

Supplement to the agenda for

Cabinet

Friday 27 July 2018

10.00 am

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

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Questions from members of the public: Cabinet 27 July 2018

Question 1

Mrs V Wegg-Prosser - Breinton

Please can the Nutrient Management Board Technical Advisory Group meeting minutes be published as well as minutes of the NMB itself? Without these TAG minutes the public cannot be informed of the conditions the TAG are imposing so that vital progress towards improved phosphate levels is evidenced on the proposed dashboard. When I asked for the TAG minutes to be published my request put to Cabinet on 10 May was ignored.

Response

The Nutrient Management Plan Board Technical Advisory Group is a multi-agency group chaired jointly by the Environment Agency and Natural England. Herefordshire Council does not provide the secretarial support but does attend meetings and will ensure your request is considered by the group at its next meeting.

Question 2

Ms G Parker – Lower Breinton

Every time I have attended one of the meetings at shire hall held by Hereford council it is quite clear that they are not listening to a word said by people against this bypass and they have no interest in what the wyeruinit campaign say. Can you explain why that is?

Response

I can give you my assurance that the views put forward are considered. The public consultation report being considered today provides a detailed summary of the feedback we have had from over 4000 people about this project. As with many consultations there will be differing, and often opposing views, put forward. It is our responsibility having considered all the evidence including the views of residents, businesses and organisations, to come to an evidence-based and reasoned decision. At every public meeting of the council where the project is discussed members of the public are able to ask questions in advance and at the meetings which are considered during the debate.

I accept that not everyone will agree with the decisions that we take, but don't accept that means we are not listening. It is clear from the feedback we have received, as reported today, that there is support for the Hereford Transport Package and for a bypass as part of the package. Subject to a decision today there will be further consultation later this year which will provide a further opportunity for feedback to the developing project to be made and I would encourage people to take part in this to ensure our future decisions continue to be informed.

Question 3

Mr R Parker - Lower Breinton

How many councillors have been to Breinton and stopped to think what an impact this will have on such a wonderful unspoilt part of Hereford we should be protecting this environment?

Response

I cannot answer for all 53 Herefordshire councillors, but I know the Breinton area well and have visited many times. With my Cabinet colleagues I have very recently visited the area to consider in detail the issues prior to today's debate, and I am aware that fellow councillors who are members of the General Scrutiny Committee carried out a similar visit to inform their own consideration of the matter.

Understanding the impacts, and how they may be mitigated, is an essential element of our decision-making. Herefordshire is indeed a beautiful county and we must do all that we can to ensure that we provide the conditions that enable it to thrive. Providing this necessary infrastructure will impact on the environment but, subject to any decision today, in moving the project on we will work to identify actions to mitigate those impacts wherever possible.

Question 4

Mr P Hands - Breinton

Can Councillors please confirm publicly, that the proposed Western Bypass/Relief Road/Link Road, will not improve pollution to the city of Hereford given the prevailing westerly winds or do they disagree with recent statements made by Council Officers to the contrary?

Each new household will have at least 1.5- 2 motor vehicles, creating added pollution to those already using the city roads.

Will Councillor Price now admit that the additional pollution will cause harm to the indigenous population and those with respiratory ailments or will he maintain his stance of "Road at all costs"?

Response

This is not my stance; it is that I will pursue the best option to secure the future of Herefordshire, a county I care passionately about and have lived in and farmed all my life.

Air quality modelling has concluded that the proposed scheme will redistribute traffic that currently goes through Hereford onto the bypass, leading to improvements in air quality in the centre of Hereford. This will mean improved air quality associated with traffic on homes, schools and communities adjacent to the existing A49. The implementation of Active Travel Measures within the city centre will contribute further to improving the environment for those living and working within the area.

The delivery of the bypass will have a minimal impact on air quality in the area surrounding the new road as the route will be mostly free flowing rather than stop/start traffic as is currently the case at peak times on the existing A49.

Question 5

Ms K Burrows - Hereford

What plans do the Council have to ensure the long term future of the Community Farm in Warham, given the Council's preferred route will have major implications for the Farm?

