

SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA FOR

Council

Friday 16 December 2016

9.30 am

**Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford,
HR1 2HX**

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5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC To receive questions from members of the public.	3 - 6
14. FORMAL QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS TO THE CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRMEN UNDER STANDING ORDERS To receive any written questions from Councillors.	7 - 8

Public questions to Council 16 December 2016**Question from Mrs C Protherough, Birch Hill****Question 1****Hereford bypass**

As, in the council's submission for funding for the Hereford transport package, it is generously proposed that the "bypass will make the A49 an alternative for M4/M5 traffic to ease congestion on the motorway network", could the council provide statistics for the likely resulting increase in through traffic, both car and HGV, on the A49 between north of Leominster and Ross, and could they confirm that these figures will be widely available in public consultation on the bypass in the future?

Answer from Councillor Philip Price, cabinet member infrastructure

The A49 forms part of the strategic road network managed by Highways England, which is responsible for maintaining journey times for longer distance traffic. Modelling of the strategic road network to 2040 identifies increasing congestion on the M5/M6 corridor with only limited deterioration on the A49 corridor, most notably in the vicinity of Hereford city. This modelling information can be viewed at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/387222/npsnn-print.pdf

The large local majors bid submitted by the council referenced this information and noted that with a bypass for Hereford the A49 could have an enhanced role and provide an alternative for some traffic on the parallel M5/M6 (not M4/M5 as stated in the question) which is forecast to become increasingly congested. As modelling work is progressed the scale of this will be established and will be made available when it is completed and agreed with Highways England.

Question from Mr P McKay, Leominster**Question 2****Green highway infrastructure and planning obligations.**

Following my September question I am getting positive feedback from two parishes regarding play areas and parks, they now being aware of and conditions regarding planning obligation funds available for that purpose, but the November Local Access Forum minutes report that our paths are in poor condition with lack of funding leading to idle volunteers. This seems to boil down to our green highway infrastructure not having been specifically mentioned in the local transport plan delivery strategy nor monitored in the annual progress reports, even though the local transport plan recognises our green highway infrastructure as being the single most important means of accessing the countryside, providing for quiet recreation and improving health, leisure, tourism, with the management subject of ever increasing partnership working whether that is with health providers to encourage greater walking and recognition of health benefits, with tourism partners to encourage access or with local councils and volunteers to ensure as far as possible that routes are available and free from obstruction.

So may I ask if reference to this green highway infrastructure could be mentioned when transport planning obligations are sought, so that parishes and volunteers may also be aware of and conditions regarding available transport planning obligation funds, with our green highway infrastructure included in the annual transport plan progress reports?

Answer from Councillor Philip Price, cabinet member infrastructure

I am pleased to confirm that improvements to the rights of way network are already a matter that is discussed in relation to potential developments.

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The spend of any contributions towards the rights of way network will be reported in the core strategy authority monitoring report and published on the council's website in the new year.

Question from Ms K Sharp, Hereford

Question 3

Southern link road

I have seen correspondence from the Department for Transport, including letters from Andrew Jones Minister for Roads, stating that the Southern Link Road is a 'retained scheme' and that the Local Growth funding of £27m allocated for the Southern Link Road will only be released when DfT approve the Final Business case. As the Final Business Case for the SLR is yet to be approved, do you not agree that it is very misleading for Council to repeatedly tell residents that "the funding is secured"?

Answer from Councillor Philip Price, cabinet member infrastructure

No I do not agree. Funding for the south Wye transport package (which includes the southern link road) has been secured and indeed that funding has already begun to be drawn down against development costs as applied for. As is inevitably the case with funding of this nature and projects of this scale there are conditions to be met in order to draw down the full amount of secured funding. A formal grant funding agreement is in place between the council and the Marches local enterprise partnership (through which the funding from the Department for Transport is delivered) which confirms that the funding will be available to be drawn down as the council continues to deliver the south Wye transport package as applied for.

Question from Mr J Perkins, Hereford

Question 4

Air pollution

On 29th April, the Supreme Court ordered the British government to boost its fight against air pollution, which could lead to drivers of diesel cars facing higher road taxes and daily charges to enter city centres or even being banned from them.

Many areas are discussing banning such vehicles from their city centres including London.

In Britain, about 29,000 premature deaths a year are thought to be caused by air pollution. When will Herefordshire Council make an announcement banning these sources of illegal pollution?

