

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO GENERAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 18 July 2018

Question 1

Mr J Milln - Hereford

The impacts on society and well-being of the proposed red route (as indeed all routes) - bad enough already - are shown by the Equality Impact Assessment to be have a disproportionately adverse impact on the less advantaged. In respect of its bypass how does the Council propose therefore to comply with section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 which places a duty upon it to advance equality of opportunity?

Response

Thank you for your question. The committee will be scrutinising the evidence and rationale for the proposed decision of Cabinet and will ensure that this issue is explored. I have asked for further information on this point to be published in advance of the committee meeting to inform our consideration of the matter.

Supplementary Question

Disturbingly the council's response to my question shows that it believes that to comply with its duty under the 2010 equality act to advance equality of opportunity it needs only to demonstrate a 'process of assessment and review'. Further, the council concedes that the proposed road has the potential to impact disproportionately upon the disabled and other less advantaged groups, even presuming beneficial impacts for them (see appendix 7 table 9). Yet, even its assessment acknowledges (section 5.2.9) would likely render the community farm at Wareham that provides land based therapy for the disabled unviable. That so, will the committee kindly advise the cabinet to abandon its road or at the very least withdraw its mendacious claim in respect of the disabled?

Response

The committee explored the issues raised by your question and have recommended to Cabinet that further information be sought from the community farm about the impacts of the proposed route on its viability.

Question 2

Mr J Lewis - Marden

As demographics dictate that more roads are not required why would new road building be in the public interest?

Response

Thank you for your question. The query that you raise does not form part of the proposed decision of Cabinet which the committee will be scrutinising. The rationale for a new road has been explored through the Local Plan Core Strategy and Local Transport Plan processes and informed the decisions of full Council when they adopted these plans.

Question 3

Mrs E Morawiecka - Breinton

According to the Resource Implications table in the main report, the cost estimates of all the routes have increased since the Spring 2018 consultation by 17-18%. The preferred Red Route cost has increased by over £24million from a figure of less than £129million in the Spring 2018 consultation to a current cost estimate of £153million.

How does the increased cost of this road affect the Benefit Cost Ratio of the "Bypass" project, which I was unable to find in the main report to the committee?

Response

Thank you for your question. The committee will be scrutinising the evidence and rationale for the proposed decision of Cabinet and will ensure that this issue is explored. I have asked for further information on this point to be published in advance of the committee meeting to inform our consideration of the matter.

Supplementary

The inquiry on the core strategy local plan planning inspector said the by-pass risks viability of the whole plan. The answer provided in the supplement says the benefits costs ratio does not form part of the methodology for determining a route for the by-pass. However, the cabinet and the general scrutiny committee are being asked at recommendation C to inform future decisions on the Hereford Transport Package for maximum cost of £2.45m. According to the report to full Council on 13th July, Herefordshire Council is having to borrow all of the £2.45m referred to in this report. If the road fails to show that it will deliver best value for money over any alternatives, why would HC wish to pursue any route if they will not secure government funding and this route will make the whole core strategy economically unviable. Where is the assessment of value for money for this road project and a comparison against the alternatives to inform both the scrutiny committee and the cabinet?

Response

Major schemes of this nature rightly require a significant amount of assessment and feasibility work; as the development of the scheme progresses the level of detail increases. In order to progress those assessments, which at this next stage will include benefits cost ratio, it is necessary to invest in the appropriate technical expertise, research and analysis. The strategic outline business case referenced in the resources section of the draft cabinet report provides an initial assessment of options and this assessment is reviewed and refined as the project moves forward in accordance with the recognised methodology for such schemes. The approach taken to establish value-for-money for the Hereford Transport Package has followed the approach laid down by the Department for Transport's WebTAG process. This recommends a proportionate approach to be adopted at all stages of scheme development. The value-for-money assessment will consist of an assessment of the costs and benefits of the Bypass with the Active Travel Measures as set out in that guidance.

We previously developed a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) in 2015 and this is available on the Council's website

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/13069/hereford_transport_package_strategic_outline_business_case)

The SOBC indicated a strong value-for money.