The Community Farm currently provides the equivalent of 6,885 days per year of social care placements for children, young people and adults living with disability, long term health conditions and mental health issues. Crucially, the Community Farm fills the gap left by closure of other services due to funding cuts, and is provided at no operational cost to the local authority.

The facility provides a lifeline to disadvantaged people in and around Hereford. As a Community Farm volunteer, I see at first hand what a valuable service is provided.

Response

The council has had detailed discussions with both the landlord and current operator of the community farm. The landlord has confirmed that he sees no reason why the farm should not continue to operate if the by-pass is built. We will continue to work with both to establish any mitigation measures or accommodation changes necessary to enable this valued service to continue.

Question 6

Mr J Milln – Hereford

Para 11 of the report for Cabinet, states 'A total of 4,351 questionnaires were either fully or partially completed', and in para 15, '1789 of these respondents (59%) said they agreed that a bypass should form part of the package'. The claim, at para 24, that this represents a majority is untruthful, since of course 1789 respondents ticking 'yes' from a total of 4351 questionnaires is 41% not 59%. What is the number or proportion of this 41% who, in the consultation form comments boxes, indicated a preference for an Eastern route?

Response

I must correct the statement included in the question; the Phase 2 Consultation Report is not untruthful. Paragraph 15 of the Cabinet Report is quite clear that 3,033 people responded to the question 'Do you agree that a bypass should form part of the package?' Of these respondents, 1,789 (or 59%) said that they agreed a bypass should form part of the package. This indicates clear support for the bypass.

Only 74 respondents (4% of the 1,789) who supported a bypass included a comment indicating a preference for an Eastern route.

Question 7

Mrs C Palgrave – How Caple

At para 90 of the Cabinet report, the estimated cost of the Red Route is given as £153m on 2018 prices, an increase of £24m on the estimate of £129m previously used in the consultation. Applying the same increase of 18.6% to the original cost estimate for the Southern Link Road of £27m, gives a figure of just over £32m. The SLR, the second phase of the bypass, is expected to be financed from the Local Growth Fund to a limit of £27m. If the SLR construction costs were to exceed the Local Growth Fund grant, where would the additional funds come from?

Response

There is an approved budget for the Southern Link Road within the council's capital programme of £35m. Funding of £27m has already been secured from DfT with the balance being provided through a local contribution of £8m. Estimated scheme costs are monitored during the delivery of a scheme and currently remain within budget. Costs of schemes of this size do change as schemes progress; should it become apparent that costs are likely to exceed current budgetary provision this will be reported to Cabinet and approval sought for any additional funding requirement, including identification of that funding source.

Question 8

Mr R Palgrave – How Caple

In Appendix 2 to the Cabinet Report, at 6.9 Traffic Modelling and Forecasting, we read that the current forecast traffic flows from the Highways Assignment Model for the Hereford Bypass for the Opening Year (2026) project that the northern most section of the Bypass (A4103 to A49) is expected to carry a 2-way Average Annual Daily Traffic of just 7000, and the section from the A438 to the A4103 just 11300. For comparison, the July 2016 AADT figure for Greyfriars Bridge given in Table 2 of Appendix 2, was 44300. Why is the Bypass forecast to carry so little traffic?

Response

The figures selected by the questioner are not comparing like with like. The section of the proposed bypass most comparable to the Greyfriars Bridge section of the existing road would be the A465 to A438 section; the modelling shows that to have an expected 17,600 two way AADT in the opening year.

Greyfriars Bridge, as the main city river crossing, currently presents a pinch point for all traffic, whether through journeys or local journeys. Building a second river crossing as part of the bypass is not intended to remove all traffic from the current route, but will provide a suitable alternative enabling drivers to select the most appropriate route for their journey. In particular it will allow through journeys to be undertaken without the need to enter the city centre. The traffic modelling methodology used follows nationally accepted WEBTAG standards and these initial estimates will be tested and developed further using this methodology as the scheme progresses.

Question 9

Ms J Richards – Hereford

The report to Cabinet says that “The need for significant investment in transport infrastructure is recognised by the council, the LEP, and Highways England”. It also states in para 105 that there is ongoing consultation with Highways England, Natural England, Environment Agency etc. Why is there no record or evidence of this “ongoing consultation” published in the reports to either Scrutiny or the Cabinet?

