

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Thursday 28 March 2024 at 2.30 pm

Cabinet Members Physically Present and voting:	Councillor Jonathan Lester, Leader of the Council (Chairperson) Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairperson)
	Councillors Graham Biggs, Harry Bramer, Barry Durkin, Carole Gandy, Ivan Powell, Philip Price and Pete Stoddart
Cabinet Members in remote attendance	Councillors <i>Cabinet members attending the meeting remotely, e.g. through video conferencing facilities, may not vote on any decisions taken.</i>

Cabinet support members in attendance Councillors Dan Hurcomb

Group leaders / representatives in attendance Councillors Liz Harvey, Ellie Chowns, Terry James and Bob Matthews

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance Councillors Toni Fagan, Liz Harvey, Ellie Chowns

Officers in attendance: P Walker, A Lovegrove, J Coleman (Secretary), R Cook, C Porter, H Hall, D Webb (Secretary), S Cann (Secretary), M Averill, H Doyle, Hancock and G Pickford

97. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Louis Stark.

98. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ivan Powell declared an interest in item 11 (New Road Strategy for Hereford) in relation to his role as Chairman of Herford Rugby Club. Councillor Powell stated he would remove himself from the meeting during the discussion on the item.

Councillor Dan Hurcomb - for the purpose of transparency - declared that he was employed by National Highways, which was referenced in the report for item 11 (New Road Strategy for Hereford).

Councillor David Hitchiner, in relation to comments he intended to make during the discussion on item 11 (New Road Strategy for Hereford), declared that his residence was 700 meters from the proposed western roundabout.

99. MINUTES

Resolved: **That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 February 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.**

100. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 13 - 24)

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 1 to the minutes.

101. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS (Pages 25 - 26)
Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 2 to the minutes.

102. REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES
There were three reports from scrutiny committees for consideration at this meeting.

103. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: CORPORATE PARENTING SERVICE AND CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

(a) Recommendations of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee:
Corporate Parenting Service and Corporate Parenting Board

*Recommendations of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee:
Corporate Parenting Service and Corporate Parenting Board*

The chairperson for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee (CYPSC) detailed that the meeting in March 2024 had focused on the Corporate Parenting Service and in particular the Corporate Parenting Board. The CYPSC felt that the workings of the board weren't very accessible to either councillors or members of the public. It was suggested that the board's website could provide greater accountability by including a quarterly report showing information such as the board's progress, responsibilities and attendance records.

The second recommendation from the CYPSC related to building on and extending opportunities to write letters and cards celebrating the success of Herefordshire Council's looked-after children.

The leader thanked the committee and stated that the recommendations would be noted and responded to by the executive in due course.

104. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONNECTED COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: THE POLICY, PRIORITISATION AND DELIVERY OF SECTION 106 FUNDING

(b) Recommendations of the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee: The policy, prioritisation and delivery of section 106 funding

Recommendations of the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee: The policy, prioritisation and delivery of section 106 funding

The chairperson for the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee (CCSC) detailed that the meeting in February 2024 had focused on scrutinising the question of section 106 contributions. The CCSC had looked at two aspects, the first was the strategic focus - the process that decided what sort of projects would go forward for consideration for section 106 funding and how the process of consultation with parishes worked. The second was looking at the implementation of spending section 106 contributions.

In relation to recommendation 1 from the committee, the chairperson of CCSC highlighted concerns that the amounts for section 106 contributions had been set in a 2008 policy document, which had not specified a need for in-line with inflation increases in contributions.

The committee chairperson also highlighted the need for greater involvement with parishes and local residents in setting priorities for section 106, by improving parish councillor and resident engagement with the community wish lists.

The leader thanked the committee for the recommendations and for shining a light on an important function of the council. Recommendations would be noted and responded to by the executive in due course.

105. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD: HOOPLE LTD
(c) Recommendations of the Scrutiny Management Board: Hoople Ltd

Recommendations of the Scrutiny Management Board: Hoople Ltd

The chairperson of the Scrutiny Management Board (SMB) detailed that the meeting in March 2024 had focused on Hoople Ltd and how it operated and worked with the council, and how it was overseen. The majority of the recommendations were to the shareholder committee of the council and the SMB had been disappointed to learn that the shareholder committee had yet to meet,

The leader thanked the SMB for its recommendations. The cabinet members voted unanimously to note the recommendations and for a response to be provided in due course.

106. HEREFORDSHIRE AND WORCESTERSHIRE ALL AGE AUTISM STRATEGY 2024-2029

The cabinet member for adults, health and wellbeing provided an overview of the background legislation, explaining that the autism Act of 2009 was the only disability-specific legislation in England. It provided statutory guidance supporting the NHS and local authorities in implementing a local strategy to improve: staff training, identification and diagnosis and transition planning when people moved from children to adult services, employment and criminal justice.

The cabinet member highlighted that in September 2022, work had started on an all-age strategy, in line with the National Autism Strategy, for the Integrated Care System (ICS) in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Initial co-production of work across the two counties had involved: autistic people, carers and professionals, workshops and online surveys (with over 400 responses received).

A breakdown of the strategy priorities (as set out in para 7 of the [main report](#)) was provided and it was explained that progress would be monitored at the ICS Developing Services for Autistic People Board with oversight from the ICS Learning Disability and Autism Programme Assurance Board, with annual reports being presented to the Health and Well-being Boards in both counties.

The strategy aimed to deliver positive outcomes and improve lives in a number of different areas across local communities. The strategy would provide the platform to elevate the profile of autism and would aim to facilitate significant and meaningful change by enabling the best start in life for children and good mental well-being throughout life.

Cabinet members praised the manner in which personalised knowledge and a focus on lived experience underpinned and enriched the strategy.

Group leaders welcomed and supported the strategy and praised the emphasis that it placed on: the voice of the individual, lived experience and references to academic studies / sources. The accessible and readable format of the report was also welcomed.

A number of suggestions were put forward by group leaders, including numbering rather than bullet pointing high level aims and key actions. A request that the strategy be followed up with an implementation plan was also made.

In response to the suggestions the cabinet member stated that bullet points would be replaced with numbering, if that was the preference. It was also explained that a detailed delivery/implementation plan was already in the pipeline.

The cabinet member for adults, health and wellbeing answered a final question from the cabinet members about how the strategy might help people experiencing issues between diagnosis and accessing services. It was explained that autism assessments were carried out by NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust and that actions to reduce waiting times were contained in the aims of the strategy.

