

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 14 December 2017

Question 1

Mrs V Wegg-Prosser, Breinton

To: cabinet member: infrastructure

The purpose of the HTP bypass is to induce developers to build in areas adjacent to its route. Reference SMOTS, over 8,000 school children and their families in the Hereford area are being denied modal shift targets because the Council insist on building the bypass before setting the targets. How can this be justified when there is no sign of funding for the bypass and air quality continues to deteriorate?

Response

The purpose of the Hereford Transport Package (including the bypass) is not to induce developers to build, but to reduce congestion and improve journey times, improve regional connectivity, improve safety and health, and enable growth.

The Sustainable Modes of Travel to School strategy is scheduled for Cabinet consideration in January and will recognise the need for modal shift targets to be set as the Hereford Transport Package is defined.

It is wrong to suggest there is no sign of funding; indeed some contributions for the development of the Hereford Transport Package have already been secured.

The provision of an alternative route to the A49 which currently runs through the centre of Hereford will be the most significant opportunity to improve air quality for the many people living within the city, and children who go to school in central Hereford. In the meantime individual school travel plans will continue to encourage use of alternative modes of travel.

Question 2

Mr R Palgrave, How Caple

To: cabinet member: infrastructure

The January 2017 OAR for the SWTP gives one objective as, "reduce growth in transport related emissions". There is no objective to reduce actual emissions. How will the performance of the SWTP be measured against this very vague objective, and is it appropriate to be proceeding with a scheme that does not reduce actual emissions when UK carbon emissions rose last year and air quality continues to be poor?

Response

It is entirely appropriate to continue progressing development of the scheme. Air quality will be improved for residents along Belmont Road due to the removal of HGVs. A monitoring and evaluation strategy will be developed which will set out the scheme and will be evaluated against its targets and this will be signed off by the Department for Transport as part of the full business case for the scheme.

Supplementary question

Responses to the SWTP consultation indicated strong support for improved bus services. More people on buses should mean fewer cars and reduced emissions. Will the detailed design of the SWTP active travel measures look at improving bus services?

Response

Yes. Even though the consultation has thrown up responses with some actions being more preferred than others - the bus priority lanes in Belmont Road were quite lowly supported in relation to other schemes – but we will look at everything when the schemes are coming up as to what we think is the best value for money and serves the purpose for what the whole scheme is about, which is to try and get people out and about actively travelling walking cycling using buses and generally having better health.

Question 3

Prof R Wise, Breinton

To: cabinet member: infrastructure

Can the Council assure us that a new ,truly independent, report be produced as the earlier "2011 report by Parsons Brinckerhoff, Independent Review of Hereford Relief Road Technical Studies" was flawed in many respects ,but primarily because of the conflict of interest between HCC and Balfour Beatty and the legal consequences that would flow from relying upon that report.

Response

There is no need for a new report as the 2011 report is not flawed and there is no conflict of interest.

Question 4

Mrs J Wise, Breinton

To: cabinet member: infrastructure

If the Parsons Brinckerhoff Relief Road proposal (2011) did not include details of engineering feasibility or costs, could the council justify proceeding with the project irrespective of accurate costing and exact funding sources?

Response

Yes. The only way to obtain accurate costings is to progress development of the project. Any decision to deliver the project will be informed by accurate costings and available funding.

Question 5

Mr J Hull, Breinton

To: cabinet member: infrastructure

The volume of HGV traffic flowing on the M5/M6 currently is between 12 and 25 times greater than the A49. Even a small percentage of M5/M6 HGV relief will result in a marked increase in fine particulate pollution. Why has this not been made clear to County residents, particularly with respect to the proposed new housing developments which the road will pass through?

Response

The important regional role of the Hereford bypass is recognised in the Midlands Connect strategy. With a bypass for Hereford, the A49 could have an enhanced role and provide an alternative for some traffic on the parallel M5/M6. As modelling work is progressed the scale of this will be established, be made available when it is completed and agreed with Highways England, and will inform future consultation.

Supplementary question

What level of M5/M6 motorway relief traffic is considered to be acceptable and viable in the business case for the western relief road and on what basis was it estimated?

Response

I can't really give you a complete answer that you might expect for that because as you know when new roads come into being there will always be an immediate surge of extra traffic using it. However when the general motoring public want to go from a to b they will choose a route which is best suited for their purpose. This will all come out as part of the assessment from Midlands Connect and Highways England in their assessments going forward as to whether or not the bypass is the priority that they are now currently putting on it. We will be able to inform you better when we have the business case moving towards the delivery of this project.

Question 6

Ms K Seekings, Hereford

To: cabinet member: infrastructure

When will the planning regulations relating to the cost estimates for developments in full business plans be required to include the full long-term costs, such as the environmental costs associated with pollution, loss of habitat and loss of biodiversity?