Answer from Councillor Philip Price, cabinet member infrastructure

Herefordshire Council currently has no plans to make such an announcement. The council has an obligation to review and assess its air quality and as a consequence has declared two air quality management areas, the first along the A49 corridor in Hereford and the second at the Bargates junction in Leominster. These designated areas are subject to air quality action plans which look to reduce the impact of traffic related air pollution upon the community by implementing a variety of different measures. Progress on this is reviewed annually and reported back to Defra.

The proposal to ban such vehicles from city centres using clean air zones (like in London) has been considered. It would only be viable to ban such vehicles in the centre of Hereford if an alternative route existed, as proposed by the Hereford bypass. The need for such a road is already identified in the current suite of actions for both Herefordshire's air quality management areas are considered sufficient to reduce pollution levels to an acceptable level.

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Defra is currently consulting upon the implementation of clean air zones in five UK cities, namely Birmingham, Derby, Leeds, Nottingham and Southampton. This consultation does not currently extend to smaller cities such as Hereford. It is, however, understood that Defra's proposals are to be reviewed following the recent court judgement. Herefordshire Council will consider any further guidance that may be issued by Defra.

Members' questions at Council – 16 December 2016**Question from Councillor A Seldon****Marches local enterprise partnership (LEP).****Question 1**

With reference to the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership, who is responsible to scrutinising the activities of the board?

Answer from Councillor A Johnson, cabinet member corporate strategy and finance

Nationally there is an expectation that the involvement and engagement of the relevant councils will ensure there remains democratic accountability around decision-making regarding use of public funds. A joint executive committee has been formed to deliver this in the most efficient and effective way; however scrutiny of the activities of the committee currently remain a matter for the individual partner councils' own scrutiny committees to determine.

In Herefordshire that function falls to the general overview and scrutiny committee. In fulfilment of that role, in addition to calling in one decision of the joint committee the general overview and scrutiny committee considered a report on the activities of the LEP at its meeting on 8 March 2016.

Question from Councillor B Matthews**Accommodation strategy****Question 2**

Several months ago members were informed that adult social services would be relocating to Elgar House, Holmer Road, Hereford. When is the move going to take place and what will the total bill be for the taxpayer in respect of removing the asbestos and any other renovating or decorating that will be required?

Answer from Councillor H Bramer, cabinet member contracts and assets

Staff are scheduled to move into Elgar House at the end of January following completion of agreed works to the building. The moves are an integral element of the council's overall accommodation strategy enabling us to relinquish costly and unsuitable premises and deliver longer term revenue savings.

The costs of the pre-contract asbestos removal and building refurbishment are estimated at £59k and £546K respectively making a total of £605k. The final account is yet to be received, but it is expected to come in within the total budget approved.

Question from Councillor L Harvey**Asset disposal****Question**

In March 2015 Cllr Johnson took the decision to approve the sale of a property belonging to Herefordshire Council which formed part of the setting for the Master's House in Ledbury. This

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followed a sealed bid process which the community was assured would deliver a high quality restoration of the building and a new purpose for the property which would complement the Master's House and St Katherine's Hospital complex. The building was transferred with the addition of new vehicular access permissions not previously part of the deeds to the property.

18 months later the barn in question is for sale on the open market without any restoration work having been undertaken and with no prospect of a development coming forward to deliver on the assurances originally given.

What responsibility does the council accept for ensuring that the best outcome is achieved when public assets are transferred into private hands, and how has this been discharged in this particular case?

Answer from Councillor H Bramer, cabinet member contracts and assets

The objectives of the council's asset disposal strategy, within the overarching corporate property state that the council will see to:

- Only hold assets that meet the authority's operational property, socio-economic and investment objectives
- Release actual and latent capital from surplus assets
- Reduce or remove liabilities;
- Unlock the benefits of regeneration;
- Enable local development framework policies to be realised and:
- Optimise the proceeds or land use benefits of particular disposals for the benefit of the authority and its communities

Councils are obliged to obtain best value when disposing of assets; in this case the property was tendered for sale on the open market, with the benefit of vehicular access. Tenders received were assessed against the following criteria and weightings

- Price – 50%
- Sustainability – 10%
- Impact on the Market House – 10%
- Funding for delivery – 10%
- Quality/'buildability' – 10%
- Employment – 10%

and the highest scoring bidder secured the sale.