronger Towns Funding, with the potential to access up to £25m to enable the regeneration and growth of towns and cities. A requirement of accessing the funding is to form a Town Board, and to develop a Town Investment Plan. The board has now been formed, and work will commence on the Town Investment Plan for submission to government in January 2021.</p>			

I have continued the initiative begun by Cllr Lester to have half yearly Parish Summits to which Market Town Councillors are invited. The purpose is to give a voice to, and engage with, representatives of all Parishes and Market Towns. We have a Parish Summit meeting planned for 23rd July 2020 to highlight parish's responses to the Covip-19 virus, focusing on community resilience, recovery and renewal.

For market towns we have invited representatives to attend an Economic Development Forum on 22nd July 2020. The purpose of this initial meeting is to initiate the process of developing Market Town Economic Development Investment Plans. Following this we intend to hold individual market town meetings.

Recognising the critical role market towns play in terms of employment and access to community services, earlier this year the council allocated £14m in the capital programme to enable the development of business space and employment land in the towns. The development of these Investment Plans for each town will identify their growth needs and opportunities, providing a basis for prioritising how the funds can be best utilised to support each area.

To complete the picture we now have regular meetings with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Hereford to exchange information on projects and share views.

So far as performance targets are concerned I, and previous Leaders I am sure, have very motivated cabinet and cabinet support who know what they want to achieve. Their commitment together is to deliver the County Plan, with a view to being re-elected at the next election.

How long it will take to develop Economic Development Investment Plans for The Market Towns will depend on the enthusiasm of the participants. Cllr Bartlett, Cllr Chowns and I look forward especially to working with the Ward and Parish Councillors for Ross who have no shortage of enthusiasm. If Ross would like to have other regular meetings with me and other cabinet members I am sure this could be arranged, but I am hopeful that the meetings to discuss the Economic Development will enable a good dialogue to take place making such additional meetings unnecessary.

Supplementary question:

Why was Leominster the only market town involved in the bidding for the high street heritage action zone fund?

Leader's response:

A written response would be provided.

Response sent on 31 July 2020:

The decision to enter Leominster into the first stage of the linked Heritage Action Zone scheme was made by the cabinet member for Economic Development under the previous administration. This decision was based on an assessment of which market town best met the English Heritage criteria at that time.

MQ 3	Councillor Roger Phillips, Arrow	<p>In the interests of pedestrian safety due to the extremely narrow footway of the highway bridge and high level of traffic on the B4362 (4,000 per day including 1,000 HGVs); Shobdon Parish Council has identified the provision of a pedestrian crossing at Tanbridge a community priority. I have been working with them and Balfour Beatty in order to provide this important project which will be paid for out of the parish precept.</p> <p>Given its proximity to the existing road bridge we require Balfour Beatty to sign off the works. I wrote to the Cabinet Member on the 8th June with a gentle reminder on the 29th June. Can the Cabinet member confirm he is willing for the Council to cover the design costs so that this scheme can progress?</p>	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
<p>Response:</p> <p>Thank you Cllr Phillips for you question and apologies for any delay in getting back to you. For future clarity – and courtesy - if you are requiring a direct response, which I always do my best to provide members, it is best to address me by name rather than ‘Dear All’ with my name third on the list in the address bar’ – it helps me to understand how much of my time and intervention you are requiring or whether you are simply copying me in on discussion with officers.</p> <p>I’d like to start by congratulating the parish for the work they have undertaken. It is a great credit to them that they have taken this responsibility upon themselves and a source of concern that we as an authority cannot do more to support such initiatives financially. Unfortunately, as you well know, substantial cuts by the Conservative governments – cuts shamefully supported by both our MPs in the voting chamber – have left us considerably less funded as a rural authority, losing £60 million a year (£90 million if adjusted for inflation) with the almost complete withdrawal of the Revenue Support Grant for example, making it harder and harder to support residents as the physical fabric of our communities continues to erode and decline. This makes it challenging for authorities to undertake their statutory responsibilities let alone support requests or initiatives like this.</p> <p>That all said and done – and apologies for appearing political but it is important to be honest – I am determined that parishes such as Shobdon, that are prepared to do so much of the heavy lifting themselves, should have that determination and commitment matched by the local authority and I am happy to agree to a site meeting as a matter of priority, with further detailed discussion following that on the best way to proceed to enable the parish to achieve its ambition of a separate foot crossing.</p>			
Supplementary question:			

