

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 28 June 2018

Question 1

Ms J North, Hereford

To: cabinet member, contract and assets

What evidence does the Council collect about the benefits which the Museum Service contributes to health, well-being and education and where that information can be found?

Response

There is a wide range of nationally published information that includes the health, wellbeing and educational benefits of the museum service which informs local service development, including 'Museums Matter published by the National Museums Directors' Council, case studies published by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and information published by the National Alliance for Museums, Health and Wellbeing.

The council's [museum plan 2017 2020](#) sets out how the service can contribute to achievement of the council's corporate plan priorities to: enable residents to live safe healthy and independent lives; keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life; support the growth of our local economy; and secure better services, quality of life and value for money.

Appendix 1 to the report on today's agenda provides links to a number of reports and reviews which include reference to the wider benefits of the museum service.

Supplementary question

If the museum service is outsourced will future benefits be measured under any new governance?

Answer

The future benefits associated with the museum service would need to comply with the museum plan 2017/18. At this stage it would be presumptuous to assume that the museum service will be outsourced.

Question 2

Ms J Ward, Tarrington

To: cabinet member, contract and assets

There is a law in Britain to protect public libraries: The Museums and Libraries Act 1964 imposes on local authorities a statutory duty to provide comprehensive and efficient public library services. Any public servant or politician who breaks the law is liable to criminal proceedings. Will Herefordshire Council abide by the law?

Response

Yes. The report to Cabinet elsewhere on our agenda today clearly sets out the legal framework within which the council does, and will continue to operate.

Question 3

Ms L Wallace, Bishops Cleeve

To: cabinet member, contract and assets

What is the cost of the tendering process and how many years would it take to offset this against anticipated savings through outsourcing/subcontracting?

Response

There are no specific costs to the tendering process beyond existing staff time. The business case including financial benefits/costs for a commissioned service will be identified and evaluated through the procurement process and will inform a further decision on the preferred option.

Question 4

Ms E Whittler, Ledbury

To: cabinet member, contract and assets

What is the evidence to show that there would be cost savings by outsourcing / subcontracting the Library Service?

Response

The outcome of the soft market testing and the report of the Heritage Lottery Funded review "The Future Resilience of Herefordshire Council's Museum Service" links to which are published as an appendix to the report on the Cabinet agenda today demonstrate that a commissioned service may provide an income generation opportunity and shared costs as a way of reducing the revenue budget. This will be further tested through the procurement process to inform a final decision.

Question 5

Ms J Buttery, Ledbury

To: cabinet member, contract and assets

What is the evidence to show that there would be cost savings by outsourcing/subcontracting the Library Service?

Response

I refer to the response provided to Ms Whittler above.

Question 6

Ms S Sharples

To: cabinet member, contract and assets

How will the tendering process ensure that possible providers of these services have the relevant expertise?

Response

The evaluation criteria for any procurement process will include an assessment of the skills, expertise and track record of potential providers.

Question 7

Mr B Sharples

To: cabinet member, contract and assets

I believe the Council is doing good work in its analysis of how the MLA services can be adapted to serve future Herefordshire Residents. The document is vague on this point so would you explain in some detail the procedures you will put in place to ensure that anyone running any part of these services is properly monitored by the Council and who will be the responsible person tasked with carrying out this work?

Response

As with any commissioned service specific standards would be put in place to evaluate performance of the selected provider and ensure that commissioned services deliver the outcomes expected by the council. If the recommendations before Cabinet today are agreed it is intended that these standards will align to current levels of service, [CIPFA](#) benchmarking for the library service, accreditation for the museum services and due accreditation for the archive service.

The council will assign a contracts manager to manage the commissioned service and performance will be monitored and reported in accordance with the council's [Performance, Risk and Opportunity Management Framework](#). As with all council services whether delivered in house or through a commissioned arrangement, performance may be reviewed by the relevant scrutiny committee.

Question 8

Mrs E Morawiecka, Breinton

To: cabinet member, infrastructure

Herefordshire Council have referred to the Southern Link Road as the second phase of the Hereford Bypass. As this is just a local council project and not part of the strategic road network, what assurances have been received from Highways England that this road will be adopted, along with the proposed Hereford Relief Road, to be the new route of the A49.

Response

A decision as to whether the Hereford bypass is included as part of the national Strategic Route Network is a matter for the Secretary of State for Transport to determine not Highways England. Regardless of any future decision the Secretary of State may make on this matter the by-pass is of strategic importance as recognised in the council's local transport plan and the prioritisation of the route in the Midlands Connect transport strategy.

Supplementary question

Without support from the Secretary of State for Transport to detrunk the existing A49 route through Hereford, signage will continue to direct the 15% to 20% of through traffic into the city. What assurances have been received from the Department for Transport that the southern link road on the proposed western relief road will become that the new £230m A49 trunk road, without it being re-trucked.

