

Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from members of the public

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Ms Liddle, Ledbury	Will the Cabinet Member consider making provision in the Council's budget to undertake a gender audit of the Core Strategy as part of its review this year, along the lines of Together For Equality and Respect's (TFER) Gender Audit Tool and Guidelines (http://whe.org.au/tfer/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/06/Gender-Audit-Tool-and-Guidelines1.pdf), to ensure that the legal requirement for 'due regard to equality' is fulfilled under the Public Sector Equality Duty?	Cabinet member infrastructure
<p>Response: The request appears to focus on only one of the protected characteristic groups. The council carries out an equality impact assessment that relates to all protected characteristic groups when determining policy changes or other decision-making. This was done to inform the adoption of the current core strategy (and is available on the council's website) and will be done as part of the process for review and adoption of any revised core strategy; I understand the processes of review will begin later this year. The council's proposed budget includes provision to support this work ensuring that we continue to fulfil our public sector equality duties.</p>			
<p>Supplementary Question: Will you provide the assessment that was carried out of the current Core Strategy and an explanation as to how it does not discriminate against people identifying as women of all ages, religions, ethnicities, abilities and sexual orientations?</p>			
<p>Response from cabinet member to supplementary question: The cabinet confirmed that he would provide a response and make it available.</p>			
PQ 2	Ms Sharp, Hereford	The budget for the SLR, part of the SWTP, is re-forecast to cost £29.73 million with just £5 million now left for Active Transport Measures in South Wye – not £8million previously promised. Cllr Price assured me by email, December 1 st 2016; '£8 million is and has been in the Council budget and will fund the active travel as described as part of the recent public consultation.' Further, at Cabinet on 16 th November 2017 Cllr Price confirmed in answer to my public question; 'The budget for the active travel is £8 million and will be used for that purpose'. What assurances can Cllr Price honestly give about this issue bearing in mind the 2016 public consultation can now be revealed as a sham and his track record on budgets seems to be rooted in empty promises and 'stabs in the dark'?	Cabinet member infrastructure
<p>Response:</p>			

In all the responses I have given to date about this matter I have always given assurance that the South Wye Transport Package (SWTP) active travel measures would be funded, and funding for this package would not be spent elsewhere. This commitment has not changed and I will be confirming soon the preferred package of schemes to be included in the SWTP business case to be submitted to DfT later this year.

The 2016 public consultation was far from being a sham. The feedback gained by this consultation was very positive, gives a clear mandate for delivery of the improvements in the South Wye area, and will continue to inform our decision-making.

In my responses that you refer to in your question, the figure of £8m for active travel measures I referenced was based on my understanding at that time of the estimated active travel measure costs. However I would also draw attention to a response I gave to another public question at the same meeting in November 2017 about cost/budget estimates relating to complex transport package schemes. That response stated: "I fully expect the final actual figures to differ from these estimates – that is normal and to be expected on a project of this scale being developed over a period of time and in accordance with relevant guidance. Any changes will be authorised and reported as they arise."

The active travel measures costs were set out in the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) in 2014 and are based on the detail known at that time. These are as follows:

Package Element	Capital Cost £
A465 public realm scheme to reduce severance and encourage use of active modes	3,000,000
A465/A49 Southern link (including risk adjustment at 50%)	29,729,000
Cycle and walking schemes in Belmont	1,000,000
Cycle and walking schemes in Bullingham	1,000,000

It is the SOBC costs that are referred to in paragraph 27 of the Capital Programme 2019/2020 onwards, the capital strategy document, and the South Wye Transport Package - southern link road land acquisitions cabinet member report of 12 November 2018; they are not a reforecast as your question suggests.

The cabinet member report of 12 November 2018 set out clearly that spend to end of 2017/2018 on the SWTP project totals £4,977,931.67 with funding of £3,843,609.71 received from the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) growth fund. Drawdown of the remainder of the grant will commence following the sign-off of the full business case by DfT. The report set out that the council has funded £1,134,321.96 of capital costs to end 2017/2018. This report also sets out that spend in 2018/2019 is forecast as £1.75m which will be funded from the council's Local Transport Plan grant in advance of drawing down Marches LEP grant.

The project funding to the end of financial year 2017/2018 has enabled the SWTP project to be developed and consulted on; this includes work on both the Southern Link Road (SLR) and the active travel measures (ATM) which will form part of the SWTP. We have considered options for the SWTP to confirm a preferred package of SLR and ATM schemes and carried out a detailed consultation in 2014 on route options and possible

complimentary ATMs which would form the SWTP. We have developed a business case for the full SWTP project (not just the road) including traffic surveys and modelling work to support economic assessment of the scheme in future years. We held a comprehensive consultation in 2016 on the possible complementary improvement schemes to support package development. The full business case for the scheme will be submitted later in the year, and will include a preferred package of schemes for delivery with the SLR. This full final business case will provide an updated estimated cost of both the SLR and ATMs and will be published on the council's website at that time. It is entirely appropriate in a significant scheme of this scale developed over a period of years for cost estimates to be revised and I fully expect them to continue to be so as the project progresses. This is neither an indication of an empty promise or a stab in the dark; it is sound programme development and implementation.

