

Supplement to the agenda for

Cabinet

Thursday 31 January 2019

10.00 am

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

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Herefordshire Council

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at The Council Chamber - The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Thursday 17 January 2019 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor JG Lester, Leader of the Council (Chairman)
 Councillor NE Shaw, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairman)

 Councillors H Bramer, BA Durkin, DG Harlow, PD Price, P Rone and EJ Swinglehurst

Cabinet support members in attendance Councillors AW Johnson and RJ Phillips

Group leaders in attendance Councillors PP Marsh, RI Matthews and A Seldon

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance Councillors PA Andrews and CA Gandy

Other councillors in attendance: Councillors D Summers

Officers in attendance: Alistair Neill, Richard Ball, Chris Baird, Andrew Lovegrove, Stephen Vickers, Annie Brookes and Karen Wright

34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies from members of the cabinet.

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

36. MINUTES

The leader of the council noted that the items covered in the previous meeting were all very good evidence of the council delivering on its key priorities.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

37. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 5 - 10)

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 1 to the minutes.

The cabinet member infrastructure thanked officers who had assisted in putting together a comprehensive set of answers to the questions received.

38. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

No questions were received from councillors.

39. EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO THE SPOTLIGHT REVIEW CONCERNING DENTAL HEALTH AND CHILDHOOD OBESITY

The leader of the council and cabinet members expressed thanks to all those involved in producing the report, including members of the task and finish group, the children and young people's scrutiny committee and the representatives of partner organisations.

The cabinet member children and families introduced the report and noted that it covered both the children and families and health and wellbeing portfolios. The review had been undertaken following concern regarding levels of tooth decay and childhood obesity in Herefordshire as evidenced in the joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) of 2017. The work and resulting report was a fantastic example of the contribution made by scrutiny. The recommendations made were considered and thoughtful, with the result that seven out of the nine recommendations to the executive had been accepted in their entirety, one had been partially accepted and only one rejected. The rejection and partial rejection were due to methodologies that needed to be established rather than any issue with the principles expressed.

The director of public health welcomed the focus on two important issues. She noted that while all individuals could take action and be responsible for their own health, the council was working with partner agencies through the health and wellbeing board, with schools and across the council to encourage positive steps such as improving access to healthy food and restricting access to unhealthy food.

The public health specialist highlighted a pilot project due to commence, working with overweight pregnant women. Other work already taking place included the public health nursing service handing out tooth brushing packs to parents of young children and continuing health advice at every contact with families. Services had excellent relationships with schools and it was hoped that the reintroduction of health education to the curriculum in September 2019 would further increase work with schools.

In discussion of the proposed response to the scrutiny recommendations cabinet members noted that:

- there were mixed views about introducing fluoridation and how effective this might be in improving dental health;
- there were two major water suppliers that served the county which could provide an opportunity to compare if one were to introduce fluoridation and the other did not, however as a rural county there were many properties with private water supplies and these would not benefit from fluoridation;
- there were other ways the council could seek to improve dental health without introducing fluoride to the water supply such as supporting parents to ensure their children brushed their teeth;
- the potential disbenefits to introducing fluoridation needed to be explored alongside any potential health benefits, it was agreed that the response to the scrutiny committee be amended to reflect this;
- Herefordshire produced good, healthy food and it was important to educate people on how to prepare it, continuing work with schools was supported;
- increased childhood obesity was storing up long term problems for the NHS;
- while individuals were responsible for their own health, the council had a responsibility to promote public health, providing education and support to take positive steps;
- the responses to the public questions set out those measures to enable safe walking and cycling that had already been delivered and what was planned for the future, consultation on the walking, cycling and public transport measures to be delivered as part of the Hereford Transport Package would start on 29 January 2019.

The chair of the children and young people scrutiny committee spoke on the report. She thanked cabinet for their consideration of the recommendations and was pleased that the majority had been accepted. The reasons for the one rejection and one partial rejection were understood. In her comments on the report she noted that:

- the review was well attended by a large number of outside organisations;

- there were 45,000 hospital operations across the country each year to remove teeth from children and teenagers, this was a cost to the NHS and a risk to the patients as the procedures were carried out under general anaesthetic;
- parents reported difficulty in finding an NHS dentist to take their children to, however figures from the NHS suggested that there were dentists with spare capacity, it was possible that physical access was a barrier to those in more rural areas without own transport and the scrutiny committee had recommended to NHS England that mobile dental services be considered;
- the matter of fluoridation had been discussed at length and the differences of opinion on its desirability and impact were recognised;
- with relation to obesity, the council played its part in a number of ways such as encouraging use of its leisure centres for regular exercise;
- many people did not recognise themselves as being overweight and the council could help to raise awareness;
- some of the money raised nationally through the tax on fizzy drinks should be made available to councils to spend on public health issues.