Answer

In the process of working up the Southern Link Road , Hereford by pass, it is being done in conjunction with all the national authorities, (Department of Transport, Highways England, Midland Engine, etc). As the full business case and full funding comes forward, assurances will be given that the A49 will be re-routed and all through traffic will be directed to the new road. Further details will be forthcoming in due course.

Question 9

Ms N Shields, Ledbury

To: cabinet member, contract and assets

As libraries are a key service in our communities and support the Council's four main objectives, where is the evidence that undertaking an expensive tendering process will result in any cost savings or help ensure the sustainability of this service?

Response

I refer to the response provided to Ms Whattler above.

Supplementary question

In respect of the libraries, given that there is no evidence to state that outsourcing would be beneficial and given that there no evidence about how much the cost saving would be, what we would like to see is a proper consultation about the options as there is more than one way to do this.

Answer

The soft marketing testing was to see if there is interest in the market. The decision is to see if there is any formal interest. The three facets will be handled in different ways.

Question 10

Mr A Walker, Hereford

To: cabinet member, contract and assets

Will the council give assurance that any decision to award a contract for management of the Archive service will be taken by full council and not be delegated to the cabinet member for contracts and assets?

Response

Any decision to award a contract for the management of these services will be taken by either Cabinet or myself. This is because, by law, in a council operating a cabinet system such as Herefordshire, any function not reserved to Council to determine, is a function of the Cabinet.

However, council members are consulted on key decisions and can, through effective scrutiny, make recommendations to Cabinet to inform our decision making.

Question 11

Mr J Milln, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure

Progress on the Hereford Area Plan has stalled, allegedly due to the awaited decision on the proposed Western by-pass, with no meeting of its Reference Group since 4th April. Yet most of the HAP's work is unrelated. In particular there is an urgent need to progress the recommendations of Historic England's Urban Panel for a Design Guide SPD and for a visionary and overarching City Masterplan to underpin the HAP. Who is carrying out this work, to what brief and timetable?

Response

Progress on the Hereford Area Plan has not stalled. A brief for a City Centre Design Guide has been prepared and consultants are being procured to draft a Supplementary Planning Document. The document is expected to be completed in 8-9 months.

Additionally, consultation on the Hereford Area Plan Housing and Employment Site Options is expected to begin in August to enable the consultation to be informed by a preferred route. The Reference Group will have an opportunity to review the draft consultation document before the consultation begins.

Supplementary question

How is Herefordshire Council proposing the recommendations from Historical England which called for a visionary city masterplan to provide overarching connectivity with the Hereford Area Plan?

Answer

The HAP is moving forward. A consultant will be employed to come forward with design principles, which will include the university. This will take approx. 12 to 18 months.

Question 12

Mr T W Harvey, Leominster

To: cabinet member, contract and assets

In the consideration of the best way to deliver library services in Herefordshire, why is the in-house management of library services not included as an option to be evaluated along with the other possibilities such as out-sourcing?

Response

In-house delivery is included as an alternative option in the report to be considered by Cabinet today. Proposals submitted by potential providers will, as part of the tender evaluation, be assessed against current service delivery standards and costs.

Question 13

Ms J Adams, Kingsthorpe

To: cabinet member, contract and assets

Will the Council give assurance that the community groups representing the concerns of users and supporters of archives, museums and libraries will be given the opportunity to be fully involved in the development of any service specifications and evaluation of bids should a commissioning process to examine options for their delivery be put in place?

Response

As the report on today's agenda sets out it is proposed to use the existing service standards rather than develop a new specifications. An evaluation process will be developed to include provision for user group representative views to be taken into consideration.

Supplementary question

How will any tender process take into account the cultural value and thus the economical value. Of the services.

Answer

The cultural benefits will be taken into account. There is nothing unusual about the cultural criteria and our standard criteria will continue.

Question 14

Mrs C Palgrave, How Caple

To: cabinet member, finance and corporate services

The proposed capital programme for 2018/9 shows a Grant & Funding Contribution of £29.052m for the South Wye Transport Programme. This is different from the £27m provisionally awarded for the SWTP from the Marches LEP Local Growth Fund. Which figure is correct?

Response

The total budget for the South Wye Transport Package is £35m. Funding for the scheme comprises £27m allocated from the Marches LEP Local Growth Fund and £8m Local Transport Plan grant allocations over the life of the project. The Grant and Funding Contribution column in the appendix shows the balance of LEP and LTP funding yet to be drawn down with the balance of the £35m figure being shown in the previous years' column. I would also like to clarify that the appendix 1 published with the agenda erroneously included £970k prudential borrowing; this has been corrected in a supplement published this week.

