

Agenda item no. 6 - Questions from members of the council

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 1	Councillor Paul Symonds, Ross East	<p>In July last year this Council asked the Cabinet to adopt the Community Infrastructure Levy no later than January 2021. In the 9 months since then Cabinet has failed to respond to this request.</p> <p>In October you said a response would be included in scoping the Core Strategy review early in 2020, but this has also not happened. It is therefore clear that the Cabinet has no intention of implementing CIL in Herefordshire by January 2021.</p> <p>Please explain why the Cabinet is continuing to disenfranchise our Town and Parish Councils by ignoring the clear wishes of the Council on this matter.</p>	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
<p>Response:</p> <p>In response to your question at Cabinet on 27th November I indicated that this would be a matter that would be considered alongside the scope and timetable for the review and update of the core strategy. That remains the case. In order to properly identify the scope of any core strategy update it is necessary that appropriate resources were identified to undertake the work. The County Plan and budget approved at the last Council meeting identified the core strategy as a priority and allocated resources for 2020-21.</p> <p>Initial work on the core strategy review commenced last autumn. Technical work is underway to inform a report to Cabinet that will set out the full scope of the review, timetable for updating the core strategy and recommend the approach to Community Infrastructure Levy. It is anticipated that this report will be considered within the next three months to determine the future work programme. Work has already progressed on a number of evidence based studies including those related to housing requirements and the transportation review.</p> <p>It is not correct to say that the Cabinet is in any way disenfranchising the County's Town and Parish Councils. In line with government guidance, we have already engaged with both Town and Parish councils on this important issue and a survey questionnaire seeking information to assist with the update of the core strategy has already been sent for them to respond at this early stage. The Leader has recently appointed a Cabinet Support member to work with Town and Parish councils in delivering and managing local priorities and assets. I believe this shows that we are wishing to enfranchise Town and Parish Councils rather than the opposite.</p> <p>I am happy to meet with you and other ward members to discuss this in more detail and to get your thoughts and input into the process.</p>			

Supplementary question:

Assurance was sought that the introduction of the community infrastructure levy could be accomplished by January 2021.

Cabinet member response:

The cabinet member was assured that it could be but an update would be provided on the timeframe.

MQ 2	Councillor Bob Matthew, Credenhill	<p>In the recently approved Corporate Plan, under the heading of ECONOMY it stated “a thriving and prosperous economy is vital if we are to provide sustainable well-paid job opportunities for local people”</p> <p>We have an ever increasing population so more such jobs are urgently needed generally, and in particular to help retain and encourage our many talented young people to remain in the county and seek employment in the local economy.</p> <p>The present administration have been in charge for the past ten months. Can the Cabinet Member for Environment Economy and Skills inform us how many NEW well paid jobs have been created on the Hereford Enterprise Zone during this period of time together with the names of the companies who have created these jobs?</p>	Cabinet member environment, economy and skills
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Response:

Developing out the Hereford Enterprise Zone is a priority for the administration so we continue to support this long term venture. This continues the cycle of the council preparing industrial land ready for sale, private sector businesses buying that land, securing planning, investing in the construction of new premises and then occupying these.

In the period from May 2019 to now 8 companies have moved onto the Hereford Enterprise Zone. These companies are reporting 105 jobs of which 59 are new jobs. The businesses supply the Enterprise Zone with this information on the basis that the data is commercially confidential and will be aggregated as a whole return not a return specific to a particular business. This figure does not take into account jobs created by companies moving into the locations vacated by those moving onto the Hereford Enterprise Zone. The Hereford Enterprise Zone is a success story for Herefordshire. It is developing into a thriving business community with an emphasis on engineering. The prospects for further success with high paid jobs due to the development of the Cyber Centre, Shell Store, courses being run by NMiTE and the building of the Timber Technology Building is very exciting.

Supplementary question:

The additional new jobs were welcomes but more needed to be done. With an upgraded infrastructure police it would be easier to attract businesses.

Cabinet member response:

The Hereford Enterprise Zone (HEZ) had been a success but it was recognised that more could be done including an increase in the gross value added. What return was provided through investment in economic development was important to understand. Visits to the HEZ would take place to determine what more could be done and what constraints existed.

MQ 3

Councillor Nigel Shaw,
Bromyard Bringsty

We are all aware of the serious damage caused to the county's road network, bridges and structures by the recent flooding. With damage like the landslip and collapse on the B4224 will the cabinet member give a date by which all such restricted and damaged roads will be operable, or is there going to be a two year delay like that on the C1257 at Symonds Yat West?

Cabinet member
infrastructure and
transport**Response:**

A succession of storms Ciara, Dennis and Jorge has caused serious and substantial damage to our public infrastructure. The impact of this damage is continuing to be felt by residents and businesses across the county, even those not amongst the more than 400 who have been flooded. Not least is the impact on the parishes of Fownhope and Woolhope following both: a landslip; and partial collapse of a 100-metre long retaining wall that supports the B4224.

It is our priority to stabilise and repair this B road as quickly and as safely possible. We met with representatives from these communities on Monday and are actively working to support them through these difficult times. We have committed to providing the community with a realistic estimate of the timescale for these extensive works by the end of this week. I ask all to lend their support to a community that is accessible and very much open for business. So please do visit them and enjoy a meal in their pubs, enjoy their leisure facilities, enjoy their shops and enjoy spending time in this area of outstanding natural beauty.