**It was unanimously resolved that:
Cabinet**

- (1) Approves the Herefordshire and Worcestershire All Age Autism strategy, and**
- (2) Delegated authority be given to the Corporate Director for Community Wellbeing and the Corporate Director for Children and Young People to take all operational decisions that fall within the responsibility of Herefordshire Council to complete, as set out within this strategy.**

107. WYE VALLEY TRUST (WVT) INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP MODEL

The cabinet member for economy and growth provided an overview and update on the progress of the work to develop the education centre at the county hospital in Hereford. It was highlighted that officers from both Herefordshire Council and the Wye Valley Trust had been working together to deliver a full business case in the autumn. The project was an enabler for economic growth, providing an exemplar state-of-the-art teaching facility that would play a critical part in upskilling staff and supporting Herefordshire Council and the Wye Valley Trust to recruit and retrain staff.

The cabinet member for economy and growth highlighted there was greater clarity around the build costs and that Wye Valley Trust had been engaging with NHS England to increase the trust's CDEL limit.

It was also highlighted that whilst the centre would not be an asset of Herefordshire Council (as stated in the papers), the council would be working with the trust to minimize any environmental impact.

The cabinet member for finance and corporate services supported the project and described it as a win win/no brainer, which would grow the economy and create a highly qualified workforce, whilst being revenue neutral.

Group leaders acknowledged the importance of supporting investment in skills development within the health service, but raised concerns about the increasing costs involved with the project. It was noted that over the last 8 months, the estimated overall cost of the work had increased by 60% from the original £10.5 million. The loan requested from Herefordshire Council had risen from £6 million to £15 million, whilst during the same period the Wye Valley Trust component appeared to have nearly halved from £4.5 million to £2.5 million.

Concerns were raised that by the time the business case was available, costs could have potentially doubled again and several questions were asked in relation to establishing what factors had driven up the costs of the project. The wording of the report's terminology of an increase in value of the investment was noted as being unhelpfully bureaucratic.

Group leaders asked if similar projects had been operated elsewhere in the country and if they had been successful.

Group leaders also sought clarity as to whether the recommendation in the report was seeking approval for the increased costs of the project or for it to be noted.

Clarity was sought about the repayment terms and a question was asked about why the Wye Valley Trust was using the Council as a 'middle person' for a loan, when the money would still appear to be included in CDEL, rather than borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board.

The cabinet member for economy and growth, explained in response to questions from group leaders, that the Wye Valley Trust had assessed the project and was reporting a cost of £17.5 million, but that this was pending a full business case, which would be available in the autumn. The cabinet was not seeking to approve the loan today and was noting progress.

The cabinet member for transport and infrastructure supported the basis of the project in improving the skill set within Herefordshire, but was disappointed that the cost of the project seemed to be increasing without a clear explanation as to why, this was something the cabinet member hoped would become clearer when a full business case was available.

The cabinet member for finance and corporate services explained, in response to a question from group leaders, that a similar project had been successfully operated in the country and that Wychavon Council had funded a health centre with the NHS in Pershore.

It was unanimously resolved that:

- (a) Cabinet to note progress on the development of the business case to enable the development of an Education Centre at Hereford County Hospital and the potential increase of the capital investment up to £15million subject to final approval of business case and funding.**

108. FOURTH OFSTED MONITORING VISIT FEEDBACK

The leader opened the discussion by thanking the departing corporate director of children and young people for his hard work and dedication over what had been an extremely challenging two year period.

The cabinet member for children and young people provided an overview of the feedback from Ofsted following its fourth monitoring visit to Hereford's Children's Services on 21 and 22 February 2024.

It was explained that the areas covered by the visit were: children in care aged 16 and 17 years old, and care leavers. The Ofsted inspectors had acknowledged that improvements continued to be made, but noted that the pace of change wasn't swift enough and the quality of practice needed to be more consistent.

The cabinet member for children and young people pointed out that two member briefings - regarding the Ofsted feedback - had been delivered on 27 March and that questions and observations from members had been recorded and would be reflected on.

It was pointed out that during the member briefings, discussions had taken place about contributions from partners, and the need to work with and challenge partners to improve the timeliness of service deliveries.

The cabinet member for children and young people read out the headline findings as detailed in [Appendix A](#) of the report.

The inspectors had acknowledged that significant additional funding had been put into the service and agreed for the next few years, but that this had not yet resulted in significant improvement.

It was highlighted that Ofsted inspectors had provided verbal feedback prior to the formal report and the service had already started to respond to this.

The cabinet member pointed out that the improvement plan, which responded to the findings of the inspection of local authority children services in July 2022, had been reviewed and a draft refresh of the plan for the year 2024/25 had been presented and considered by the Improvement Board and its members on the 20th of March 2024, with a view to presenting the refreshed plan at the cabinet meeting on 25 April 2024.

Cabinet members had no questions regarding the report.

Group leaders expressed disappointment at the report and felt that it was another case of one step forward and one step back. It was noted that money, time, thought and effort had been put in to improving the service, but unfortunately this had not appeared to have changed things on the ground.

The group leaders praised the proactive engagement of the cabinet member for children and young people with families and within the directorate. There was also praise for the swift actions taken by the service in response to issues flagged up as requiring immediate action by the inspectors.

Concerns were raised about the quality of managerial guidance and direction given to personal advisors (PAs) and a question was asked about progress being made in relation to partnership working.

The Leader of the Council thanked the group leaders for their comments.

The cabinet member for children and young people responded to the question about managerial guidance and direction for personal advisors, by explaining that there was a public practice standard in place in terms of what was expected from staff and that managers were expected to comply with and enforce these standards.

Regarding partnership working, the cabinet member highlighted the 'Working Together 2023' statutory guidance published in December 2023, which identified the joint and equal responsibility of the local authority, health and police service to work together to safeguard and protect children. It was pointed out that the appropriate mechanism for holding conversations and making sure partners were sharing that joint and equal responsibility was via Herefordshire's Children Safeguarding Partnership.

The cabinet member for children and young people stated he would be meeting with the new Local Government Improvement Advisor for Herefordshire and the Scrutineer of Herefordshire's Children Safeguarding Partnership to discuss how to make improvements in a timely fashion.

In conclusion, the cabinet member acknowledged the pace of improvement had been frustratingly slow and that there was a requirement for more consistent practice.

However, it was important to note that there have not been any immediately at risk children elevated within the service since the first monitoring visit.

It was unanimously resolved that:

(a) Cabinet receive and note the feedback from Ofsted Inspectors' Monitoring Visit letter, at appendix A.

