

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 26 September

Question 1

Ms J Morris, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

In addition to their public realm contract, BBLP and WSP have provided additional professional expertise at council meetings as well as extra design resources and environmental assessments. The Council claims that every new fee proposals from these companies, which is treated as an extension to the existing contract, is reviewed and monitored and subjected to detailed change control mechanisms. With the SWTP still not on the new Verto Capital monitoring system in March 2019 and over £4.million spent in professional fees with these companies, would the cabinet member please explain what work has been done to confirm that these additional contract costs are within the detailed, up to date budgets and are competitive despite not going out to tender.

Response

The SWTP project management and design functions provided by BBLP are services which are within scope of defined services of the Public Realm Service Delivery contract and these services were therefore commissioned using this contract and are not an extension as the question suggests. The process of commissioning this work involves detailed scrutiny of fee proposals before commissioning and any changes to commissions during delivery are managed through the contract change control mechanism.

Approved budgets, spend and forecast spend reports are monitored as part of the project management of the programme as well as being reported to cabinet. The £4m figure referred to in the question is not recognised. The scheme is managed using the councils VERTO system and the current forecast project cost remains within the £35m budget set out in the 2014 Strategic Outline Business Case for the project. In addition, each report informing decisions about this project and published on the council's website contains a summary of scheme budget and cost forecasts.

Question 2

Mrs J Tonge, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Can the cabinet member confirm that the time savings quoted for a bypass in the 2018 HTP Consultation leaflets were 'made up', and not the result of any detailed modelling?

Response

No I cannot. Officers have confirmed to me that the journey time statements set out in the 2018 Hereford Transport Package public consultation materials were based on traffic modelling outputs available at the time of publication taken from the traffic model established for Hereford. This model has been developed in accordance with Department for Transport specification and can be used to understand how a wide range of transport projects, including walking, cycling public transport and road schemes would work.

The consultation brochure compares a journey time on the A49 in 2032 with the bypass scheme open to a present day journey time on the A49. The information presented is based on the 2016 traffic model. Should the bypass scheme progress, traffic modelling work would continue and

further traffic modelling information would be set out in future public consultations about the scheme.

Question 3

Dr N Geeson, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

At the last meeting of the General Scrutiny Committee (23 July 2019) I asked about the Hereford Transport Package Consultation on Walking/Cycling/Buses that had closed on 11th March 2019, and when the results of the consultation would be available. I was told that “the HTP consultation feedback is being analysed and a report summarising this feedback will be presented to the new administration cabinet later this summer and will published on the council’s website at that time”. Is this important feedback now available please?

Response

I agree that it is important to publish the results of this consultation.

The public consultation report was not completed whilst the new cabinet took some time to review the Hereford Transport & South Wye Transport projects following the election. However the report will be finalised and published shortly.

Question 4

Mrs J Richards, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that the number of lorries (HGV’s) crossing the Greyfriars Bridge has actually fallen consistently since 2000?

Response

No it is not possible for me to confirm this. We don’t have automatic count information which separates out HGVs from other vehicles from before 2010. The data we do have access to from the permanent traffic counter on Greyfriars Bridge records the number of vehicles greater than 6.6m (which would include HGVs). We have this data from 2010 from this recorder which shows that the number of such vehicles has fluctuated over this period. This is set out in the following table:

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
AA DT (all vehicles)	46522	46304	46388	45735	46464	46701	46386	46018	45511
AA DT >6.6m	5350	5337	5107	5096	5285	5098	5149	5338	5552
AA DT <6.6m	41172	40968	41282	40641	41179	41604	41237	40680	39959

Question 5

Ms H Thomas, H Weston and Sons Ltd, Much Marcle

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

If there is no bypass for Hereford City, is Herefordshire Council now advocating that all HGVs must drive through Hereford City Centre to get to their onward destination?

Response

No this is certainly not what I am advocating. I took the decision to pause the bypass scheme to allow further time to review the scheme (which would include HGV movements and impacts) in more detail. I am concerned that as currently developed, the bypass and the southern link road may not be compatible with the climate challenge, carbon reduction and emerging policy and that there may be other options that could deliver transport and growth objectives and these should be considered. All options need to be considered as we look to the long term and towards providing a high quality, integrated and low carbon transport system for the whole of Herefordshire, not just for the immediate future but for generations to come.

Question 6

Mr R Palgrave, How Caple

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

At Council's Cabinet meeting in January 2018, the minutes report: "The cabinet member infrastructure responded that the eastern route for a bypass was not a viable alternative and that the enterprise zone was booming. The cabinet member economy and communications stated that unemployment in Herefordshire was at an historic low and that the enterprise zone had been highly successful." Does the current cabinet member for Infrastructure believe that in the subsequent 18 months, the Hereford Enterprise zone has gone from boom to bust and that the delay in completing the Southern Link Road is to blame?