PQ 3	Dr Jamieson, Ross-on-Wye	Government has signalled that all councils will have to provide food waste collections from residential properties by 2023. Anaerobic Digestion (AD) of food waste is a proven way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and AD is widely used in Herefordshire to process agricultural waste. Does the Herefordshire Capital Strategy 2018-2030 make any provision for the likely costs of implementing arrangements to collect food waste?	Cabinet member contracts and assets
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Response:

I understand that the government intends to consult on future arrangements for food waste collections in the coming months and will confirm the final policy requirements of its Resource and Waste Strategy having regard to the outcome of that consultation. The government has indicated that councils will receive additional resource to meet any new net costs; pending confirmation of both the policy requirements and central government funding it would be premature to include provision in the capital strategy.

The council continues to support measures to reduce the amount of food waste collected through the current service by encouraging waste prevention initiatives such as the national 'love food hate waste' campaign and home composting.

PQ 4	Dr Geeson, Hereford	At the moment there are two public consultations that overlap in their subject matter. The Draft Hereford Design Guide consultation includes a movement framework. The current Hereford Transport Package consultation is strangely not about ALL of Hereford, and does not mention plans for the City Centre or South Wye. Both consultations address improving public open space, but with very different and contradictory responses. The different approaches and spatial coverage of the consultant reports are confusing, and will not result in any clear overall action plan. My Question is, why is the budget of the council being spent on two different sets of consultants each being paid for similar appraisals?	Cabinet member infrastructure
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Response:

Whilst it is recognised that the Hereford Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and the Hereford Transport Package (HTP) both reference transport in Hereford, they remain separate pieces of work.

The role of the Design Guide SPD is to provide design guidance and good practice advice to help developers, applicants and council officers improve the quality of design in new development, public realm and movement projects across the city. The SPD will also inform emerging policies

within the Hereford Area Plan. As a result the council considered it appropriate to appoint a specialist urban design consultant to lead on the preparation of the document.

On the other hand, the HTP is a specific range of measures designed to improve the way we move about the city and give people more choice about how they travel. The HTP includes the Hereford Bypass to the west of the city and a series of walking, cycling and bus measures for short distance journeys. The current consultation focuses on the walking, cycling, bus and public space improvements within the HTP. The work on the HTP is being undertaken by transport consultants from WSP and Balfour Beatty.

The consultants have been in discussion with each other to ensure consistency between the work and the development of the HTP active travel measures have considered the draft design guide. This dialogue will continue as the projects are advanced. The detailed design of the HTP, following consultation, will continue to refer to the design guide, which will itself be further developed following consultation. Both projects are subject to appropriate budgetary processes to ensure value for money.

Supplementary Question:

There are overlaps and contradictions between the two current consultations for the Hereford Transport Package (HTP) and the draft Hereford Design Guide that make each very misleading; there is no overall picture. What was or is the budget for each of these two consultations?

Response from cabinet member to supplementary question:

The cabinet member confirmed that the HTP and the Hereford Design Guide were two very different projects. The budget for the Hereford Design Guide could be made available. The HTP budget would need to be finalised at a later date when it would be made available.

PQ 5	Ms Ovenstall, Dulas	Herefordshire Council has a good record of reducing carbon emissions and environment protection. What is the budget allocated to this work and is it ring-fenced?	Cabinet member infrastructure
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Response:

I am pleased that Ms Ovenstall recognises the excellent record the Council has in tackling carbon emissions and environmental protection in Herefordshire. The council recognises the importance of this work, as reflected in the proposed 2019/20 budgets.

The work on environmental protection is primarily undertaken by the council's regulatory services, which spans the protection of air, land and water quality as well as general environmental protection and pollution control work and the environmental management of our closed landfill sites. In 2019/20 we are proposing expenditure of circa £678,000, being offset with income from statutory fees in the order of £84,000, meaning we expect a net cost of about £594,000.

The tackling of the council's impact on carbon emissions is primarily undertaken by the council's environment & waste services. In 2019/20 we are proposing expenditure of circa £4.51m, being offset with grant income in the order of £1.67m, meaning we expect a net cost of about £2.84m.

Although these budgets are not ring fenced as such, budget movements are governed by our financial procedure rules available on the council's website.