109. OBJECTIVES FOR NEW HEREFORDSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

The cabinet member for transport and infrastructure gave an overview of the report, in which it was explained that the Local Transport Plan had had a rocky start due to the delay and subsequent cancellation of a new Department of Transport process document.

The link and connectivity between the Local Plan and the Local Transport Plan was highlighted. Referring to the key considerations in the main report, the cabinet member also noted the alignment between the Local Transport Plan and other strategies such as the Big Economic Plan and the joint Health and Well-being Strategy.

It was pointed out that producing a Local Transport Plan was a statutory requirement that needed to be met in order to secure funding from the Department of Transport.

The cabinet member for transport and infrastructure explained that it was hoped the Local Transport Plan would be coming forward in late summer for consideration and drew attention to and read out the recommended objectives of the plan as set out in [para 19 of the main report](#).

The cabinet members welcomed the inclusion of objective (III) at para 19, which focused on tackling climate change and protecting and enhancing the natural built environment. The alignment of environmental themes running through many large plans and the focus on environmental impact at para 21 and 22 were also supported.

The cabinet members noted that objective (I) at para 19 regarding supporting a thriving and prosperous economy, chimed with the views of speakers at last year's County Council Conference, who had suggested that infrastructure was fundamental to growth.

Group leaders discussed the order of the objectives in the report. There was support for a thriving and prosperous economy, but it was felt that the objectives didn't focus heavily enough on people and how transport needs and requirements varied around the county. It was felt that issues such as road safety/reducing road deaths and climate change should be highlighted more specifically within the plan.

Group leaders felt that stronger language in relation to climate change and commitments to net zero was required to ensure that the Local Transport Plan was compatible with national policy.

Disappointment was expressed about the apparent side-lining of recommendations from the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee (CCSC) regarding engagement with stakeholders on the Local Transport Plan. It was stressed that there was a need to actively reach out and listen to people from across the county about what they needed from strategy documents.

It was noted that there were aspects of each of the recommended objectives that contributed to delivering sustainable communities and there was a need for articulation on how the Local Transport Plan could achieve this ambition.

The cabinet member for transport and infrastructure clarified that the objectives within the report were not listed in any particular order of importance. It was also stated that meeting all of the differing transport needs of residents around the county would be difficult to achieve, but that the plan would aim to meet as many of those needs as was possible.

In response to comments on climate change, the cabinet member pointed to a report from carbon.org about CO2 levels in the world being lower now than in Victorian times. The cabinet member stated that he was unclear whether anything said on the climate subject was accurate or not.

In response to comments on sustainable communities, the cabinet member stated the intention to build on those ambitions as the plan progressed and that ambitions would be shaped by input from people who were asked to consult on what their views were for their communities.

As a closing comment, the cabinet member for transport and infrastructure pointed out that the bypass was a specific project, with its own set of objectives, which would differ from those of the Local Transport Plan.

It was unanimously resolved that:

- (a) Cabinet approves the objectives (as set out at para 19) for the new Local Transport Plan as recommended in the report and**
- (b) Cabinet notes changes to the DfT's anticipated timetable (as set out at paras. 9 and 10) for producing the new Local Transport Plan.**

110. NEW ROAD STRATEGY FOR HEREFORD

The cabinet member for transport and infrastructure provided background information and an overview of the report. It was explained that traffic congestion had been a problem in Hereford for many years, causing journey unreliability and negatively impacting the local economy, environment and health of local residents.

It was noted that the problems were recognised by the Council, Midlands Connect (the sub regional transport body) and National Highways (which was responsible for the A49).

It was highlighted that the official diversion route in the event of the closure of Greyfriars Bridge was 38 miles long, which created issues with network resilience far wider than the city itself.

It was also highlighted that the Herefordshire Economic Plan stated that the county had the lowest productivity of any county in England. Wages were 16% below the national average and traffic congestion created increased costs for business, discouraged investment and created difficulties for residents in accessing training, work, leisure and other services.

The cabinet member pointed out that the draft Local Plan had identified a need for thousands of new homes in the city and additional employment land to support the economy, but highway capacity limits were restricting the full development of key sites. It was stated that congestion on the A49 splits the city in two and that a road link would be an essential part of transport package that would include active travel measures. The cabinet member pointed out that any new road would need to support Cabinet's objectives to: deliver economic benefits, improve network resilience, detrunk the existing A49, deliver traffic benefits, support city centre improvements and support the draft Local Plan.

The cabinet member for transport and infrastructure acknowledged the undoubted merits of the strategic outline business case for the Eastern River Crossing and Link Road. However, following like-for-like comparisons carried out by officers and consultants, the Hereford Western Bypass remained Council policy and the report showed the Western Bypass to be more effective than the Eastern Crossing in addressing the Cabinet's objectives.

The Council was currently in the design and deliver stage for a number of grant funded active travel measures throughout the city, these measures would provide greater choice in how to travel, but would not improve the capacity or resilience of the road network. It was stated that the measure would benefit greatly from the detrunking of the A49, which would only be achievable through the adoption of the proposed Western Bypass.

The cabinet member for transport and infrastructure concluded by pointing out that the report identified both capital and revenue funding to progress both phases of the Hereford Western Bypass. Additionally, the Council had recently been notified of its allocation of over £100 million of local transport funding over a seven year period and was currently engaged with the Department of Transport on how to progress the scheme.

Cabinet members were invited to comment:

The cabinet member for economy and growth supported the strategy and felt that it would resolve road congestion issues, allow for affordable housing and encourage investment in the economy.

Confirmation was sought from the cabinet member for adults, health and wellbeing regarding the percentage of affordable housing that could be achievable on the potential housing land, which would be opened up by the building of the bypass. The cabinet member for transport and infrastructure stated that the figure in Hereford would be up to 35% of affordable homes.

The cabinet member for community and assets enquired, in relation to the proposed detrunking of the A49, what assurance would be given from the Department of Transport and National Highways to ongoing maintenance and funding of the road and particularly the bridge, should the Council add the road to its network.

The cabinet member for transport and infrastructure responded to the question by explaining that it would fall within the negotiations with the Council's funding partners. The majority of the development would be externally funded and as part of that, the question would arise about the detrunking and the responsibility of the road that was being detrunked. To be able to give the space and requirement to the city for other modal shift benefits the Council needed that space. The negotiations would determine what would be provided as a funding package and what state the road would be in when it was handed to the Council. The detrunking of the A465 was provided as an example of how a similar situation had been managed historically.

The cabinet member for finance and corporate services supported the Western Bypass proposal and believed that the reduced congestion would reduce costs for local businesses and create a better environment for local inward investment.

