

Agenda item no. 7 - Questions from members of the council

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 1	Councillor Chappell	With the closure of 'Hillside', and the expectation that patients will be discharged from hospital to their homes, will the cabinet member review the contracts in place with private home care providers, to ensure they have enough staff, can provide enough hours of care, have the resources to care for clients in their homes whilst allowing the council to secure contract efficiencies in line with savings proposals in the budget?	Cabinet member for health and wellbeing
<p>Response I refer to the answer provided to Ms Coda at public question number 7.</p>			
<p>Supplementary Question There is a shortage of full time care workers in Herefordshire The Council has half hourly care packages with private care home providers which causes huge logistical problems especially in the rural areas. There are several examples where care workers find a client who has fallen on to the floor some hours before they arrive. Having phones for an ambulance and made the client comfortable, are told to leave the client on the floor to go to the next client because their half hour contract with that client is up and there are no other care workers available. It is simply not acceptable to leave elderly, vulnerable people alone on the floor for what might be another hour before the ambulance arrives. With people being discharged directly from hospital to home and the need for care workers to comply with instructions from DN, physio, GPs over and above the personal care they have to give to their clients, it will not be possible for care workers to undertake the terms of their contract with Herefordshire Council. Will the cabinet member give an assurance that no client in receipt of a home care package with Herefordshire Council will be put at risk as a result of these contracts?</p>			
<p>Cabinet member response to supplementary question The intention is to make this happen. The building belongs to the authority but the services are the responsibility of the NHS. The Adults Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee considered the matter at its meeting on 25 January. Individuals in need of care recover better at home than in a care setting.</p>			
MQ 2	Councillor Crockett	Will the cabinet member please assure members that city centre sites, or others which the administrators of the proposed university show an interest in purchasing, will be disposed of in accordance with the treasury management strategy (to be approved at this meeting) and advertised for sale on the open market, ensuring that taxpayers of this county obtain full value for money, which is the duty of any public body?	Cabinet member for finance, housing and corporate services
<p>Response This is not a matter related to the treasury management strategy. The council has a duty to secure best value, and any decision to dispose of council owned land will be carried out in accordance with the council's corporate property strategy. That strategy sets out that the council may dispose of land at less than full market value, where it considers that the purpose for which the land is to be disposed of, is likely to contribute to the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the community.</p>			

MQ 3	Councillor Powers	In early 2017 DCLG provided £503k from its Community Housing Fund for Herefordshire Council “to build capacity within local groups [and] set up support hubs.” This was approved by Cabinet on 9 March. What applications have been received, from whom, and to what sum; of which how much has been approved, is pending or been disbursed, what remains in the fund and where is this shown in the budget?	Cabinet member for finance, housing and corporate services
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Response

In accordance with the decision taken by cabinet on 9 March 2017, to date £195k of the £503k allocation has been awarded to support five projects. I will provide a written response providing the detail requested but these include: a community self-build project for veterans in Leominster, a hostel extension in Hereford, and parish council projects in Llanwarne and Fownhope. A further £110k has been allocated to support training, housing needs analysis, and delivery capacity.

Applications are currently under consideration which, if approved would account for up to a further £126k and it is anticipated that the remaining £73k will be allocated in accordance with the scheme criteria before the end of the current financial year.

The Government has announced that the fund will be continue for a further three years but will be administered by Homes England and not by councils and therefore future provision is not reflected in the proposed budget.

Supplementary Question

Can the Cabinet Member state categorically that all monies granted or yet to be granted meet the criteria established by Cabinet in March 2017?

Cabinet member response to supplementary question

My understanding is that all schemes were approved subject to those requirements. Happy to meet with the councillor to review any schemes of particular interest.

MQ 4	Councillor Jinman	Mindful of the £4.1m rural grant from government and the reimbursement from a previous Council contractor, what is the message to the road users and council tax payers as to the spend for this coming year on rural road repair, reconstruction and preventive maintenance and how does that match any survey estimates of need given the deteriorating state of the roads in most of the rural areas of the county?	Cabinet member transport and regulatory services
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Response

The message to tax payers is that we are using the resources available to us in the most cost effective way to improve and sustain the overall condition of our roads. The condition surveys show that we have improved the overall condition of Herefordshire’s roads as a result of the substantial investment made in recent years. There is more work to do and today’s report on the capital programme considers the investment of a further £5.6 million into our roads and bridges throughout the county in the coming year. Herefordshire has the second highest road miles per head of population in England and we continue to pursue every funding opportunity available to help us improve the condition of our 2000 miles of roads by investing in road surfacing work and bridge repairs that will reduce longer term maintenance costs.

Supplementary question

What is the standard you are referring to (by which you measure improvement) when you say matters have improved? Has the norm against which you measure standards moved in the past 10 years to a new very poor standard?

Cabinet member response to supplementary question

This is a technical matter which requires a written response to the member and to be shared with all members.

MQ 5	Councillor Michael	Why are tenants of the council's land holdings on the Rotherwas Estate not being offered the opportunity to buy their own freehold before the land is sold by auction in London? Is this consistent with the treasury management strategy and asset disposal policies at the council?	Cabinet member for finance, housing and corporate services
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Response

This is not a matter related to the treasury management strategy.

As the report informing the decision to dispose of the freehold ground leases on this site set out, disposals are undertaken in accordance with the council's corporate property strategy. The council has a duty to secure best value. This is being achieved through open market disposals, which ensure that tenants have an opportunity to bid.

Supplementary question

Assurance is sought that all tenants are informed at the earliest opportunity when plots will be auctioned.

Cabinet member response to supplementary question

Property services at the Council inform tenants when the freehold to the land they are leasing is being taken to auction.