We will produce an Outline Business Case (OBC) later in 2018. This will combine the costs of both the bypass and the Active Travel Measures, with the benefits of the full HTP. The OBC will be presented to the Department for Transport for their consideration.

It should be noted that the issue of value-for-money is not relevant to the choice of bypass corridor.

Question 4

Mrs J Richards – Hereford

The consultation report mentions that a number of phase 1 consultation responses were not included in the Phase 1 report and analysis and that matters concerning funding and the environment were not included in the consultation. With no written responses published for either Highways England or Natural England for the Phase 2 consultation, how can the public be confident that all the Phase 2 consultation responses have been correctly analysed and reported for the Cabinet decision?

Response

Thank you for your question. The committee will be scrutinising the evidence and rationale for the proposed decision of Cabinet and will ensure that this issue is explored. I have asked for further information on this point to be published in advance of the committee meeting to inform our consideration of the matter.

Supplementary

I asked if there were written responses from Highways England and Natural England, surely this means that the consultations of the conclusion and the consultation report may be inaccurate and the scrutiny committee does not have all the information that they need to scrutinise effectively.

Response

The committee explored the issues raised by your question. It was explained that both organisations were engaged in the scheme development, but had not responded to the consultation. The committee have recommended to Cabinet that both organisations be invited to provide their views.

Question 5

Mrs V Wegg-Prosser - Breinton

Appendix 6 of the Hereford Transport Package Report to this Committee contains an impressive list of active travel measures (ATMs) in 11 movement corridors across Hereford. They involve better use of public space, junction improvements for non-motorised traffic, crossing improvements on main roads, and enhancement of existing traffic free paths. Implementing these ATMs will be proportionate to the Council's obligation to reduce private car dependency in Hereford. Can the Committee please be assured that the action to implement the Hereford Bypass is justified in terms of proportionality, before these reasonable and achievable ATMs have been developed and implemented? If the assurance cannot be given, then the Committee should recommend to Cabinet that the ATMs be introduced before the Bypass development goes ahead.

Response

Thank you for your question. The committee will be scrutinising the evidence and rationale for the proposed decision of Cabinet and will ensure that this issue is explored. I have asked

for further information on this point to be published in advance of the committee meeting to inform our consideration of the matter.

Question 6

Mr P Chapman – Breinton

The HTP report says that the aim of the bypass is to “Enable the improvement of regional connectivity by achieving acceptable peak hour journey times on the A49 through the city”. Can you define what is an acceptable peak hour journey time on the A49 through the City, and what comparisons of journey times have been made compared to similar sized towns/cities?

Response

Thank you for your question. The committee will be scrutinising the evidence and rationale for the proposed decision of Cabinet and will ensure that this issue is explored. I have asked for further information on this point to be published in advance of the committee meeting to inform our consideration of the matter.

Supplementary

The supplementary reply cannot be right. Paragraph 1 said detailed traffic modelling is to be undertaken and that conflicts with paragraph 4 about monitoring of journey times. Para 4 is obviously ‘tosh’ otherwise nobody would use the tube. Can I be sure that the council has assessed the success of the previous A49 route alterations in terms of journey times? For instance the A49 by-pass at the town of Weaverham promised alleviation of congestion, economic growth and better living standards just like Hereford. However, twenty years later in their design and parish landscape statement they said that the High Street is very narrow and that it’s insufficient for some of the heavy goods vehicles that continue to use it, and the large scale developments may add to this problem. Because of this it has in recent years been overwhelmed by modern traffic which has contributed to it decline as a commercial centre. After this road building failure, doesn’t it seem perverse that Herefordshire Council is seeking to follow this disastrous route which will lead to a decline in our city and can the chair tell me when comparative traffic flow information will be properly open to scrutiny before the decision of the preferred route?

Response

The committee explored the issues raised by your question. Traffic modelling will be undertaken as part of the next phase of development. Comparison of average journey times with other cities are not appropriate given the significant range of variables involved relating to each location.