Response

The consultation report published with the Cabinet agenda specifically relates to the Phase 2 consultation; the organisations referenced in the question made no response to that consultation. The issue that you raise was explored by the General Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 18 July; the recommendation of the committee and the proposed response to that recommendation are referenced at paragraph 58.

Question 10

Mrs E Morawiecka - Breinton

Alternative options rejected in the recommendations to Cabinet include “Deferring a decision on the preferred corridor for further assessment would add significant delay to the programme for taking forward the scheme, prolong the uncertainty for residents and landowners affected by the short list of routes and incur significant additional costs” What are the additional costs incurred by not spending up to £2.45million of borrowed money on consultants reports in 2018/19?

Response

As the report sets out, a delay to the decision to select a preferred route would have a number of impacts. Increased cost is one and this would be a result of delivering the scheme in later financial years than currently programmed which would result in higher consultants and contractors costs as a result of inflation. It is also important to remember that a delay in selecting a preferred route will mean uncertainty and stress for residents and landowners affected by all possible route corridors. It is also important to note that money is not borrowed until it is required.

Question 11

Mr A Morawiecki - Breinton

The report option 3 says “Not progressing this work (the bypass) will mean the HTP objectives and core strategy growth targets cannot be achieved.” With the opening of the City Link Rd in Hereford bringing forward a minimum of 800 new homes in the Core Strategy “Urban village”, where is the evidence that a lack of road building has prevented delivery of any new housing or new jobs in Hereford, below levels predicted by the council in their Core Strategy?

Response

Some growth will be possible and indeed is taking place. However delivery of the projected requirement of 6,500 new homes for the city will be constrained by the lack of a bypass and associated travel measures. A number of studies have been prepared over a number of years to demonstrate the need for new road infrastructure in Hereford to enable the city to grow and achieve its housing and employment land targets. These studies are available to view on the [Local Plan](#) evidence base pages of the council's website. For example, the Hereford Transport Strategy Phasing Study Strategic prioritisation (2014) concluded that, on the basis of the level of development proposed in the Core Strategy, new road infrastructure from the A49 to the north of Hereford and the A49 in the south was required in order to enable the achievement of Core Strategy growth with a need to provide a River Wye crossing by 2022 followed by the completion of the bypass no later than 2027. This recommendation is reflected in the adopted Core Strategy policies itself, in particular policy SS3 regarding housing delivery and Appendix 5 which sets out the relationship between the delivery of housing and timing of infrastructure.

Question 12

Ms J Harris - Hereford

The junction of the bypass with the A465 is shown as a 5-armed roundabout. How does this relate to the current plan to construct a 4-armed roundabout at that location as part of the consented Southern Link Road?

Response

The four arm roundabout currently planned for the Southern Link Road will be enlarged to include an additional arm for the bypass so making this a five arm roundabout.

Question 13

Mr P Chapman – Breinton

At public meetings during the public consultation WSP confirmed that the proposed Bypass increases congestion in the City. If the addition of new houses impacting on the new route has yet to be modelled it seems strange the Council claims that the new road improves journey times in the city. Since Council has also told me no modelling has yet been undertaken, is there actually any evidence there will be an improvement on current journey times in Hereford or is this Council mis-information, and that journey times will be worse as WSP has confirmed?

Response

Preliminary traffic modelling has been undertaken, as reported in the Scheme Assessment Report (Section 6.9, this is Appendix 2 to the Cabinet Report). This modelling included the impact of new housing in the city. Once the preferred route is selected and more detailed design of the scheme is completed, further traffic modelling will be undertaken which will further examine the impact on Hereford's road network.

The results of the preliminary traffic modelling were included in the Phase 2 Consultation (see Consultation Brochure – Appendix C.4 of the Phase 2 Consultation Report, which is Appendix 1 of the Cabinet Report) show improvements to journey times on the A49 through the city, not a worsening as the questioner asserts.

Question 14

Ms J Tonge – Hereford

The presentation to Scrutiny says that the red route was the best performing route 'after traffic, engineering and environmental assessments'.

How could WSP arrive at this conclusion when environmental surveys were being undertaken the day before the Scrutiny meeting, and so the environmental surveys would be incomplete in arriving at such conclusions?

