

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 27 February 2020

Question 1

Mr R Board, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

An Article in the Hereford Times identified as being written by Bill Wiggin indicates the following "This proposed spending seems extravagant when the council are considering rejecting £182 million from central government for the bypass that will improve air quality around the city." Could the relevant Councillor inform me if they are aware that this funding exists and what they are doing to pursue and retain this funding for the Herefordshire Bypass?

Response

The Council has not received any offer of funding from central government for the bypass and I have not rejected any such offer as your question suggests. Submissions were made by the previous administration to Highways England for the Road Investment Strategy 2 and Housing Infrastructure Fund but to be clear no funding offer has been made as a result of these submissions. Following the decision to review the southern link road and bypass schemes we have liaised closely with central government departments to keep them up to date with the timescale and process for the review and it is likely they will form part of the transport review steering group. We are also tracking a number of grant announcements recently made by government regarding sustainable funding (including electric bus and cycle schemes) and will be applying for relevant opportunities as the review of the bypass scheme progresses.

Question 2

Mr D Mills, Ewyas Harold

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

When is the Herefordshire Council going to liaise with the other Agencies with a view to replacing the out of date and inadequate drainage system with a system 'fit for purpose and for future needs? We are continually experiencing flooding from the highway - B4347 - between Morgan's Garage and the bridge over the Dulas Brook - causing damage to the adjoining properties and making them inaccessible and also causing structural damage to the highway and pavements. Further - the lack of maintenance of the Dulas Brook and maintenance of the existing drainage system is exasperating the situation.

Response

I am aware that officers have been working with other agencies about this matter including the Environment Agency and Welsh Water. There have been discussions and a number of meetings to determine what can be done and responsibility of each organisation. There are a number of complex issues associated with this drainage system but officers are working with agencies on this to develop a coordinated programme of works and I will make sure officers update the ward and parish councillors as soon as possible.

Supplementary Question

There were concerns that the drainage in the village was inadequate, particularly taking into account the increase in the number of properties and increased runoff. It was recognised that this would take time to address but in the meantime existing facilities such as culverts needed to

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be maintained. There were also concerns over flooding from a foul sewer which was understood to be a Herefordshire Council asset.

Response

The cabinet member infrastructure and transport responded that these issues would be followed up.

Question 3

Ms Overstall, Dulas

To: cabinet member, environment, economy and skills

Is the Council aware the Biological Records Centre which is part of Herefordshire Council's Ecology service, is no longer supporting biological recorders within Herefordshire, which means it is not fulfilling its duty of submitting data to regional and national projects? It is also charging substantial fees to organisations that need biological data to develop projects, which means it is hard for environmental charities to pursue their goals.

Response

The Herefordshire Biological Records Centre (HBRC) is based in the Council's HARC building and operates as a not-for-profit partnership service, collecting, managing and distributing data relating to wildlife sites, species, habitats, biodiversity and nature. Its aim is to provide wide access to both species and habitat records for Herefordshire and assist in their protection, currently holding over 570,000 records.

As we face an ecological emergency, quality data on our local environment is of increasing importance. Our officers therefore continue to support recorders in a variety of ways as we always have done. This assistance has never ceased for any amount of time and nor do we plan to stop. We share data with many local and national recording schemes, as it is essential to the work of our HBRC. With regard to the charging element of your question, we apply fees in a comparable way to our colleagues in other Local Environmental Record Centres (LERCs). In fact, we recently found that we are nearer the lower end of the charges applied by LERCs across the UK, when we last benchmarked this.

I have asked that the HBRC contact you directly so that you can discuss this matter more fully.

Supplementary Question

It was suggested that new technologies existed which recorders could use by themselves and that the business model of the HBRC needed to be reviewed.

Response

The cabinet member environment, economy and skills responded that the council was open to new ideas about how things could be done differently in the future.

Question 4

Mr M Gardiner, Michaelchurch

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Appendix 2

Why aren't the local authority, Hereford County Council, speaking to local land owners and the farming community about water runoff from their land and attempting to minimise said runoff and so preserve our local roads?

Response

We do engage with landowners (including farmers) throughout the county about their responsibilities to maintain land drains, watercourses and culvert on their land. They are required to maintain these systems regularly and to undertake any necessary clearance after a flood event. Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) locality stewards speak regularly with landowners to support this and if needed we can take enforcement action if a landowner is not complying with what they are required to do in law. I have asked BBLP to issue parish councils and landowners with a fact sheet on who is responsible for what with regards to drainage maintenance (this is also now on the website) and to step up its efforts to make sure all landowners are aware of their responsibilities. This is an area the Council is giving a lot of thought and time to at the moment and I understand how essential it is that gullies, culverts and water courses are as well maintained as possible and BBLP now have 3 gully cleaning tankers out on our roads making sure we are doing all we can outside as a Council to do this.

Supplementary Question

There was concern that the locality stewards did not have the ability to contact landowners and that no noticeable action had been taken to minimise the impact of significant water levels on the local road surfaces. It was suggested that someone with more teeth was needed who could move issues forward.

Response

The cabinet member infrastructure and transport responded to say that he understood the frustration and the council was considering how to respond to issues with run off, being mindful of the available funding, and was working on improving communications with communities and how to resolve issues with culverts and drains etc. where these were not the responsibility of the council.