Cabinet members agreed that Hereford Council needed to be in control of its own destiny when it came to strategic infrastructure and advancing schemes that prioritise local requirements. The Council could not simply wait for other agencies to come up with schemes, such as duelling the A49 between Hereford and Ross-on-Wye, which was not currently planned.

The Leader of the council noted that consideration of road options in the past had been clear about the strategic value of going west and enquired whether the cabinet member for transport and infrastructure was surprised that the latest officer report had come back with the same conclusions.

In response, the cabinet member for transport stated that he was not surprised and noted that the latest report had been produced by a completely new set of officers, who had compared different schemes on a like-for-like basis and concluded that the Western Bypass project was the only scheme that would allow for the detrunking of the A49, which would provide the city centre with the space required for future active travel. Congestion had been plaguing the county for a very long time and there was no argument not to move forward.

Group leaders were invited to comment and give their group's views:

The group leader of the True Independents referred to a Department of Transport paper warning of dire congestion on access roads in UK towns and cities by 2027. Qualified engineers had warned that a road to the west of the county would increase congestion in the access roads to the Hereford city centre.

The group leader of the True Independents stated there was a need for joined-up working with local MPs to modernise the local rail network and public transport in general. It was suggested that running a bypass through the centre of 18,000 houses would increase carbon emissions, light and noise pollution and contradict objectives as set out in the Local Transport Plan.

The group leader for the True Independents emphasised the need for providing more services locally and proposed the modernisation of Ross-on-Wye Community Hospital and the creation of a new market town to the south of the county, which would reduce traffic flow into the city centre and also reduce medium and long travel distances in line with Local Transport Plan objectives.

The group leader of the Green Party agreed with Cabinet that traffic congestion was a problem (but at specific times) within the county and that doing nothing was not an option. However, the group leader noted that only two options had been considered and that this was a blinkered approach to resolving the problem.

Local people the group leader had engaged with were disillusioned about the idea of a bypass and were doubtful it would ever happen, the cost of £300 million and 15 year timescale involved in building the bypass was also of concern to residents. There was an appetite for solutions that would have an immediate impact on congestion.

The group leader for the Green Party suggested that funding released from the HS2 project could be used to fund quicker and cheaper projects, such as free school transport, which would reduce the number of vehicles on the roads at peak congestion times.

The group leader stated that at £300 million the proposal did not represent good value for money and pointed out that the report showed that the most significant journey reductions times would be just 2-4 minutes, which would 'not make a dent' in the congestion problem.

It was suggested that building more houses would exacerbate congestion in already clogged roads coming into the city from the west, and that the bypass might actually hamper productivity in the county, as people heading North to South and vice versa might avoid the city completely. It was also suggested that traffic currently going down

the M6 and M5 between North and South Wales would be attracted to the A49, which would adversely impact surrounding communities.

Concerns were raised that the cost for walking and cycling measures had been included in the Eastern Bridge proposal, but not the Western Bypass.

It was noted that para 84 of the report didn't contain any information on the actual carbon impacts of the proposal. The embodied and operational carbon impacts of building the bypass had been assessed back in 2020, and the question was asked, why, as a starting point, was information from reports that had already been conducted not being taken forward.

It was highlighted that no reference was made to the environmental performance for route options in the summary table at para 87, which compared the western and eastern routes and that this was requirement of the Department for Trade guidance.

The question was asked why the objectives in the bypass paper were not joined up with those set out in the Local Transport Plan.

The group leader for the Independents for Herefordshire described how strategic planning could assist in making informed decisions and balance out future risks and probabilities.

The Independents for Herefordshire recognised the work that had gone into preparing the decision, but were disappointed that the traffic modelling had not considered the impact of the Eastern River Crossing in combination with the Southern Link Road, as this would have been worthwhile in demonstrating that the eastern route would deliver greater improvement to the city's traffic troubles, in addition to being cheaper, quicker and easier to deliver than the western route.

It was also suggested that the eastern route would benefit the travel experience of people who lived and worked in and around the city, unlike the western route, which aimed mostly to improve the transit of vehicles wishing to avoid Hereford all together.

The group leader for the Independents for Herefordshire raised concerns that the City Masterplan was seemingly being ignored while important decisions were being made.

The group leader for the Liberal Democrats pointed out that 25 years ago the Hereford Times paper had printed a headline 'Go West' in relation to the proposed plans for a bypass and that the public were now sick of the prevarication going on over the bypass issue and just wanted it done.

The group leader for the Liberal Democrats suggested that Hereford needed to be a working place where young people could make a living and prosper. Young people wanted a vibrant economy and they were not going to get it if things carried on as they had been. Each of the market towns including Ross, Ledbury, Bromyard and Leominster had bypasses, and the question was asked why was it that Hereford did not have one, when there was overwhelming public support for it.

Councillor David Hitchiner was permitted by the Leader to speak on behalf of the Stoney Street Ward. It was pointed out that current plans for Clehonger roundabout only featured four arms, which would potentially necessitate a costly and disruptive rebuild to link it up to the western bypass if/when it was built. The Councillor asked the Cabinet if it agreed the roundabout needed to be looked at again and whether it would commission Aon to do the design work.

Councillor Hitchiner also highlighted data set out in para 69 of the report, which anticipated traffic increases of over 80% at Allensmore and Clehonger, with Madley

anticipated to see a reduction of 31%. An explanation for local residents as to what was behind those figures was requested.

On the subject of road safety, Councillor Hitchiner expressed concern about the impact on smaller villages around the county. It was noted that there was reference to the project increasing road safety in Hereford, but that information should also be provided on the impact for residents living outside of Hereford.

The Leader of the Council thanked the group leaders and Councillor Hitchiner for their contributions and gave an assurance that when Cabinet was in a position to make a decision about which strategic route to explore, then it would be able to address all of the issues that had been raised during the meeting.

The Leader of the Council acknowledged the merits of the Eastern link and noted that the Eastern Link shouldn't be referred to as a bypass, as unlike the Western route, the Eastern route cannot connect to the A49.

In response to the Leader's question the cabinet member for transport and infrastructure detailed the many issues he believed would be created by adopting the eastern route and stated that ultimately, based on his personal experience and guidance and data provided by Council officers, he had been reassured that the western proposal was the correct option to support.