The offer of a site meeting and detailed discussions were welcomed but it was felt that this happened at the virtual meeting on 8 June. What outcomes of the meeting were unacceptable that required further discussions?

Cabinet member response:

The cabinet member was unaware of the meeting and would follow up the outcomes from it.

MQ 4	Councillor Nigel Shaw, Bromyard and Bringsty	<p>Holden Aluminium Technologies have announced their closure in my ward. The loss of 50 direct jobs is distressing news for Bromyard. Additional to the loss of livelihoods for the workforce, living locally and shopping in the town, there will be the knock on effects of their loss of purchasing power for retailers already suffering from the economic effects of Covid.</p> <p>Bromyard's recycling centre was late to open, it's library remains indefinitely shut, the council's housing development on it's old depot site has been mothballed yet the council invests £600k in Hereford's theatre and ignores requests for capital assistance from Bromyard's Conquest Theatre for their plans. This administration throws £4.5m of council funds at a moribund shopping centre in the centre of Hereford, but what initiatives are they bringing forward to encourage economic investment and hope in market towns like Bromyard?</p>	Cabinet member environment, economy and skills
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Response:

I and all my colleagues were very saddened to hear of Holden Aluminium Technologies' announcement last week. During these unprecedented times we recognise that businesses across Herefordshire are facing significant challenges and are having to make some very difficult choices about their future. The council has been doing all it can to support businesses during this difficult period. We have paid out over £56 million of central government grant funding to 4,825 businesses in Herefordshire; we launched a Discretionary Grant Scheme; provided online training on subjects such as planning your finances; secured funding to support the recovery of the visitor economy, and provided advice and guidance to hundreds of businesses.

In planning for recovery of the local economy it is essential that we support both our city and our market towns to thrive. They all play a critical role in terms of employment and access to community services.

To take your points in order:

Re the recycling centre: The approach to reopening household recycling centres across the county has been phased recognising the restrictions imposed by government in response to Covid-19 and the primary need to ensure the safety of both staff operating the sites and the public. This required detailed planning on a site by site basis and the Bromyard site was opened as soon as possible earlier this month with appropriate social distancing arrangements in place.

Re the library: Council staff are working closely with Halo to secure the re-opening of Bromyard's Library, located within the Leisure Centre, to ensure the safety of customers and staff in accordance with Covid-19 guidelines.

Re the Courtyard in Hereford: The council has agreed to loan (not give) £611k to the Courtyard Theatre to enable their continued successful growth, helping create the conditions to attract people to live, work, learn, visit and invest in the county.

Re the Conquest Theatre in Bromyard: We are keen to do what we can to support the cultural sector across the county and I know Cllr Davies is in communication with the Conquest Theatre and is looking forward to supporting them. She is currently arranging a visit where they will be able to discuss their plans. This administration is fully committed to supporting the arts in Herefordshire hence why we removed the previous budget saving of £250,000 savings target in this year's budget.

Regarding the Council's purchase of Maylord Orchards: This purchase was made in order to ensure that a strategically important site in the centre of Hereford did not further fall into disrepair with increasing numbers of vacant units and declining footfall. The council has proactively intervened to prevent such a decline, and secure this strategic site so that it can help drive the transformation of the city, to the benefit of all our residents, for many years to come. The Maylords Orchards site a) is a going concern that 'washes its face' financially; b) provides us in the short term with excellent opportunities to proactively support post-Covid recovery in the city centre, and c) offers exciting long-term opportunities for regeneration of the city centre. As I reported to councillors last month, Hereford is one of 101 towns across the country that have each been invited by central government to apply for up to £25 million of investment. The newly-formed Hereford Town Deal Board is currently working to develop a Town Investment Plan for our city.