Question 15

Ms A E Jones, Hereford

To: cabinet member, contracts and assets

As a former library worker I am interested in the following: When formulating the agreement of a TUPE process how long will the Council guarantee that the Staff Terms and Conditions and their Local Government Pensions will be protected for?

Response

The council will comply with the TUPE legislation. Should a commissioned service be implemented, relevant staff would transfer on existing terms and conditions including pension. TUPE does not expressly prohibit changes to terms and conditions within a certain time frame, but any new employer would be obliged to follow relevant employment processes should they wish to implement a change.

Question 16

Mr R Palgrave, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure

The adopted Neighbourhood Development Plan for Abbeydore, Bacton, Ewyas Harold, Dulas, Llancillo, Rowlestone and Kentchurch, identified a key issue as follows - "The long-term objective of re-opening the Pontrilas Railway Station should be promoted, with the aim of reducing road use and for the wider economic benefit of south west Herefordshire."
Pontrilas is identified in the Core Strategy as a main focus of proportionate housing development, and I understand that the local sawmill is interested in making use of the railway line for freight transport.

Will Herefordshire Council actively support the objective set out in the NDP?

Response

The Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) referred to was adopted on 20 April 2018 forms part of the statutory development plan. The re-opening of the station at Pontrilas emerged as a key issue and a long term objective within the area. There is no specific policy within the plan regarding the reopening of the station as it was considered to be beyond the plan period.

The proposal is not currently prioritised within the council's Corporate Plan or Local Transport Plan and before consideration could be given to supporting achievement of this long term objective work would need to be undertaken to establish an initial business case through an assessment of the proposal in line with national guidance. I have discussed the proposal with the ward member and although the council does not currently have resources available to support this initial work we would be happy to provide the community with advice on the process to be followed so that they may take forward this initial exploration.

Question 17

Mr D Stevens, Branch Secretary Herefordshire UNISON, Hereford

To: cabinet member, contract and assets

With regards to the future of museums libraries and archives, if a procurement process is commenced for the future commissioning of museums, libraries and archives will UNISON be included in any subsequent tender creation and following procurement processes?

Response

Management will comply with the council's policies for managing change within the organisation and will inform unions and positively engage them in developing options, consultation and negotiation about major changes in the workforce in accordance with established HR policies and procedures.

Supplementary question

Is it a yes or a no?

Answer

I will leave it to you to make your own assumptions about the answer.

Question 18

Ms D Toynbee, Hereford

To: cabinet member, contracts and assets

What plans does the Council have to reduce and ultimately stop the use of single-use plastics across its estate, including schools?

Response

The council's [Environmental Policy](#) approved in 2013 is currently being reviewed and consideration is being given to this issue as part of that review.

Schools are responsible for their own procurement policies, but we will, as part of our review, consider how best to encourage schools and our contractors, to minimise use of single use plastics where less environmentally impactful materials are available. These discussions are already underway with our catering provider.

More widely the council's [Stop the Drop](#) campaign has gathered enormous community support to reduce and clear up litter, including single use plastics, across the our beautiful county.

Question 19

Mr A Sharp, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure

In light of the evidence in the CPOs for the SLR, I suspect that only desk-top analysis was used to re-route bridleways and would welcome evidence to the contrary. It is also of great concern that the planners appear not to grasp the current legal precedent requiring horse-riders to ride on the road and not the verge as the planners have suggested in the Orders. Instead of trying to cut corners at every turn, thereby putting horses and their riders in grave danger, please can the council reassure bridleway users that every site will now be visited – in person - and that safety audits, relying on up to date information, are now carried out as a matter of urgency.

Response

There is no attempt to 'cut corners at every turn' and the safety of all road users continues to be appropriately assessed in accordance with established guidelines to ensure informed decision making.

Any proposed changes to the public rights of way network have been designed using appropriate guidance and standards, and safety audits of the scheme have been carried out as the design has progressed; further audits will be completed when the scheme is constructed.

Question 20

Mrs K Sharp, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure

The CPO documents for the SLR leads one to suspect that only desk-top analysis was used to reposition a new PROW and access gate onto an extremely dangerous road and also that a Road Safety Audit was not carried out in regard of the repositioned access at HA7 onto Haywood Lane. If this was not the case, I would welcome any evidence please as well as an assurance that the council will seek to better protect and reassure pedestrians as they plan the SLR and that every site will now be visited – in person – and safety audits for each path and gate will be carried out now as a matter of urgency.

Response

Road safety audits of the scheme design were carried out at the appropriate stages of the project. An objector's concerns about the visual impact of an access relocation on their property has been considered and, subject to the Secretary of State's consent, a modification will be sought to the Side Roads Order to retain the access from the footpath on Haywood Lane in its current location. The review you suggest is not required; the appropriate design process has been followed, appropriate audits have been completed, and further audits will be carried out when the scheme is constructed in accordance with established processes.