Response

I do not believe the Hereford Enterprise Zone to be 'bust'. It continues to be highly successful, a number of major developments are underway such as the £9million development of the Cyber Quarter - Midlands Centre for Cyber Security (through a joint venture between the council and the University of Wolverhampton) and the £7 million development of business incubation space in the former World War One Shell Store.

The council recently approved £5m of funding in August to support the next phase of infrastructure works required to bring brownfield sites back into economic use, in response to a high demand for business space on the Enterprise Zone.

Question 7

Mr D Hinksman, H Weston and Sons Ltd, Much Marcle

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

If there is no bypass are the council confident that the alternative routes that drivers currently take to avoid congestion – Holme Lacy bridge, Mordiford Bridge and Bridge Sollers bridge – are

routes capable of carrying this additional traffic; not only cars but HGVs too. Increasingly Mordiford bridge is gridlocked as lorries try to negotiate it.

Response

I have not at any time since my election suggested that the rural routes you refer to in your question are the appropriate routes for HGV traffic to travel on and there are already restrictions in place which prevents this on the route through Holme Lacy and Mordiford. As I set out in my response to question 5 the decision to pause and review the bypass scheme will enable options to be considered for a high quality, integrated and low carbon transport system for the whole of Herefordshire.

Question 8

Mr A Morwiecki, Breinton

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

The 2017 investigation into Blueschool House required capital projects to have a fully auditable budget with costs tracked against spend. The Council website reports that in response “the chief executive made a statement in which he:

- apologised unreservedly for what had taken place
- accepted all the recommendations made by the auditors”.

The November 2018 public inquiry on the SWTP heard the only budget available was the 2014 Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). The public have since been told that the 2014 SOBC budget was not an “approved budget”. The funding for the SWTP ATMs has been cut from £8million to £5million and professional fees of £4.7Million are over the £750,000 budget in the SOBC. If the Chief Executive agreed the Internal Audit recommendations, where is the approved detailed budget for the SWTP with costs tracked against it?

Response

Approved budget, actual spend and spend forecasts for the South Wye Transport Project are monitored as part of the project management of the project as well as being reported to cabinet. The scheme is managed using the councils VERTO system and the current forecast project cost remains within the £35m budget set out in the 2014 Strategic Outline Business Case. In addition, each report informing decisions about this project and published on the council’s website contains a summary of scheme budget and cost forecasts. The ATM budget has not been cut from £8m to £5m as your question suggests. The 2014 SWTP SOBC document sets out an estimated ATM cost of £5m within the overall scheme budget of £35m and this has not been reduced. I am not clear what the figure of £750k in your question refers to. It is not from the 2014 SOBC document and it is not correct to suggest that this figure represents the current approved budget for SWTP fees.

Question 9

Mr E Morfett, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Can the Councillor for infrastructure confirm that average annual traffic passing over Greyfriars Bridge has barely increased since 2000 and remained around 45,000 per day since 2012, based on Department of Transport road counts?

See: (<https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/manualcountpoints/36537>).

Response

The council holds automatic traffic count data for the Greyfriars Bridge dating back to 2006. In assessing changing flows since this period we have commenced at 2007 as this is the point at which the ASDA roundabout work was completed. The table below summarises the data for Greyfriars Bridge which is held by the council. This indicates that traffic flows have fluctuated slightly between a high of 47,133 and low of 45,511 during this period.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
AADT (all vehicles)	46,412	47,133	46,734	46,522	46,304	46,388	45,735	46,464	46,701	46,386	46,018	45,511

Question 10

Mr M Churchward, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Can the Cabinet member confirm that Highways England did not require a cap on vehicle traffic leaving Asda or the Old Market shopping development but did so for the HEZ?

Response

The ASDA food store and Oldmarket development did not have an LDO associated with them. The ASDA food store was permitted in March 2005 as part of a planning application for a number of uses whilst the outline planning permission for the Old Market shopping development was permitted in 2011. There were no "traffic caps" required by the Highways Agency as part of these permissions but the planning application for each included a detailed assessment of traffic that would be generated by the development, the impact on the highway network including the trunk road network and mitigation works to ensure there was no detriment as a result of the development – this involved junction improvements as part of the Asda development.

The Hereford Enterprise Zone Local Development Order contributes to the development of Hereford Enterprise Zone by applying simplifying planning arrangements to avoid the need for individual planning applications where proposals accord with the conditions imposed by the LDO. The conditions of the LDO exclude development that would either on its own or in combination with other development lead to an increase in morning and afternoon peak hour trip generation above a trip limit agreed between Herefordshire Council and Highways England in a separate Memorandum of Understanding.