Group leaders were invited to express the views of their group. It was stated that:

- the number of take-away and fast food outlets needed to be looked at;
- actions to be undertaken should be monitored and some sort of report brought back to ensure things move forward;
- mobile facilities attending school sites might be more cost effective than attending individual villages;
- having appropriate routes encouraged cycling which in addition to health benefits for the individual helped to reduce air pollution, benefitting other road users;
- the public health grant from government was reducing;
- socio economic factors were touched on in the report, the definition of and differences between poverty and deprivation needed to be understood;
- reversing the decision to fluoridate the water supply would be difficult so any introduction of this needed to be considered carefully;
- the important role of parents and the challenge for working parents to prepare healthy meals needed to be recognised;
- new housing developments should contain more open spaces to encourage outside activity.

In closing the discussion, the leader confirmed that public health remained a priority for the council.

Resolved that:

the response to the children and young people scrutiny committee's recommendations regarding the spotlight review concerning dental health and childhood obesity in Herefordshire as attached at appendix 1 be agreed, subject to an amendment to the response to recommendation xii that the proposed feasibility study consider both benefits and disbenefits of fluoridation.

40. 2019/20 LOCAL AUTHORITY SCHOOLS BUILDING, MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME AND ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENT WORKS

The cabinet member children and families introduced the item. She noted that:

- funding was allocated annually from central government;
- the report set out the proposal to spend £1.535 on maintenance projects and £120k on schemes for individual pupil needs in the 2019/20 financial year as listed in the appendix to the report;
- maintenance at academies and voluntary aided schools was funded via different routes;

- the current set of condition surveys had informed the priority projects alongside information on admission of pupils with particular access requirements;
- a new set of condition surveys of school had been commissioned with work planned to be complete by summer of 2019, these would inform decision on future programmes;
- consultation had taken place with schools through the capital strategy consultative group;
- a contingency sum would be kept back for emergency works arising during the year.

In discussion of the item cabinet members noted:

- it was important to secure best value, even from the smaller items of work;
- funding was provided through a capital grant from government;
- the trust schools included in the proposed project for 2019/20 were not academy schools and were eligible to benefit from this funding;
- maintenance was a continuous requirement.

Group leaders were invited to give the views of their group. It was stated that:

- maintenance requirements of modern buildings could be the same or more than older buildings;
- opportunities should be sought to include renewable energy generation and invest to save schemes in projects and to use energy efficient materials and designs to reduce future running costs;
- the impact of housing development at Credenhill on the local school needed to be mitigated.

Resolved that:

- (a) the school capital and maintenance schemes as set out in appendix 1 be approved for implementation in 2019/20; and**
- (b) the Assistant Director Education Development and Skills be authorised to take all operational decisions necessary to implement the approved schemes within an approved budget of £1.535m for maintenance and £120k for individual pupil needs.**

The meeting ended at 11.06 am

Chairman

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 17 January 2019

Question 1

Mrs E Morawiecka, Breinton

To: cabinet member, infrastructure

The Spotlight Review summary of recommendations no. xvii says “The executive is recommended to fast track measures to enable safe walking and cycling, within the city of Hereford and our Market towns, and to encourage these modes of active travel to reduce obesity and to enhance mental and physical health and wellbeing.”

The executive response says “accepted” but the action does not reflect this. The response does not ENABLE safe walking and cycling but just talks of getting insights as to why people don’t walk/cycle or promotions.

Information is available both locally and nationally that risk of injury/safety (actual and perceived) is a main factor preventing walking/cycling. What is the Executive actually DOING TO PROVIDE “safe routes to school”; support school travel plans with capital investment in surrounding areas to promote walking/cycling; 20mph speed limits in residential areas?

Response

The proposed actions set out in the cabinet papers in response to the recommendations from scrutiny include insight work that will be undertaken to understand why people do / do not use active travel measures. This is essential if we are to ensure that investment is directed to measures that will be of most impact. However this isn’t the only action, and the response includes a continued commitment to the promotion and facilitation of walking and cycling in Hereford and the market towns. This commitment will continue to be demonstrated through the delivery of the infrastructure needed to enable safe walking and cycling and the promotion of active travel.

Through our Local Transport Plan we have over many years invested in a range of projects to improve facilities for cycling and walking across the county and improve safety along routes to school, including the introduction of 20mph zones, particularly in the vicinity of schools.

We already have over 17 miles of off-road cycle provision in Hereford including some key routes to schools and colleges. These include, but are not limited to:

- the recent improvements on Holme Lacy Road providing wide shared use routes and controlled crossings to primary schools in this area
- A new wide shared use route along the City Link Road providing a direct safe route to primary schools and colleges from the west of the city.