Response

Appendix 3 to the cabinet report on today's agenda sets out the work completed to date on which WSP have based their conclusions. The environmental surveys undertaken to date are appropriate for the Stage 2 Assessment. National guidance, e.g. DMRB Volume 11, Section 3, Part 4, covering ecology surveys, only requires completion of a desk study and preliminary walkover survey at this Stage. Data has been gathered in a staged way with initial survey work informing the requirement for more detailed surveys. This approach was agreed with Natural England and the County Ecologist. The data gathered to date has been used together with desk study information, habitat information, and ecological knowledge regarding species behaviour and habitat preferences and is sufficient to inform route selection.

The next stage will incorporate further detailed ecology surveys to identify mitigation measures required for delivery. It is these surveys that are currently being undertaken, in the appropriate time of year.

Question 15

Mrs J Morris – Hereford

The assumed configuration (Highway Standard) of the 'bypass' at this stage is Wide Single plus 1 (WS2+1), although the Scheme Assessment Report raises the question of a dual carriageway as design work progresses and refers to the possibility of additional land being required (para 5.11.9).

Can the Cabinet member confirm that such additional land has been allowed for in the red route corridor and the impacts on property and natural features are for a dual carriageway road?

Response

Yes, and this is a consistent assumption across all seven route options. The impacts of the scheme would be assessed in full in the Environmental Impact Assessment at the next stage. The impacts on properties would be the same for either a dual or a wide single 2 + 1 carriageway.

Question 16

Mr E Morfett – Hereford

The Cabinet Report at para 101 says that "CPRE Herefordshire, Hereford Green Party, Historic England and the National Trust set out concerns that the proposed bypass could have environmental and heritage impacts and would not deliver the benefits claimed." and that "These comments will be considered further as the project is progressed. "What will be the process for further consideration?

Response

The next stage of the process, if the red route is confirmed as the preferred route, will be to prepare an application for planning consent for the Hereford Transport Package (HTP) which includes the development of more detailed design. Comments received during Phase 2 consultation will inform the design process and discussions will be held with consultees throughout the design and assessment process where appropriate. Phase 3 of consultation will then be undertaken on the detailed design of the HTP, including any measures required to mitigate adverse effects identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment. The outcome of that consultation will inform the next decision.

Question 17

Ms A Simpson – Hereford

Would the Council members please tell us whether they have devised, or are working on, a plan to redress the imbalance in footfall & consequently trade between the 'Old Market' shopping centre & the traditional heart of the City, thereby (if successful) uniting what has in effect become a divided City in terms of the shopping areas, to the particular detriment of the Independent Quarter.

Response

I don't accept that Hereford has become a divided city. The Old Market development has indeed been successful and I welcome this. I am also pleased to note that footfall trend data provided by the Hereford BID team demonstrates that the city centre is performing well in comparison to national high street trends.

That doesn't mean that we can't collectively do more both through transport and public realm improvements, as well as supporting the work of the Hereford BID team who have implemented a programme of events and promotions and are developing wayfinding signage, aimed at increasing footfall throughout the bid area using a one centre approach.

The Hereford City Centre Transport Package includes a range of public realm projects which will regenerate the areas of Commercial Road, Blueschool and Newmarket Street as well as the provision of a new transport hub at the train station. These public realm improvements will build on the improvements delivered on Newmarket Street to ensure improvements to the public realm consistent with Widemarsh Street and High Street and the works currently ongoing in Commercial Street. We will be consulting on these proposals later this year.

Question 18

Dr P Ronan – Breinton

The capital programme report to full Council on 13th July highlighted that the Council will have to undertake £2.96 Million prudential borrowing to fund more consultants' reports to progress the development of the bypass project. How can the Cabinet determine that this road project is best use of borrowed money and will generate a better return than any other investment such as active travel measures, sustainable modes of school transport or investment in social services, libraries, museums or tourism?