Supplementary Question:

Will the council respond to the climate emergency and increase the budget to take action on carbon reduction and would it be responsible for rolling this out to all local businesses etc.?

Response from cabinet member to supplementary question:

The cabinet member explained that he was proud of the record of the council in reducing carbon emissions and it would be a matter for the next Council, after the elections in May, to determine how it would respond to the challenge of climate change.

PQ 6

Mr Milln, Hereford

The alternative budget proposed by It's Our County challenges Council to develop plans to achieve a reduction in carbon emissions of 80% on 1990 levels by 2035. Will Council recognise that most of the other councils cited by IOC in their budget (at para 3.42) as having declared a climate emergency have called for a reduction of 100% by 2030, i.e. carbon neutrality, which is more closely aligned with the most recent scientific assessments of the risk?

Cabinet member
infrastructure**Response:**

I would refer to the answer given to the previous question and confirm that I am not at all complacent about the need to continue to act to reduce carbon emissions and other harmful environmental contributors to global climate change. However while targets and aspirational statements may grab headlines I prefer to take an informed and practical approach to delivering those reductions and want to be assured about how we can deliver sustained and meaningful improvement in the county before setting any target – particularly one of 100% which is unlikely to be deliverable however much I may wish it.

It is important to note the great strides Herefordshire Council has already made to lead a local reduction in countywide emissions. The most recent statistics (for 2016) show a countywide emission reduction of 32.5%; this is in line with the current emission reduction pathways set out within the latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

I'm also pleased to confirm that the council is currently on track to exceed its 40% reduction target by 2020/21 and will be developing the third edition of our carbon management plan over the next year – targets will be reviewed as part of that process. To inform the development of this plan, and ensure that we have explored the options open to us to help in the global action needed to address climate change, I will be asking the General Scrutiny Committee to build into their work programme for 2019/20 consideration of the policy options and practical actions available to us.

PQ 7

Ms Toynee,
Hereford

It is shocking to see in the provisional settlement that just £1 million is due for Herefordshire Council from central government. This is less than 1% of the 2019-20 Herefordshire Council budget! Please could council let us know what efforts they made to influence government, and our local MPs, to obtain a grant that would enable them to provide the services we need?

Cabinet member
finance and
corporate services**Response:**

The council works with its local government colleagues through the Local Government Association, the County Councils' Network, Society of County Treasurers and SPARSE to lobby for fairer funding. For 2019/20 this helped secure additional funding for rural councils, £1m for Herefordshire. The council regularly briefs its MPs on the pressures facing the county and works with partner councils, both through the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership and regional networks, to set out the county's case.

The provisional settlement for 2019/20 confirmed the four year settlement agreed in 2017/18 and additional funding for rural and social care services plus EU exit preparations, this is shown below:-

	£000
Revenue support grant	624
Rural services delivery grant	5,101
Business Rates top up grant	9,281
Adult social care grant	2,385
New homes bonus	2,176
EU exit preparations	105
Total	19,672

Additionally the council actively pursues relevant central government funding opportunities and, on the strength of the evidence based cases developed, has secured additional funding towards road infrastructure and broadband delivery as well as enabled other bodies such as NMiTE and the voluntary and community sector to secure much needed grant funding into the county

Supplementary question:

Given that all cabinet members are Conservative councillors can we take it that our cabinet approves of, supports and defends their party's policy of impoverishing and weakening local government?

Response from cabinet member to supplementary question:

The Conservative group forms the administration and cabinet at the council but there is an ongoing dialogue with central government. Lobbying of central government also takes place through the Local Government Association (LGA) and SPARSE Rural which raises concerns on behalf of rural areas over methodologies of funding. The Conservative group supports the government but raises issues with local MPs and lobbies the government through the LGA and SPARSE Rural.

PQ 8	Ms Lagoutte, Hereford	The Core Strategy of 2015 set out the council's ambitions for providing much needed social housing across the county. Please can the Cabinet Member responsible explain how these budget proposals can fulfil this strategy?	Cabinet member infrastructure
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Response:

Significant provision of some £40m is made within the 2018 – 30 Capital Strategy to support the Development and Regeneration Programme. This funding will be used to support not only commercial development opportunities but also the development of new housing, including affordable housing, on council-owned sites, through our partnership with Keepmoat Homes. The recent approval of planning permission at Bromyard includes the requirement that 40% of the new homes provided will be affordable. A further £800k per annum 2018 – 2021, totalling £2.4m, has been allocated

towards Affordable Housing Grants to enable the council to support the development of affordable housing, including supported housing for our most vulnerable residents.