Question 7

Mr S Williams – Hereford

In the Foreword to the bypass consultation document it is stated that "without new infrastructure, we will have no chance of delivering our ambitious plans to establish a world class university". Does this mean that if the bypass is not built, there can, and will, be no university?

Response

Thank you for your question. The committee will be scrutinising the evidence and rationale for the proposed decision of Cabinet and will ensure that this issue is explored. I have asked for further information on this point to be published in advance of the committee meeting to inform our consideration of the matter.

Question 8

Mr R Palgrave – How Caple

The final recommendation for pre-decision scrutiny today seeks authorisation for further expenditure to progress work to inform future decisions on the Hereford Transport Package. In support, on page 15 under "Alternative Options", the report says, "Not progressing this work will mean the HTP objectives and core strategy growth targets cannot be achieved."

To allow this claim to be given appropriate weight, would the Scrutiny Committee ask that Cabinet publish any evidence relied on during development of the core strategy to support the assertion (in Appendix 5 of the Core Strategy on page 46) that only circa 4800 indicative net housing could be delivered prior to delivery of the Hereford Relief Road by 2027?

Response

Thank you for your question. The query that you raise does not form part of the proposed decision of Cabinet which the committee will be scrutinising. The rationale and evidence base for a new road and growth targets has been explored through the Local Plan Core Strategy and Local Transport Plan processes and informed the decisions of full Council when they adopted these plans.

Supplementary

(repeated original question)

Response:

The information that you are requesting was published as part of the core strategy and local transport plan preparations and is available at:

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/123/adopted_core_strategy

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200185/local_plan/137/local_plan_-_core_strategy/1

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200136/travel_and_transport/220/local_transport_plan/1

Question 9

Dr N Geeson – Hereford

The consultation report makes no mention of any written responses from Highways England or Natural England. If they have been part of ongoing discussions rather than responding to the consultation, why are these documents not publicly available?

Response

Thank you for your question. The committee will be scrutinising the evidence and rationale for the proposed decision of Cabinet and will ensure that this issue is explored. I have asked for further information on this point to be published in advance of the committee meeting to inform our consideration of the matter.

Supplementary

On page 325 of appendix 1 – we read this from the Campaign for Better Transport: 'like the woodland trust we doubt that either of the two proposed bridging points over the river wye does actually avoid ancient woodland as claimed'. I know that the woodland trust met with Herefordshire Council on 22 February to talk about the threat to woodland from a by-pass. Especially about their own Drovers Wood, but there is no mention of their views in these scrutiny agenda documents. Why not? And how many other unreported consultations from other organisation are missing and cannot be scrutinised?

Response

The committee explored the issue of unreported consultation responses raised by your question and received confirmation that all responses received are referenced. A number of meetings were held with interested parties, at their request, to provide them with further information. However not all organisations then went on to respond to the consultation.

Question 10

Ms D Toynbee - Hereford

The first stage of the Hereford 'Bypass' - the Southern Link Road - is not a confirmed project. Land acquisition is contingent on compulsory purchase orders being confirmed, which could take until 2019, after the public inquiry this autumn. A second planning application awaits permission, and the business case to release £27m from the Department for Transport has still not been submitted! To avoid a potential waste of public money funding a third consultation on the preferred route for the 'Bypass', and developing a detailed design for the road, would it not be prudent to wait until we know if the Southern Link Road is viable?

Response

Thank you for your question. The committee will be scrutinising the evidence and rationale for the proposed decision of Cabinet and will ensure that this issue is explored. I have asked for further information on this point to be published in advance of the committee meeting to inform our consideration of the matter.

Question11

Mrs C Palgrave – How Caple

It is reported that in the HTP public consultation only 1789 questionnaires (out of 4351, equalling 41%) showed support for a bypass and that only 1747 respondents (40%) answered the question "Which Bypass route would you prefer?" A significantly higher number (2427) of respondents said active travel measures should be included in the Package. Does this not clearly indicate that active travel measures should be a higher priority than building the bypass?