Response

The investment of £2.96m (which is not borrowed until it is needed) supports the further development of the detail of the scheme and this provision has been included in the capital programme approved by Council. It does not prevent investment in other valued services. Indeed the council is investing capital funding in precisely the areas that you suggest and more; our current capital programme includes investment in a wide range of active travel measures, libraries improvements, schools improvements, and creating much needed residential nursing care capacity as well as investing in improving our roads and supporting the growth of our economy.

The strategic outline business case for the Hereford Transport package sets out the benefits that will be delivered by the bypass project and a package of active travel measures and demonstrates a robust case for investment. This can be seen on the council's website. The outline business case will further develop the case for the package and value for money based on a bypass on the red route and a package of measures.

Question 19

Ms K Sharp – Hereford

The Red route has a significant adverse impact on the Community Farm at Warham, which supports over 60 people with disability and learning difficulties at a very low cost to the Council. What costs relating to the loss of this facility have been included in the costs to the Council for this road project?

Response

I refer to the response given to public question 5 above.

No costs relating to a loss of this facility are included. The basis for the costs estimates for the project at this stage (which are for the process of route comparison) are set out the Scheme Assessment Report contained within Appendix 2 of the cabinet report. As the project is developed detailed cost estimates will be developed for the bypass and the active travel measures to inform future decision. These detailed cost estimates will include an estimate of land acquisition and compensation/relocation costs as appropriate.

Question 20

Mr T Geeson – Hereford

Can the Cabinet member confirm that no roads or public rights of way will be closed i.e. reduced to dead ends by the choice of the red route as it passes through Breinton?

Response

Where public roads and public rights of way are affected by the Preferred Route the project team will consult fully with affected statutory bodies, interested groups and individuals to agree suitable alternative arrangements. Where appropriate local diversions will be provided, this will improve safety and connectivity on the network. The integrity of public rights of way will be maintained.

Question 21

Ms J Milsom – Hereford

The selection of the preferred Red Route for the Hereford bypass will cross directly through Hereford Community Farm making this vital service unworkable. Cllr Price and his team met with representatives and families on 1st Feb & 6 March and should now be fully aware of the devastating impact this will have. In the Equality impact assessment p28/29 section 5.2.9 & 6.1.1 recognises the potential loss of this facility - what does Cllr Price and his cabinet propose to do to enable the continuation of this essential service and what assurances is he prepared to give now to the people affected and the proprietors who lease this site to allay fears over its closure and to ensure the continued viability of the business?

Response

I refer to the answer given to public question 5 above.

Question 22

Dr N Geeson - Hereford

If plans for the Red Route proceed, there will be a need to mitigate various impacts. Can the Cabinet member confirm that mitigation measures will be located adjacent or close to the route, within the Parishes affected rather than elsewhere in the County?

Response

I can confirm that the project will follow best practice to mitigate on site as close to the source of impact as possible.

Question 23

Mr R Hunter – Hereford

The proposed Red Route would pass through the Pippin Trust's orchards which contain a nationally important collection of 150 different varieties of cider fruit and it would destroy the integrity of a collection which has taken many years to plan, propagate and establish. The orchards could be saved by diverting a short section the Red Route some tens of metres to the east to join the Orange then Cyan Routes before re-joining Red Route south of the new King's Acre Road roundabout. The assessments of these routes, completed as part of the phase 2 consultation, indicate that little environmental detriment would result. Is such a minor route diversion not feasible, justifiable and worthwhile in this case? Will Cabinet please resolve that the Phase 3 Consultation should seek the answers to these questions?

Response

Thank you for providing detailed information on the Pippin Trust's orchards. As part of the next stage of design the project team will consider in more detail the impacts of the Preferred Route and any potential mitigation, compensation and, where possible, enhancement. The project team and I recently met with you and your group and it was a useful opportunity to discuss the impacts of the proposed preferred route on the orchard and potential mitigation.

Question 24

Mr S Kerry – Hereford

Given the overwhelming public support for the active travel measures outlined in the proposals for a bypass, the reality that some of these cannot be commenced with the existing traffic flows on the A49(T) what assurance can the Cabinet Member give that all measures achievable before detrunking will be implemented and that those depending on detrunking are viable in spite of forecasted traffic flows from local traffic on the existing roads once the bypass is built?