Unlike that experienced at Symonds Yat, there will be no two year delay in the opening of the B4224. This is principally because in the case of the Fownhope road, the damage is to a structure and embankment that supports a road and this is the Council's responsibility to fix. By contrast the C1257 remained closed principally as a consequence of the danger posed by a privately owned retaining wall, a wall that supported a property set above the highway. The responsibility for the repair of that wall sat with its owners who unsuccessfully contested

the fact. I can advise that it is now possible to take forward the works required at Symonds Yat to reopen the C1257 which will now commence later this month, enabling this road to be open for the summer.

Supplementary question:

If government do not pay the estimated £10 million repair costs for the flooding damage where would the cabinet member secure funding from?

Cabinet Member response:

Clarity was being gained regarding the remit of Bellwin to determine what infrastructure repair could be undertake and supported by the scheme. The three month extension was being sought to conduct work in those areas which had been inaccessible in the initial aftermath of the flooding. The use of borrowing or reserves would need to be considered if support from central government was not forthcoming and updates would be provided in future.

MQ 4	Councillor Roger Phillips, Arrow	With the land identified and finance secured for the purchase of the southern relief road to Hereford city, can you confirm what compensation to landowners and residents has been paid out to date together with any interim money towards their costs incurred to date?	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
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Response:

The council have paid all costs due to landowners affected by the Southern Link Road (SLR) scheme.

We have acquired an area of land from one landowner directly affected by the scheme. The record of officer decision to acquire this land can be seen by following the link below:

<https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=6690>

Where option agreements have been negotiated with other landowners we have paid all legal costs and agents' fees incurred by them to date. We have also paid compensation fees due to other landowners where we have undertaken survey works and associated compensation is due. These payments were funded from council local transport plan budgets in accordance with the capital programme approved by the previous Council and this is set out in the record of officer decision which can be viewed by following the link below:

<http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50070292/South%20Wye%20Transport%20Package%20-%20Southern%20Link%20Road%20SLR%20Payment%20of%20Fees%20Incurred.pdf>

One further property was acquired using discretionary powers as a result of the impact of the scheme on that property. The detail of this acquisition can be seen by following the link below:

<http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50068150/Record%20of%20officer%20decision%20purchase%20of%20property%2030719%20v7.docx.pdf>

Supplementary question:

With the SLR scheme on hold householders and land owners affected were in a period of uncertainty and would be incurring ongoing costs. Was the council committed to covering any costs they incurred?

Cabinet member response:

It was acknowledged that there had been poor communication between the council and landowners which had now been resolved. Effective liaison was supporting covering of costs incurred.

MQ 5

Councillor Toni Fagan,
Birch

Could the cabinet member for Infrastructure please confirm that ecological breakdown in Herefordshire is being fully acknowledged as part of the Climate Emergency and that this will be reflected in guidance to developers through the planning system whereby Core Strategy policies LD2 and LD3 will be given priority with regards to green infrastructure connectivity to wider ecological networks? To achieve this Herefordshire Council could agree to work alongside the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust in its ambition to establish Nature Recovery Networks as an emergency action.

Cabinet member
infrastructure and
transport

Response:

Yes, in short. I can confirm that the Council is fully committed to addressing both the Climate Emergency and the Ecological Crisis and that officers are currently developing guidance to support developers on both of these important issues.

Acknowledging the important links between these issues, the Council recently created a new environment, climate emergency and waste service area to ensure that the links between climate and ecology are strengthened.

In addition, Herefordshire Council and the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust are active members of the Herefordshire Local Nature Partnership where we continue to work in partnership not only on Nature Recovery Networks, but also Climate Change, land and water management.

Finally, as the Council undertakes a comprehensive update of the Core Strategy, we will actively engage with partners and stakeholders on these important issues.

We can always and must do better and welcome the input of Councillors such as yourself and groups like Herefordshire Wildlife Trust. We must use the experience and ability of all our members and partners.

Supplementary question:

Will the ecological emergency be included in the pre-planning questionnaire and focus on carbon reduction and the ecological criteria included in the current core strategy?

Cabinet member response:

The cabinet member confirmed that it would.

MQ 6

Councillor William Wilding, Penyard

In light of the recent court ruling over the third runway at Heathrow, does the cabinet agree with me that there might be value in looking at other areas where decisions taken might be held up to a greater degree of scrutiny in terms of their impact on the climate emergency. I'm thinking, for instance, of the many decisions taken each month by the planning department which do not reflect the urgency with which individual developers and the building industry in particular must now be treating the climate and ecological disaster unfolding in front of us. Should the council be exploring ways in which it can legally challenge Government Planning legislation?

Cabinet member environment, economy and skills

Response:

Yes I agree, it will be important to ensure that our decision making across all areas is in line with our commitment to address the climate emergency and ecological crisis.

As such I am very pleased that the Council's general scrutiny committee is exploring future decision making for the Council with regard to these important issues.

I look forward to the outcome of this work and any recommendations regarding matters which may be appropriate to raise with Government to ensure the Council is able to operate within a regulatory framework which enables us to meet the climate emergency challenge. I also intend to work with the Local Government Association to explore this in conjunction with other authorities. The recent decision regards Heathrow is hugely significant and if we feel it is justified we will challenge the government with regard to statutory planning legislation that prevents us from responding appropriately to the Paris Agreement and the local and national declarations of Climate Emergency. I thank the Councillor for highlighting this issue.

Supplementary question:

Will all decisions taken by the council take account of the climate and ecological emergency and be consistent with or even surpass the Paris agreement?

Cabinet member response:

The ruling over the Heathrow proposal and similar cases vindicated the decision to pause and review the bypass to assess its compatibility with the council's climate objectives. The draft of the carbon management plan would shortly be published and the 20/20 climate challenge would be launched. Work was also ongoing with parish councils and it was committed that a review of councillor travel would be undertaken through the carbon management plan.