Response

Thank you for your question. The committee will be scrutinising the evidence and rationale for the proposed decision of Cabinet and will ensure that this issue is explored. I have asked for further information on this point to be published in advance of the committee meeting to inform our consideration of the matter.

Question 12

H Powers – Breinton

The consultation report states that Red route had the second lowest level of support from respondents. To what extent were the views of residents taken account of in selecting the Red route as the preferred option?

Response

Thank you for your question. The committee will be scrutinising the evidence and rationale for the proposed decision of Cabinet and will ensure that this issue is explored. I have asked for further information on this point to be published in advance of the committee meeting to inform our consideration of the matter.

Supplementary

More organisations who responded to the consultation were against any of the route options, including the red route, than those who were in favour. Were the responses from organisations appropriately weighted when compared to individual response?

Response

The committee explored the issues raised by your question. Responses from organisations were, appropriately, given the same weighting as those from individuals.

Question 13

Ms K Sharp - Hereford

In the recent Statement of Case for the SLR, there is reference to an 'area wide transport model' created on SATURN (in appendix - Mrs Sharp, objection letter number 14, point 5) to inform how journey times would allegedly significantly improve in the South Wye once the SLR is built. To date there has been no sign of the model or its findings. Please now supply the raw data as well as the results of the model and evidence please that a similar model has been created and analysed by the Cabinet as part of the proposed decision to select a preferred route for Hereford bypass as part of the Hereford Transport package.

Response

Thank you for your question. The query that you raise in relation to the Southern Link Road does not form part of the proposed decision of Cabinet which the committee will be scrutinising. The committee will be scrutinising the evidence and rationale for the proposed decision of Cabinet in relation to the Hereford Transport Package and will ensure that the issue you raised in relation to this is explored. I have asked for further information on this point to be published in advance of the committee meeting to inform our consideration of the matter.

Question 14

L Stephens - Hereford

The cabinet report claims that one of the objectives of the Hereford Transport package is to reduce the impacts of noise and air quality from transport within the city. How will the red route achieve this when it is designated to be a 60mph trunk road passing through residential housing estates of over 2000 new homes inside the city boundary.

Response

Thank you for your question. The committee will be scrutinising the evidence and rationale for the proposed decision of Cabinet and will ensure that this issue is explored. I have asked for further information on this point to be published in advance of the committee meeting to inform our consideration of the matter.

Question 15

Mr A Gilliat - Breinton

Having witnessed capacity problems with the Worcester bypass and seeing Roman Road already becoming choked, how can a single carriageway version around Hereford become other than a circular traffic jam?

Response

Thank you for your question. The committee will be scrutinising the evidence and rationale for the proposed decision of Cabinet and will ensure that this issue is explored. I have asked for further information on this point to be published in advance of the committee meeting to inform our consideration of the matter.

Question 16

Mr S Allen - Hereford

The Hereford western bypass is ostensibly intended to reduce traffic on the A49 through Hereford city. It is also intended to facilitate the building of 6,500 new homes in the western part of the city. The residents of those new homes would, on a conservative estimate, own perhaps 10,000 cars, which they would use to travel into Hereford city centre. What projections has Herefordshire Council obtained to show that the resulting increase in local traffic using the A49 at, for example, the "Old Market" roundabout junction with the A438, would not be greater than the corresponding decrease in through traffic which would use the bypass instead?

Response

Thank you for your question. The committee will be scrutinising the evidence and rationale for the proposed decision of Cabinet and will ensure that this issue is explored. I have asked for further information on this point to be published in advance of the committee meeting to inform our consideration of the matter.

Question 17

Mr T Kidson, Hereford

We would like you to evaluate the cost and benefits of park and ride, electric buses and safe cycleways for Hereford before any further work is done on the bypass. Please advise.

Response

Thank you for your question. The committee will be scrutinising the evidence and rationale for the proposed decision of Cabinet and will ensure that this issue is explored. I have asked for further information on this point to be published in advance of the committee meeting to inform our consideration of the matter.