However, the LDO does not prevent development taking place which is not expressly permitted through the Order. Proposals for such development would be subject to the normal planning application process and may proceed if planning permission is granted. In addition, proposals which constitute permitted development would still be able to proceed without the need for planning permission from Herefordshire Council whether covered by this LDO or not.

Question 11

Mr D Allison, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Can the Cabinet member confirm that the overall traffic across the bridge (@45000 annual average daily flow) has not increased since 2012 and barely increased since 2000?

Response

Please see the response to question 9.

Question 12

Ms L Lewis, Breinton

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Can the Cabinet member confirm that Highway England's own figures show that Herefordshire is in the lowest possible category for businesses dependent on the on the strategic road network?

Response

Highways England has identified Herefordshire as a county with 0-3% forecast growth (2015-2030) in employment in Strategic Road Network-reliant sectors. This is however, not the lowest categorisation, with some parts of the country having less than 0% reliance on the SRN.

Question 13

Ms N Eyles, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

From Freedom of Information requests on the SWTP I note that there is an email in January 2019 from the Marches LEP asking the Head of Infrastructure of Herefordshire Council to re-profile "the outputs for housing units and jobs created" to bring them forward from 2032/33. The Growth Deal funding agreement between Herefordshire Council & Shropshire Council (for the Marches LEP) showed that the road scheme would be completed in 2018/19 and would do nothing to improve journey times; congestion or pollution. What evidence is available to support the request by the Dept for Transport that, despite the delays on this project, that these jobs and new houses will now be delivered ahead of 2032/33?

Response

The request came from the Marches LEP and not from the Department for Transport as the question suggests. It is not unusual for us to review output dates with funders over the life of a project.

It was not requested because the programme for the delivery of scheme has changed from that set out in the original contract. It is not unusual for the programme of a project of this size to change as events occur which were not originally anticipated. The SWTP scheme programme has been updated regularly and programme updates have been provided and agreed every quarter to the Department for Transport and the Marches LEP since the project began.

Question 14

Ms K Sharp, Hereford

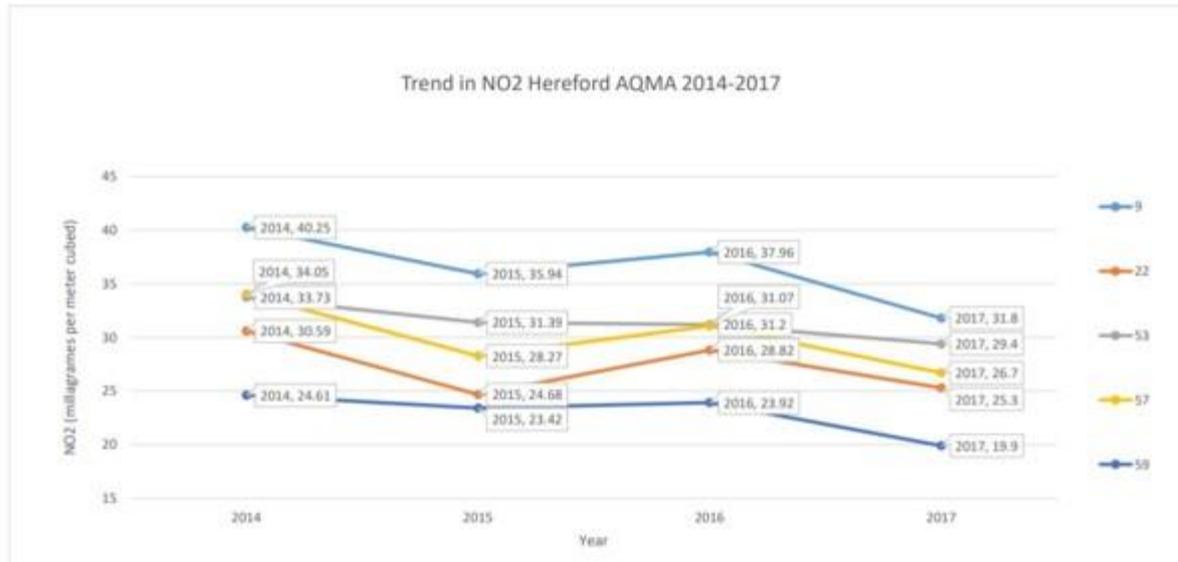
To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Can the Cabinet member confirm that that nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels as an indicator of air pollution have generally fallen, and that the Hereford AQMA now records levels consistently below the national objective level of 40µg/m³?