It was unanimously resolved that Cabinet:

- (a) Agrees to recommence progress within the existing policy frameworks of the Hereford Western Bypass linking the A49 north and south of the city. Consisting of the Southern Link Road as Phase 1 and the Western Bypass as Phase 2 to realise the county's strategic housing and employment land growth critical to the Herefordshire economy, as set out in the report;**
- (b) Acknowledges the Strategic Outline Case report for the Eastern River Crossing and Link Road;**
- (c) Agrees to draw down and spend £10.3m of approved capital funding for Phase 1 of the Hereford Western Bypass (HWB) and £760,000 of revenue funding for Phase 2 of the HWB as included in this report at para 102 to 107; and**
- (d) Delegates authority to take all operational decisions during the development of the schemes to the Corporate Director for Economy and Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure and the Section 151 Officer.**

The meeting ended at 16:51

Chairperson

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 28 March 2024**Question 1****1. Mr A Morawiecki, Breinton****To: Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure**

“The Hereford Road Strategy clearly shows this Cabinet’s focus on road building and compares outcomes on tackling congestion against “Do Nothing”. Any significant investment in transport infrastructure requires projects to be assessed against what performs best out of public investment across a variety of modes of transport, not road building vs Do Nothing.

Public transport is accessible by people of all ages and abilities and so does not discriminate on age, ability or means. What is the impact on congestion & journey times in and around Hereford, particularly during peak time in school terms, by investing in expanding the public transport offer, particularly buses and reopening the station at Pontrilas?”

Answer: Cabinet Member, Transport and Infrastructure

The previous decision to stop work on the western bypass and pursue the Easter River Crossing and Link Road was taken after considering the Hereford Transport Strategy Review, carried out in November 2020. That review assessed the likely impact of a variety of transport options, including public transport, walking and cycling and road-building, against a wide range of objectives covering the climate emergency, the economy, the environment and society.

The analysis showed that, against those objectives, that no single option would meet all the desired outcomes. The review therefore combined various options into packages. The packages that included a new road crossing of the River Wye showed the greatest reduction in traffic levels and provided much improved resilience of the transport network, and the package including the Hereford Western Bypass performed best of all.

Plans for the Hereford Western Bypass will create the conditions to support more walking, cycling and use of public transport in the city.

Public transport use in Hereford and the rest of the county is among the lowest in the country. I would like to see more people using public transport but the challenge is meeting the annual revenue cost of providing and supporting the extra services needed. As you may know, our Bus Service Improvement Plan bid, submitted in 2021, was not supported by government, although we do have some additional funding through BSIP+ that we are investing to improve bus routes, times and frequencies.

The business case for reopening the rail station at Pontrilas was rejected by the Department for Transport in 2022. However, I believe that a new station has a role to play in a wider transport strategy and we will be working closely with partners to further investigate the case for the station.

Supplementary question

Hereford has not always had low bus use, as in 2001/02 over 2.5million journeys were by bus. However, when the frequency of commercial services was cut 50% by 2005/06 1million passenger journeys were lost. I am therefore heartened that the Council is looking to invest in improving bus services.

In October 2023 Cllr Price said that reopening Pontrilas station was a priority and this was reinforced by the Leaders report at the same time. However, I am unable to find any business case for this scheme on the council website so would he please provide the cost of the scheme and the impact the Pontrilas station reopening would have on reducing car use into Hereford?

Supplementary response

Thank you for the supplementary question. A strategic outline business case was submitted to the Department for Transport in December 2020 and was not successful. However, cabinet later in this meeting, is being asked to allocate funding of £50,000 to review the strategic outline business case, so as to progress this project further, it is only when developing the full business case that we will be able to consider the wider impacts on car use. Capital costs estimated at mid-2020 prices were £12.4 million and operating cost of £130,000 per year.

Question 2

2. Mrs. V Wegg-Prosser, Breinton

To: Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure

Noting that the New Road Strategy for Hereford (Cabinet item 11) makes no significant reference to the known substantial decreases in journey time around Hereford during school holidays, that the Hereford City Masterplan is being deferred to the distant future, and that the effectively timed-out Southern Link Road is being revived with no provision for active travel measures, what is the justification for favouring a 3.6km road across open countryside (using potentially the government's Local Transport Fund) rather than a strategic makeover for the Hereford Station transport hub as a gateway for sustainable economic growth, with its concomitant reduction in journey times around the City?

Thank you for your consideration.

Answer: Cabinet Member, Transport and Infrastructure

There are significant traffic reductions expected in the city as a result of the Hereford Western Bypass. I believe that the scale of the traffic reductions and improvements in journey times are the key to encouraging economic growth and tackling the barriers to businesses to improve productivity.

The reductions in traffic will also support active travel and bus priority measures that would help to improve connectivity to the new Transport Hub, which is currently being delivered using Levelling Up Funds from the Government and the Council's own capital funding investments.

Phase 1 of the Hereford Western Bypass – the Southern Link Road – will form part of a package of complementary measures that aim to support more walking, cycling and bus use in the city.

Question 3

3. James McGeown, Weobley

To: Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure

If I understand correctly there are plans to make the area in front of the railway station an integrated transport hub.

What other forms of transport are intended to be integrated with rail services to Hereford (county bus, city bus etc)?

At present the area is a mess and very unwelcoming for those leaving the train and arriving in Hereford.

The front of the building is totally hidden so could Lorries etc. be re-sited away from the front of the lovely Victorian building.

Answer: Cabinet Member, Transport and Infrastructure

The Transport Hub forms an integral part of the Council's work to improve access to sustainable transport in the city, linking trains with buses, taxis, bicycles and walking facilities. The proposed design will provide a mix of hard and soft landscaping as well as much needed shelter for bus users. Particular attention has focussed on preserving the view of the Grade II listed station building. The landscaping and lighting in the forecourt has been designed to ensure minimum obstruction of the building for users approaching the hub.

Supplementary question

The new Herefordshire Local Transport Plan objectives support active travel and the use of public transport. The Dilwyn DW20 Footbridge farce illustrates Council's inability to support active travel to Weobley. How about public transport, the last bus for Weobley departs Hereford integrated transport hub at 18:15, one minute later, the train from Birmingham Queen Elizabeth Hospital and Worcester arrives at 18:16. So, if travel back to Weobley is required you'd better finish your Birmingham business or hospital appointments early, you couldn't make this up.

Can the Council use the influence with this county bus operator, to have departures five minutes after the train arrives? Therefore creating an extra productive hour. If the simplest Integrations of transport hub are not possible, then the reasonable conclusion would be that the plan has fine words on many pages, but no deliverable substance. Thank you.

Supplementary response

Thank you for the question. I will ensure that officers take this up with the actual operators, because this is an operational issue. I find it absolutely incomprehensible that the last bus leaves a minute before the train arrives. We will take on-board your point and get officers to ensure that they have discussions with the train and bus

people concerned. When the transport hub comes online we will make sure that we don't have mishaps in timetables of this manner. Thank you for your question.