In addition, the revenue budgets include provision for a strategic housing function that will continue to support and direct our partners to deliver new affordable housing working alongside the Neighbourhood Development Planning and Strategic Planning teams whose work is important in helping local communities to identify suitable sites for new housing, including affordable housing, to meet their local needs.

I am satisfied, therefore, that the budget proposals include opportunities for significant investment in supporting the delivery of affordable housing.

PQ 9	Mr Palgrave, Hereford	In their alternative budget, It's Our County have proposed that Council should own and rent out new affordable / social housing. Will the responsible Cabinet member commit to give this proposal full consideration and will he take account of the additional information provided by IOC in their Response to Scrutiny Recommendations which addressed concerns raised about the "Right to Acquire" legislation?	Cabinet member health and wellbeing
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Response:

We continue to explore all options for ensuring an appropriate and balanced housing supply within Herefordshire. A number of councils have started developing new homes through the creation of arms-length companies or joint ventures using, in many cases, borrowing as a means of funding new development. Through these arrangements, they maintain ownership of the dwellings but also need to establish staffing and maintenance budgets and carry the contracting and commercial risk on any new development. This council's development partnership (DRP) with Keepmoat Homes Ltd allows Herefordshire Council to develop its own land for new housing, securing capital receipts whilst limiting exposure to financing, commercial and housing market risks. It also allows the council greater control over the type of market/affordable housing delivered to meet its strategic and operational needs.

Whilst the typical approach for the ownership, management and maintenance of the affordable housing would be via a Registered Provider we will be considering, having regard to the forward pipeline of housing developments, the potential for establishing joint venture or arm's length company arrangements for the management of private rented and affordable dwellings. This will include assessment of the costs of funding new developments and the establishment of ongoing organisational, management and maintenance arrangements.

PQ 10	Mr Guest, Llanwarne	How does the money provided in the 2019/2020 budget to subsidise bus services compare with subsidies in the previous 3 years?	Cabinet member transport & regulatory services
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Response:

The council provides significant financial support for bus use within the county. This includes direct subsidy of bus services which are not commercially viable but provide important access and mobility for local residents, the cost of support the concessionary travel scheme which provides free travel on buses for OAPs and disabled people and funds used to promote bus services. The table below summarises the budget for these contributions for 2019/20 and the previous three years:

	Route Subsidy (NET)	Concessionary Travel	Publicity
2019/20	£740k	£1.25m	£63k
2018/19	£725k	£1.25m	£63k
2017/18	£677k	£1.31m	£63k
2016/17	£622k	£1.47m	£63k
Total	£2.8m	£5.3m	£252k

Of the three million bus journeys made each year in Herefordshire, around 37% (1.1million) are supported by a financial subsidy from the council. In consultation with users we have identified the need to continue to support a 'core network' of bus services that operate between the market towns and larger villages and Hereford on a regular pattern during the day from Monday to Saturday. Our aim, in the context of reducing public sector funding, is to protect this network. We are currently able to support a more extensive network through conventional, rural bus services but our ability to maintain this network will be subject to funding.

In addition to directly supported services, the council also makes a substantial contribution to supporting free transport through the English National Concessionary travel Scheme. This includes reimbursing operators for pass holders using both council supported bus services and those that are operated commercially. In 2017/18 pass holders undertook just under one million journeys and there are over 28,000 registered pass holders in the county.

These figures do not include subsidies relating to children and young people's travel to school/college.

PQ 11	Ms Herrington, Ledbury	I understand that £2.5m has been budgeted for creation of adult respite centre. I think this is a wonderful and much needed idea, However, at the other end of the age spectrum, those youngsters that need similar respite i.e. the disabled youngsters/teenagers have had their in county respite centre closed 2 years ago and nothing suitable has been put in place for them. What happens to all those youngsters who are in need of in county unit based respite; there will always be those that need this. Should there not be a similar amount pledged to the youngsters?	Cabinet member children and families
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Response:

I would like to clarify that the £2.5m that the question refers to within the proposed capital programme is for Hillside. This is not to provide a respite centre for adults, but to provide nursing care for adults with high level needs.

There are individual children and families that do and will continue to need respite care. The small numbers of young people requiring respite care mean that the viability of a bespoke facility has not been evidenced in our work to date.

There are usually around 20 disabled children and young people that may need some additional support from the council through an overnight short break. Most overnight short breaks are provided in a family environment by specialist foster carers through the council's sleepover scheme. Other children are able to access breaks provided by hospice services in Herefordshire or specialist children's homes in neighbouring counties.

Although a small number of children are travelling out of county to access overnight support. Feedback from parents has highlighted that, even though distances are not ideal, the majority are happy with the quality of support provided. Where families prefer not to access the existing provision, or believes it does not meet their needs, the council works with them to find other ways to meet the needs through direct payments that can provide support tailored to their child.