This administration has always been deeply committed to supporting economic development in the market towns. That is why, several weeks ago, I pushed for initiation of Market Town Economic Development Investment Plans to begin. You may recall that, earlier in the year, the council allocated £14 million in the capital programme to enable the development of business space and employment land in the towns – precisely because we recognise the importance of this work. We have now launched the process of working with the town councils, ward members and local residents to establish Economic Development Investment Plans for each market town. These will identify investment needs and development opportunities, and will a) enable us to prioritise how the earmarked funds can be best utilised to support each area, and b) identify viable projects for which further funding can be proactively sought. A meeting with the town councils is already scheduled for the 22 July to commence this process, and town-specific meetings will follow shortly afterwards. We have set aside £200k to support the process of developing these investment plans over the coming 18 months and I am very much personally committed to supporting this process. While central government is offering funds only for Hereford City, we as an administration are proactively working, using our own resources, to support the market towns – because we recognise that they play such a vital role in our local economy and community.

Supplementary question:

There was concern that there was no date for the reopening of Halo in Bromyard. Would the cabinet member support a review of the capital spending plans to evidence if there was a fair allocation of investment in the market towns?

Cabinet member environment, economy and skills response: The council was committed to equal treatment across the county, the market town economic development investment plans was evidence of the approach of the administration to a fairer allocation of funding for improvements. It was a matter for scrutiny to determine what issues were considered.			
Cabinet member commissioning, procurement and assets: A water issue at Halo in Bromyard was preventing the reopening of the centre. Plans were being progressed to utilise an alternative building for a click and collect service for library books.			
MQ 5	Councillor Barry Durkin, Old Gore	<p>At June's cabinet meeting part of the statement on proposed active travel measures by the Member for Infrastructure and Transport was false; viz '<i>....if the council does not implement them, the government are going to do it for us</i>'. I believed this an untruthful statement and thus misleading the residents of Herefordshire. The DoT subsequently verified, in writing "<i>....it is not the case that the Department will step in itself to do the works if the council fails to do so</i>".</p> <p>Leader would you agree with me that any untruthful statement does not represent the expected personal qualities required to underpin essential ethical standards in public life? Such statements do nothing to give confidence to the residents of Herefordshire on decisions now and in the future and thus undermines confidence in the council and impairs the credence of the administration.</p>	Leader
Response: The Cabinet member made this reference after reading this article in the respected industry journal https://www.transport-network.co.uk/Councils-wait-on-details-of-250m-allocation-but-warned-they-must-act/16633 which describes that " <i>councils are forced to make the changes and central government could step in to take powers away from councils to ensure interventions are made</i> ", "according to legal advice received by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Cycling and Walking". The statement made by the cabinet member to the June meeting was made based on the above information which was what the cabinet member honestly understood to be the position.			

When the DFT made its announcement it did not contain this reference. At the time of the cabinet member's statement he was not aware of this omission. The cabinet member accepts that the assumption he made was incorrect, apologises for providing information which wasn't accurate and thanks Mr Bill Wiggin MP for writing to the department for clarity.

Supplementary question:

How may the council and residents of Herefordshire be reassured that statements on which decisions based will be based on verifiable facts and sound judgement? Clarification was sought on the element of the original question concerning public life.

Leader's response:

The issue of public life was being addressed. The cabinet member made the statement in the honest belief that it was true which was entirely appropriate.

Cabinet member infrastructure and transport response:

The cabinet member explained that the advice that was being issued was being updated rapidly but he had made a mistake and apologised.