Question 4

4. Dr Nichola Geeson, Hereford

To: Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure

We read in the Hereford Times that Councillor Price has been “horrified” at the cost rise of an eastern road bridge to over £100 million. He prefers a bridge over the River Wye at Warham. However, this would need to be a high level bridge on pillars as the River Wye at that point is in a deep valley. As Warham is so rural, only reachable by narrow winding lanes, there would need to be lengthy specific access roads built for large construction traffic bringing in bridge-building cranes and materials including concrete. There must be preliminary costing figures for a western bridge available from previous bypass plans. How much would it now to cost to build just a western bridge, and construction access to it at Warham? Such a figure is needed to compare with the eastern bridging option.

Answer: Cabinet Member, Transport and Infrastructure

The costs for the bridges required for both the Hereford Western Bypass and the Eastern Link Road and River Crossing have been identified and included in the overall scheme costs in the Cabinet report.

The cost of the bridge, road and all other costs, including construction access, for Phase 2 of the Hereford Western Bypass is £201m at today's prices, and £232m when combined with Phase 1, the Southern Link Road. Cost estimates for the various options for the Eastern River Crossing and Link Road range from £84m to £158m at current prices, depending on the route and whether active travel measures are included alongside the road.

All road options and costs have been evaluated with The Western Bypass showing, more benefits in traffic reduction, better access to key housing and employment sites and the opportunity to de-trunk the A49 through the city – more than justifying the additional cost.

We will be working closely with the Department for Transport, Midlands Connect and National Highways to develop the business case and funding package.

Question 5

5. Peter McKay, Leominster

To: Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure

Will your strategy for the local transport plan include raising an integrated map showing our paths and highways both those maintained by Council and privately maintained,

together with our open spaces (with site boundaries), again both those maintained by Council and privately maintained, so that we may see where can go on one webpage?

Answer: Cabinet Member, Transport and Infrastructure

Whilst it is very early days in the planning for delivering the Local Transport Plan, I will take this idea on board and pass it to the teams responsible. We have recently added council owned play areas and property links to the Highways and Public Rights of Way Map which was in response to a previous request. I will ask the teams to investigate the feasibility and resources required to implement the potential to widen the scope of the data covered under the programme.

Supplementary question

Thank you for taking my suggestion 'on board', and may I ask that you draw the teams attention to the fact that sections of the Highways and Public Rights of Way Map can be printed, but sections of the Parks, Play Areas and Sports Pitches Map and Properties Map cannot be printed, and ask that development of this enables map sections to be printed facilitating constructive discussion?

Supplementary response

Thank you for the supplementary question. We strive to make Council information as accessible as possible and will investigate the practicalities of enabling personal printing thank you.

Question 6

6. Mr Banks, Hereford

To: Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure

The New Road Strategy for Hereford acknowledges that progressing the Hereford Western Bypass will strain the council's internal resources, requiring staff to dedicate significant time and effort to this complex infrastructure project. Given the desire to minimize reliance on costly external consultants, what steps will the Council take to ensure adequate in-house technical expertise and project management capabilities? What is the Council's strategy to leverage its own workforce and limit the need for external support, thereby reducing overall project costs? Additionally, how will succession planning and knowledge transfer be addressed to mitigate risks around key staff turnover that could otherwise necessitate even greater external consultant expenditure?

Answer: Cabinet Member, Transport and Infrastructure

I recognise the benefits of increasing the knowledge and expertise of our own staff and reducing dependence on consultants. I also understand the importance of our employees working alongside experts to ensure experience growth and knowledge transfer forms part of the programme.

The organisation has a 'grow our own' approach to existing internal resources through apprenticeships, training, development and offering up internal development

opportunities. I am expecting to grow our technical team in the future and I am reassured that we already have significant project management experience.

However, with such a large and complex scheme as the Hereford Western Bypass that requires specialist knowledge and expertise, we must rely on consultants to provide a significant proportion of the resources for the project, working in conjunction with the objectives above.

Supplementary question

Thank you for highlighting the council's efforts to develop internal resources and expertise while acknowledging the necessity of external consultants for the Hereford Western Bypass project. Given the importance of fiscal responsibility, could you elaborate on the measures in place to ensure that consultant costs remain within reasonable bounds and that value for money is achieved?

Additionally, how does the council plan to assess the effectiveness of these cost-control measures and ensure transparency in consultant expenditures throughout the project's lifecycle?

Supplementary response

Thank you for highlighting the council's efforts to develop internal resources and expertise while acknowledging the necessity of external consultants for the Hereford Western Bypass project. Given the importance of fiscal responsibility, could you elaborate on the measures in place to ensure that consultant costs remain within reasonable bounds and that value for money is achieved?

Additionally, how does the council plan to assess the effectiveness of these cost control measures and ensure transparency in consultant expenditures throughout the project's life cycle?

The council follows its financial guidelines and a set of contract procedure rules that ensure value for money is achieved in all contracts and that all expenditure on consultants is both transparent and managed effectively. I will furnish you with the links and they will be found on the minutes of this meeting when they are published thank you.

[Part 4 Section 6 Contract Procedure Rules.pdf \(herefordshire.gov.uk\)](#)

[Part 4 Section 7 Financial Procedures Rules.pdf \(herefordshire.gov.uk\)](#)

Question 7

7. Jeremy Milln, Hereford

To: Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure

Transport engineers have long understood three important principles: 1) adding roads to a network frequently, if counter-intuitively, increases traffic congestion and reduces overall performance (Braess's Paradox); 2) increasing road supply leads to the same result through inducing demand (Jevons Paradox) and 3) traffic increases without limit until alternative/ public transport is made the more viable option (Downs-Thompson Paradox).

It is the application of these principles which have led more progressive administrations to avoid making such fiscally irresponsible and environmentally disastrous transport choices as implied by the 'Roads Strategy' decision report at item 11 of today's agenda. Does Herefordshire Council recognise these principles and, if so, how does it propose to apply them so as to demonstrate enlightenment rather than regression?

Answer: Cabinet Member, Transport and Infrastructure

I fully recognise that building new road capacity can lead to induced demand and additional traffic. As with the previous plans for the Southern Link Road and the Western Bypass, a package of complementary measures will be included to encourage more walking, cycling and use of public transport.

The draft Hereford Masterplan contains city-wide proposals for such measures that would benefit from the reductions in traffic and increased road space.

I expect further details to be developed as part of the business case for the Hereford Western Bypass as a whole and the new Local Transport Plan.