Response

The business case will include analysis of the full range of costs and benefits of the scheme. Planning legislation already requires that for a scheme of this size a full Environmental Impact Assessment is undertaken and a detailed statement must be submitted with a planning application. The council will comply with all such legislation.

Supplementary question

I have to say I am ashamed to live in a county that it proposing such a backward step. 85% of journeys in Hereford are less than 3 miles by your own research. Why have you not already properly tried out the multiple options, imaginative and creative options for getting people out of cars for those short journeys? Electric light railway, electric buses, park and ride, proper cycling pathways. I am a cyclist, I cycled my 7 year old and 12 year old and every day we take our life in our hands. All you propose is to destroy one of the best parts of Hereford in green spaces and providing clean air. All that will result is an increase in traffic both in Hereford and in the county, why have you not already looked at other options and implemented them?

Response

I am of completely a different view to yourself in the context that Hereford has one river crossing to deal with all traffic. I am constantly bombarded by emails and conversations with people asking when are you going to deal with another bridge crossing that gives us a bypass around Hereford? I can tell you now that that comes at a much higher priority than

does the suggestions that you are putting forward. However we will be looking at the environmental and the other alternative actions as part of the active travel plans to try to make the city of Hereford and the neighbouring area a better place to live but we will be going ahead with the bypass, we will building a bridge across the river because it is far more supported than the likes of your suggestion. I am sorry to have to say it. I am very supportive of building the bypass and making sure that we have infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing economy.

Question 7

Mr J Trimble, Hereford

To: cabinet member: infrastructure

Will the cabinet be accountable for building the new road close to and upwind of Hereford Community Farm for the increased cost of healthcare from road pollution as we have 65 weekly attendees already with ill health and compromised immune systems?

Response

The route selection process aims to consider all constraints within the core strategy corridor and determine a short list of route options and then a preferred route which considers these constraints and which routes perform best across a range of criteria. In January Cabinet will consider route options for subsequent consultation. Cabinet is accountable for the decisions it takes.

Supplementary question

I don't quite understand your answer to my question. I asked you if you were accountable for the increased health cost that is going to affect people that I work with who already have ill health and other related problems. Can the cabinet explain the disparity with that answer to the air quality strategy for Hereford and Worcester, section 4.3, which states that the council commits to ensuring that the council actions do not have a detrimental effect on air quality? This is a duty that local authorities have to undertake under the Environmental Act 1995.

Response

As you have introduced some specific policies I will have to go and take a look at them and get the officers to come forward with an answer to meet your question precisely. You are introducing a technical question that wants a technical answer and I will endeavour to that in a written answer.

Question 8

Mrs C Palgrave, How Caple

To: cabinet member: infrastructure

The SWTP ATM consultation report shows that 20mph residential areas was the most strongly supported Possible Improvement. The report notes that this improvement had "High levels of strong support evenly distributed". Is there any reason why an immediate start cannot be made on introducing 20mph limits, without waiting for the Southern Link Road to be built?

Response

The report today seeks approval to develop the proposals for active travel measures. If they can be delivered in advance of the southern link road they will be.

Question 9

Mr E Morfett, Breinton

To: cabinet member: infrastructure

ATMs are designed to address the health issues of the population by reducing car use to reduce emissions which are causing lung cancer, kidney cancer, asthma, dementia and premature death. City planning recognises the need to address this issue but it appears to lack any real priority. Why is the priority in reducing emissions to reduce healthcare costs using modern transport solutions so low relative to building new roads?

Response

Addressing the health issues associated with transport is a priority. Each major transport package project includes a range of active travel measures which complement new infrastructure and together contribute to an improvement in air quality and improving health issues associated with congestion.

Supplementary question

When will this council recognise that building roads at any cost instead of mass transit non-polluting options is unsustainable? Economic progress and measuring the true cost of the impact of healthcare costs, legal costs and the environmental costs would render its strategy uneconomic, unreasonable, unrealistic and unpopular if the public were made aware of the true full costs. When will you recognise this?

Response

I believe that this council, its officers and its councillors fully undertake and understand exactly your sentiment. I had a conversation earlier this morning with the director for adult care and it is so difficult to be able to deal with health issues in a context of 'you do this what is the context of the health issues down the road from it'. We do take notice, we do care for the output of our decisions in trying to get better solutions for the residents of the county. Your question can have a multiple serious of answers but I do take on board that we do take notice of what you are suggesting.

Question 10

Ms B Johnson, Ledbury

To: cabinet member: infrastructure

Herefordshire Council policies prioritise active travel and public transport over private car use. Is the council working with the health authority to measure the health of the population regularly in order to ascertain whether their policies are having any effect on the physical and mental health of the population, and if so, exactly what does this entail?

Response

The council is the responsible body for public health functions. Each year the director of public health is required to produce a joint strategic needs assessment for approval by the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group are members of that board.

In addition the director of public health produces an annual report on the health of the county's residents.

The data and recommendations within these reports are used to inform scrutiny and decision-making.