See:

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200145/business/133/environment_and_pollution

Figure A.1 – Trends in NO₂ Hereford AQMA 2014 - 2017



Response

I cannot confirm that interpretation. The council's environmental health service continue to monitor nitrogen dioxide across the county, including several monitoring points in Hereford's Air Quality Management Area. Although recent reports have implied a reduction in trend, this may be because several monitoring points have had to be moved and therefore a simple comparison is not possible. This is explained more fully in section 3.2.1 of the 2018 Air Quality Annual Status Report which can be accessed at https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/18377/air_quality_annual_status_report_asr_2018.pdf

For this reason, the council will continue to monitor and observe the trend, reporting on this annually.

Question 15

Mrs C Protherough, Clehonger

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Can the Cabinet member confirm that Highways England did not require a cap on vehicle traffic leaving Asda or the Old Market shopping development but did so for the HEZ?

Response

Please see response to question 10.

Question 16

Mr T Meadows, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

According to the previous Cabinet Member for Infrastructure the “Destination Hereford” programme has been successful in increasing walking and cycling levels in Herefordshire since it started in April 2011, and has contributed towards a 5% reduction in car use between 2016 and 2017 and a 26% increase in cycling in the same period. Apparently, this council is the only one in the West Midlands to win funding from all three rounds of the Department for Transport funding programme. With such success in getting residents out of cars, reducing pollution, getting residents active, tackling congestion more quickly and at a much lower cost than road building, what offers better value for the local taxpayer – expensive road schemes which are designed to increase car use, or a good comprehensive network of active travel measures across the city?

Response

I agree that behavioural change initiatives like Destination Hereford and investment in active travel measures can offer good value for money and be successful in encouraging people to use modes other than the car. Appropriate road schemes which are not designed to increase car use but to mitigate other issues also can offer value for money in the right circumstances. The review of the Hereford Transport Package will enable us to determine what approach or combination of approaches would deliver the best value for the local taxpayer.

Question 17

Mr D Gillam, Peterchurch

To: cabinet member, environment, economy and skills

What steps will the Council take to publicise the Climate & Ecological Emergency and when will the Council create an appropriate communications strategy that helps everyone in Herefordshire to understand the urgency of the situation we are facing?

Response

We take the climate emergency and the protection of our environment extremely seriously. At cabinet today we will be considering the executive response to the resolutions passed by Council in March and July of this year, and what actions to take. A communications strategy will be considered as part of developing the council’s action plan to address these issues.

Question 18

Ms W Ogden, Much Birch

To: cabinet member, environment, economy and skills

In response to the Climate Emergency declared over six months ago please can the Cabinet explain how every Herefordshire Council service and administrative department can give assurance that their actions, policies and contracts are working in ways which support the declaration: in order for the impact of changes/actions needed to be included in the 20/21 budget and longer term plans?

Response

As you will see from the report appearing on today's agenda, in our proposed response to the resolutions passed by Council earlier this year we will be considering the development of a checklist against which our strategies and plans may be assessed going forward, as well as other actions we can take in the short to medium term.

Question 19

Dr K Jamieson, Ross-on-Wye

To: cabinet member, environment, economy and skills

While the commitment to reducing carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 is vital and necessary, carbon is not the only problem. What additional actions will the Council be taking to address the wider ecological crisis that threatens our food supply?

Response

As you will see from the report appearing on today's agenda, in our proposed response to the resolutions passed by Council earlier this year we will be considering what actions to take including potential impacts upon wider ecology and food supply.

Question 20

Mrs C Monkley, Much Marcle

To: cabinet member, environment, economy and skills

It is good to hear that the Council has this month changed to a 100% renewable electricity supplier. This encourages the production of more renewable energy. It does not mean that the Council will be using 100% renewable electricity as the electricity comes from the National Grid which is supplied by a mix of sources. Please will the Council commit to producing all the electricity that Herefordshire (not just the Council) uses, from renewable sources within Herefordshire?

Response

As you will see from the report appearing on today's agenda, in our proposed response to the resolutions passed by Council earlier this year we will be considering updating the council's Carbon Management Plan. The extent to which the production of renewable energy in Herefordshire could contribute to meeting the energy needs of the council will be evaluated as part of that work.

Question 21

Ms P Cramsie, Newton St Margarets

To: cabinet member, environment, economy and skills

Now that you are endorsing the Climate Emergency motion, does this mean that, since time is of the essence, you will consider signing up to already-existing initiatives such as the the Woodland Trust's Tree Charter, which would include the mass planting of trees, and Bee-Friendly's Hedgerow Manifesto, which would enable pollinator corridors to be established across the county, aiding wildlife as well as food security?

Response

As you will see from the report appearing on today's agenda, we will be considering in our proposed response to the resolutions passed by Council earlier this year, what actions to take. Subject to Cabinet's approval of these proposals, I will ensure that the potential benefits of joining existing initiatives such as those referred to are explored as part of developing our action plans.