Supplementary question

My substantive question explained how prioritising the building of motor roads worsens traffic congestion and emissions, largely through induced demand, an effect long understood by transport planners. I am pleased to hear the Cabinet Member accepts that.

In a meeting last week (19 March) he was reminded of his promise complementary active travel measures and public realm improvements (a 'boulevard') would be delivered for the Commercial Road/Blue School Street corridor conditional on the City Link Road. They were designed ten years ago but not delivered due to overspend on the CLR. Now they have been redesigned but without the same level of ambition for modal shift to sustainable travel in view of the lack of challenge to the induced increase in car traffic since the CLR was opened, an entirely predictable result.

What has the Cabinet Member learned from this experience which should be applied to his 'New Roads Strategy'?

Supplementary response

I remain committed to maximising the advantage of the traffic reductions in the centre of Hereford that the Hereford Western Bypass will deliver. Active travel measures will encourage more walking and cycling by making it safer and more attractive, thereby supporting economic growth in the city. These measures will also help to minimise any induced traffic that might arise as a result of reduced congestion and improved journey times.

Active travel measures in the city will be designed to meet current LTN1/20 guidance wherever possible. In an historic city like Hereford, what can be achieved is a delicate balance between ambition, available road space, design standards and budget. I believe that the proposals for Commercial Street accurately reflect that balance for the constraints we face today and for the funding that is available. 90% of the feedback from the stakeholder briefing was positive and I shall continue to strive to deliver what is both practical and affordable.

Question 8

8. Carol-Ann Banks, Hereford

To: Leader of the Council

"Are there any plans actually in place to review the limits of public questions at Council Meetings?"

Answer: Leader of the Council

There are currently no plans to review the limits of public questions at Council meetings.

Supplementary question

"Thank you for your reply. However, as Herefordshire Council only permit the public 1 minute and 140 words to pose a question I did a little research in neighbouring counties.

- Worcestershire allow 3 minutes per question and no word limit
- Powys have no limit to words or time except for 1 minute time limit for the supplemental question
- Shropshire permit up to 250 words per question
- Gloucestershire allocates 30 minutes for public questions without any limits on words or time per question.

I clearly recall the Chairman of the Council saying at the meeting on 8th December last year, that they would have to review the Constitution regarding public questions in discussion with Group Leaders. Isn't about time that you did review this issue as your current policy does not compare favourably with others?"

Supplementary response

Thank you very much for the question Mrs Banks and thank you for the comparisons that you've set out with other authorities. It's my understanding that the constitution will be reviewed, which will include reference to questions to members of the public and we will bear this in mind when we come to that review, thank you.

Question 9

9. David Pugh, Leominster

To: Councillor Swinglehurst, Environment

"Reporting" in the local and national press confirms worrying and ongoing damage, pollution and declining water quality in the scenic river WYE causing considerable public concerns.

A natural and beautiful resource for the county, the river, its flood plains, banks, meandering course and wonderful and important wildlife habitats include places of

special scientific interest and other reserves that are home to myriad flora and fauna, far too much of which is threatened.

Will the council resolve in all circumstances to give this ancient river described above total and ongoing protection, put it at the heart of council policy, and defend this legacy environment in totality both now and in the future along its ancient course through Herefordshire.

Answer: Cabinet Member, Environment

Herefordshire Council values and shares with our residents a passion for clean rivers and high levels of environmental protection. At the same time, we also need to create a sustainable and prosperous rural economy.

Herefordshire Council will continue to collaborate with all agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations, landowners and businesses who are able to secure change.

We expect all those causing river pollution to work as quickly as possible to deliver their fair share of pollution reduction measures and we want to see them equipped with the tools and support to achieve that.

Whilst we are committed to swift action, we also need to be honest with ourselves and each other that there are no quick or simple solutions. Full river recovery may take several decades and will require changes from our agency partners, national government in England and Wales and our rural businesses and residents too.

The River Wye presents a complex challenge and the causes of poor water quality are varied with no simple solutions available to achieve recovery. As you can see, from the examples below, no one organisation has ultimate responsibility for the state of the River Wye -

- Environmental policy for the English Wye is set by the UK Government
- Environmental policy for the Welsh Wye is devolved and determined by Welsh Government
- Enforcement Policy of pollution events in England by the Environment Agency
- Enforcement Policy of pollution events in Wales is set by Natural Resources in Wales
- Farm support to make in improvements to protect our rivers is set by Natural England in England and in Wales by Natural Resources Wales
- The level of investment in Sewage treatment made by water companies is set between the Environment Agency and Ofwat whilst permitted discharges in Wales are set by Natural Resources Wales permitting arrangements.
- Diffuse agricultural pollution itself comes from many thousands of farms across England and Wales many of whom are not breaking the present rules.

All of the above examples sit beyond the Council's remit to direct and take action. For this reason, the Council has been pressing government in England and Wales for a Cross Border Task Force to take control of the problem and provide direction for a single coherent plan. In the event that such an approach does not work then sadly, I see no alternative but to press the Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales to propose that their respective governments introduce a Water Protection Zone, a process which of itself would be controversial and would take years to come into effect.

I am grateful to the work of our communities for keeping the River Wye in the spotlight and placing pressure on all decision makers wherever they are to secure improvement for our river.

Supplementary question

While the explanation went at length about what was outside the council's ability to alter, little was said about where it had power and influence. The council currently have propositions including building beside the River Wye. One proposed development, were it to be approved, stands on the floodplain of the Wye and squarely next to a site of special scientific interest - proposing permission for the building of 350 houses, with little or no protective infrastructure for either locals or the river. Given the council's rhetoric over protection of the river, can it be assured, after such rhetoric, that Herefordshire Council will not entertain development in this or similar situations in future, under their planning control, refusing both adoption or approval?

Supplementary response

Thank you for your question and thank you for attending in person. Planning is a quasi-judicial process, so therefore there's a process of application and planning officer judgement inputs, environmental constraints will be identified and if they can't be mitigated then that will be a material consideration, so this is not for the cabinet to make a decision here and now. It's a planning application, so therefore has to go through the process of all planning applications and therefore I can't say here and now what the outcome of that would be, because it would be prejudicial to the application. Thank you

Question 10

10. Mrs Morawiecka, Breinton

To: Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure

The New Herefordshire Local Transport Plan Objectives says that this is an opportune time for the Council to support wider ambitions such as the Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy and for the Council to demonstrate reductions in transport carbon emissions and progress in the areas of active travel (walking and cycling) and the use of public transport.

