

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 19 December

Question 1

Councillor Bernard Hunt, Newton Farm Ward

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Given recent traffic incidents and the continuing increase in traffic fume pollution through Hereford City, can the cabinet tell us when they will be announcing positive policies regarding the County's road infrastructure?

Response

Thank you for your question. Tackling traffic congestion and air quality in Hereford is a priority for me and, together with Highways England who manage the A49, I am actively exploring ways of keeping the county moving. Following my decision in October to review the Hereford bypass and southern link road schemes, the scope of this review has been developed and I anticipate confirming this in a formal decision which will be published next month. This will determine the next steps to be undertaken and a timescale for this work. The review will look at other options including an eastern link / river crossing, removal of traffic signals and emergency incident response arrangements to remove blockages on the city's roads, an electric bus fleet for the urban bus network, a very light rail system and further improvements to cycle and pedestrian provision across the city including safer routes to schools. Meanwhile, I am also progressing an ambitious programme of other improvements to deliver public realm and active travel schemes in Hereford. This includes the provision of a high quality transport hub at the train station, public realm improvements on Commercial Road, Blueschool & Newmarket Street, improvements to the public realm in the High Town area and south wye area. The draft budget for next year allocates funding to progress this work.

Question 2

Councillor Nigel Shaw, Bromyard Bringsty Ward

To: leader of the council

The new, alternative, proposal presented by Cllr. Harrington to the LEP in place of the approved SWTP funding project was rejected by Marches LEP by 8 votes to 1 at their emergency board meeting in November. The proposal however remained "confidential" and has been kept secret from councillors and the public ostensibly because of election purdah rules. Now that the election is over will the Leader, in the spirit of openness and transparency, order the immediate publishing of this document so that we can all examine the alternative proposals that his administration have prepared in secret, without any consultation, and not just the cabal of officers, councillors and LEP board members who were privy to the LEP meeting?

Response

The proposal in relation to SWTP was recommended in a report presented by the LEP Executive not Cllr Harrington. However, I agree that it is important for this paper to be made public and I understand that the LEP will shortly be publishing the paper on their website now that purdah has ended.

Question 3

Councillor Bob Matthews, Credenhill Ward

To: leader of the council

The Cabinet Agenda is circulated on a Thursday, a full week before the meeting is due to be held, but the deadline for written questions is 5 PM the following day which gives Members very little time to prepare their questions and submit them to Councillor Services before the deadline expires.

I ask that the deadline be extended until 5PM the following Monday, still giving three clear days before the Cabinet meeting is due to be held. It is after all only democratic that councillors are given the opportunity to hold the administration to account.

Response

The council is committed to open and accountable local decision making and does encourage members of the council and public to engage in local decision making by utilising their right to ask questions at our public committees. In addition to written public and member questions, supplementary questions are also permitted at our public committees. The rules that govern our public and member questions processes are set out in the council's constitution and the timescales are outlined in the cabinet rules.

I will ask the audit and governance committee to consider this.