Response

It is very encouraging to see such a high level of support for the Active Travel Measures as they are an integral part of the Hereford Transport Package. Once the Preferred Route is agreed, work will be undertaken to work up the outline proposals contained in Appendix 6 to the Cabinet Report (the Active Travel Measures report) in more detail.

It is true that part of the proposed Active Travel Measures could not be implemented without a bypass in place, and that it may be possible to bring forward some of the other measures in advance of a bypass. An assessment of what measures can be delivered in advance of a bypass will form part of the next stage of the work. Please be assured that the Council is committed to ensuring that the Active Travel Measures play an important role in the transport strategy for the city.

Question 25

Ms D Toynbee – Hereford

At para 5.1.4 of Appendix 2 of the Cabinet report, the A49 North and South of Hereford have the same projected figure of 19900 AADT. Can the Cabinet member clarify and comment on the fact that these two measurements are identical, and on the dramatic increase in traffic this figure represents over the current volume of approximately 13500 AADT?

Response

The 19,900 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) figures referred to are initial traffic forecasts for 2026 with the bypass in place; the nationally recognised WEBTAG modelling has produced the identical figures. For clarity, the July 2016 traffic flows are 13,200 AADT on the A49 to the north of the city and 15,600 on the A49 to the south. The projected increases are due to:

- a) the background growth in traffic flows over this ten year period (based on national projections) - this is the predominant effect;
- b) diversion of existing traffic from other routes (such as the Canon Pyon Road in the north and Grafton Lane and Haywood Lane in the south) as traffic is attracted to using the higher quality bypass and away from the smaller and less suitable roads. This is a key benefit of the bypass and the Southern Link Road – to encourage traffic away from using unsuitable ‘rat runs’ through rural communities.

The detailed modelling at the next stage will confirm these figures.

Question 26

Mr L Lagoutte – Hereford

The council states that its transport plan will provide 'attractive alternatives to the private car for journeys within the city'. We are told it will 'continue to support a core bus network', but this core bus network is inadequate and shrinking. Which bus routes is the council planning to improve and expand, in line with its stated aims and values?

Response

The active travel measures report contained in Appendix 6 of today's cabinet report provides an update of the development of the walking, cycling, public realm and public transport projects which would form part of the Hereford Transport Package with the bypass. Further development work will progress subject to today's decision and the detail of the proposed package will be presented in a future cabinet report and this would set out any proposed public transport improvements to be delivered.

Question 27

Ms H Powers – Breinton

The capital programme report to full Council on 13th July highlighted that the Council will have to undertake £2.96 Million prudential borrowing to fund more consultants' reports to progress the development of the road project. How can the Cabinet determine that this road project is best use of borrowed money and will generate a better return than any other investment such as Active Travel measures, sustainable modes of school transport or investment in social services, libraries, museums or tourism?

Response

I refer to the answer given to public question 18 above.

Councillors' questions at Cabinet – 27 July 2018

Question 1

Councillor Matthews – Credenhill Ward

To: cabinet member infrastructure

The Cabinet Member for Infrastructure would have us believe the new road would greatly curtail traffic in the city centre and drastically reduce noise and air pollution, however engineers have confirmed an additional 26,000 vehicles in the system would result in all access routes being more congested.

He also states that the local economy will prosper from the road, yet local businessmen repeatedly inform us that they want an E route, and access to the nearby motorway and not to an inferior road system.

The proposed route would cause considerable environmental damage, in particular to the River Wye SAC and SSI and wildlife habitats.

Does the Cabinet Member agree that several of the main benefits he forecast are flawed, and that it is time he came up with more economically beneficial alternative and deliverable options which are readily available?

Response

No I don't. The evidence is clear that an eastern route is not an option given a number of considerations not least of which are the significantly greater environmental impacts. The evidence is equally clear the Hereford Transport Package, including the bypass and a number of complementary active travel measures, is deliverable and that the proposed preferred route is the best performing of the options. Councillor Matthews may continue to make his unsubstantiated claims (such as a recent assertion at General Scrutiny Committee that the choice of route had been made two years ago – it had not; a corridor for the bypass was included in the core strategy approved by Council) in an attempt to subvert the will of both Council and the county but I am satisfied that the case for the western bypass remains sound and in Herefordshire's best interests.