Despite going through new housing developments and employment sites, the New Road Strategy for Hereford is purely a road scheme for motorists and does not allocate any funding for public transport or active travel measures and excludes both from the plans. How does the road proposal take advantage of this opportune time to reduce carbon emissions and promote better health & wellbeing, and link new housing with employment and services via public transport or active travel measures?

Answer: Cabinet Member, Transport and Infrastructure

The new road will bring about significant reductions in traffic volumes and journey times in the city.

Measures to make best use of these improvements – to encourage more walking, cycling and use of public transport – will be part of the overall package and will

complement the road scheme itself. These measures benefit the local environment and people's health.

On Monday we launched the public consultation into proposals for the draft Local Plan alongside public engagement for the new Local Transport Plan. The Local Plan and LTP will work together to encourage better walking, cycling and public transport links for new developments in order to manage traffic growth.

We are already delivering active travel measures across the city that will improve walking and cycling provision, and provide Safer Routes to School. More of these schemes can be introduced across Hereford as a result of traffic that doesn't need to be in the city transferring to the Western Bypass.

Supplementary question

The road modelling shows the average journey time saving on the longer routes through Hereford is 1.5minutes and just 0.5 minutes on the shorter journeys, neither of which would be thought to be significant by most Herefordians, especially at a cost of £0.23billion for a road, ahead of any other interventions.

To reduce carbon emissions across Herefordshire, the Council would get a much better return on investment by tackling the 50% of emissions arising from journeys between 10-50 miles. Why then is the Council not considering the needs of the whole county, investing in an integrated network of public transport connected to a safe, active travel across Herefordshire, improving access and opportunity for everyone and sharing the benefits of such a high level of transport investment whilst meeting their Local Transport Plan Objectives?

Supplementary response

Thank you Mrs Morawiecka for your supplementary question. There's a lot that has been asked for here, but in response, the next stage of the Local Transport Plan development is to develop a longlist of options, to assess them against their ability to deliver the objectives and then produce a shortlist of the best performing options. This assessment process will determine the extent to which public transport, active travel and other measures contribute to the objectives, including providing viable low emission options for most journeys. Thank you

Question 11:

11. Mr. E. Morfett, Hereford

The objectives for the New Local Transport Plan set out clear targets for carbon reduction in Figure 4 Appendix C of the report. The report states, even under the most optimistic EV uptake scenarios, local transport emissions are still likely to over-shoot the upper national Net Zero Strategy Delivery Pathway and the Lower Delivery Pathway. Therefore, EVs cannot solve the carbon challenge on their own.

How does the Council intend to implement such a wide range of different interventions such as a safe cycling network and new rail stations to meet carbon targets, outlined under its new objectives, when its New Road Strategy for Hereford can never be completed within the targeted time frame?

Answer: Cabinet Member, Transport and Infrastructure

I fully anticipate that the Hereford Western Bypass will be completed within the timeframe of the new Local Transport Plan.

The reduction of traffic and improved journey times because of the new road will be integral to the delivery of wider Council goals and will support more walking, cycling and use of public transport

The Local Transport Plan objectives provide a means by which schemes are reviewed, prioritised and programmed. The Plan will include schemes for all transport modes and will incorporate an electric vehicle strategy, a local walking and cycling infrastructure plan, proposals to improve public transport and many other initiatives, as well as the new road.

Supplementary question

The western bypass is justified by building thousands of houses in the catchment of flood zones, upstream of the City. Who will be liable for the much higher environmental impact costs from flooding, developing the road and lands west of the City, higher in the catchment of the City flood zone?

Supplementary response

Thank you Mr Morfett for your supplementary question. The development of the Hereford Western Bypass and the development of any future housing sites, will require planning permission and approval of the Environment Agency to take account of flood risk and will need to include measures to mitigate those risks. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 28 March 2024

Question 1:

To: Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure

1. Cllr Mark Woodall – member for Leominster South

Many residents are hoping that a bypass will relieve the daily traffic congestion in the city. They have not been crying out for a bypass in order to have more housing or economic growth. It's always been about relieving the slow and painful passage of traffic and they want improvements as soon as possible, not in 2033 when the bypass may or may not be ready. Will the council be able to provide the necessary city centre improvements mentioned in the LTP, such as lowering congestion and carbon emissions and improving road users' safety and health, over the short to medium term without diverting all our funding and resources to a hugely expensive out-of-town project which will not by itself resolve the problem of congestion?

Answer:

It is clear that many residents are keen on a bypass in order to support a reduction in city centre congestion, pollution and severance.

The ability to provide city centre improvements, including lowering congestion and carbon emission, improving road users' safety and health, place-making and active travel are premised on the diverting of substantial quantities of traffic away from the city centre. These measures can only be implemented if traffic numbers are considerably reduced in the city. Currently there is nowhere else for traffic to go.

The Hereford Growth Corridor is a substantial package of measures which would either not be achievable, or have very limited impact, if the measures were delivered in a piecemeal manner. The ability to lower congestion comes as part of long-term strategy, focused on delivering strong outcomes, such as improved air quality

Question 2:

To: Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure

2. Cllr Stef Simmons – member for Ledbury South

Paragraph 22 states that the "LTP will include a strategic environmental assessment [SEA] as part of its development. Analysis of the current carbon baseline and the assessment of work programmes and measures that will deliver carbon reductions will identify the carbon impact of future transport proposals". SEA is an iterative process and as per DfT guidance and Statutory Regulations should run alongside development of the LTP including at broadest level of objective setting. Given decisions are being made in cabinet regarding route options for a bypass for inclusion in the LTP - has the SEA commenced to enable meaningful consideration of environmental performance and if so where is the evidence to support Cabinet's decision making process?

Answer:

An SEA ensures that environmental and sustainability impacts are considered appropriately in any policy, plans or projects. As such, a draft SEA Scoping Report has been prepared and we recognise the requirement to forward this for formal consultation with statutory consultees on its completion. During the early stages of forming the objectives and the subsequent stages of the LTP development both the

environmental assessment and the quantified carbon reduction work (included in Appendix C) are an integral part of the process. This includes during the appraisal process of identifying a long list and short list of transport proposals for Herefordshire. The final LTP will include a comprehensive SEA to support its delivery.

The proposal for the Hereford Western Bypass is consistent with objectives in both the current Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the emerging new LTP. The scheme will reduce traffic levels in the city, improve journey times, increase the resilience of the transport network and allow the detrunking of the A49. In doing so, it will support the Local Plan to deliver economic growth, enable delivery of new housing and employment land, assist city centre improvements, promote active travel and reduce severance across the city.