The council is committed to delivering improvements for walking and cycling as part of both the South Wye Transport Package (SWTP) and Hereford City Centre Transport Package (HCCTP) projects. We are also about to launch a consultation on 29 January 2019 setting out a range of possible improvements which, together with the bypass, form the Hereford Transport Package (HTP). The delivery of the HCCTP and SWTP walking and cycling schemes should commence from 2020 onwards and along with the HTP walking and cycling improvements will provide a safe and attractive network which will help and encourage students and parents to consider walking and cycling to school as an alternative to short car trips.

Alongside infrastructure improvement, we support all schools to develop and implement their travel plans through a range of initiatives. We have a dedicated walking and cycling programme, delivered by Sustrans. We lead a programme of term time activities, travel plan support and a growing programme of school holiday activities and free Bikeability training offered to all schools.

The council is also committed to delivering active travel schemes and behavioural change projects in the market towns. Transport strategy reviews for Bromyard, Leominster and Ledbury are included in the Local Transport Plan programme. These strategy reviews are looking at all transport issues in each town and identify a programme of active travel schemes for each. Once these are completed, they will inform future decisions regarding schemes for implementation.

The councils [Choose how you move](#) webpages provide lots of information about a whole host of facilities, services and opportunities to enable people to find healthy and enjoyable alternatives to using their cars.

Question 2

Ms K Sharp, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure

South Wye has high levels of childhood obesity. With over £5million already spent on the South Wye Transport Package and a total capital project fund of £35million, where are the Active Travel measures that are integral to achieving the objectives of the scheme and that were due to be made public at least 2 years ago?

Response

Possible improvements within the South Wye area were subject to public consultation. Just over a year ago, in December 2017, Cabinet considered the results of this consultation and authorised officers to progress detailed design of recommended measures and to produce a programme for delivery – including implementation of those measures that may be delivered in advance of a new road. I am due to consider a report next month that will determine the programme of schemes to be delivered as part of the South Wye Transport Package.

Active travel measures are an integral part of any major scheme development for a variety of very good health and environmental reasons. However they will not alone address the very real issue of childhood obesity and it is therefore important to support the wider actions proposed in response to the scrutiny recommendations.

Question 3

Dr N Geeson, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure

In 2012 modelling suggested that a 10% increase in cycling/walking in urban areas could save the NHS £1bn over 20 years. Childhood obesity is greater than average in Hereford, so when will projects like the St. Owens St. bike lane exhibited in 2017 become a priority? The excuse that we have to wait up to 10 years for a bypass to provide space to do this is nonsense. There are many examples of towns and cities that have imaginative and very successful active travel measures, without introducing new roads.

Response

Increasing cycling and walking is one of our priorities and there has been no suggestion that there will be a ten year wait for implementation of the St Owen's Street cycle scheme. Consultation on the design of the St Owen's Street scheme was carried out last year and was well received. Detailed design is currently being finalised to enable the construction during the next financial year. Delivery of cycle improvements is one of our priorities and we will continue to deliver such schemes. During 2018, we delivered a first phase of improvements to Holme Lacy Road (a key route into the Enterprise Zone) together with a new cycleway along the Straight Mile in Rotherwas. Phase 2 of works to Holme Lacy Road are planned for further development this year. In addition, the council has delivered an ambitious programme of walking and cycling schemes as I detailed in my response to public question 1 above, and is planning millions of pounds worth of investment as part of the Hereford City Centre, South Wye and Hereford transport packages.

Alongside investment in infrastructure the council delivers a Healthy Lifestyle Trainer project in partnership with Public Health to support residents to improve their health through increased active travel. We are currently out to tender for an on street cycle hire scheme for Hereford City and we have introduced a Cycle Lengthsmen scheme – maintaining Hereford's 17 miles of off-road dedicated walking and cycling network. We are currently upgrading the cycle signage in Hereford and will be introducing cycle way marking and we are investing in improved facilities for Park & Choose sites. We deliver a free programme of led cycle rides including new and returning cyclists, women's only rides and family rides.

Question 4

Ms J Angulatta, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure

On the 4th January 2019 NICE (National Institute for Health & Care Excellence) stated in a draft Quality Standard that Councils should develop and maintain routes that give priority to pedestrians, cyclists and those using public transport over motorised vehicles.

What is the Executive committed to doing so that safe walking, cycling and public transport receives investment ahead of other modes of transport to improve the health of the local population?

Response

I refer to the responses given to the earlier public questions where I have set out the improvements already made and proposed, and have also set out the ambitious and sustained active travel behavioural change programme being delivered by the council known as 'Destination Hereford'. This programme has been successful in increasing walking and cycling levels in Herefordshire since it started in April 2011, and has contributed towards a 5% reduction in car use between 2016 and 2017 and a 26% increase in cycling in the same period. This council is the only one in the West Midlands to win funding from all three rounds of the Department for Transport funding programme to support changes in travel behaviour to more active modes of travel since 2011, which demonstrates the soundness of our proposals.

Question 5**Mrs H Powers, Breinton****To: cabinet member, infrastructure**

The Spotlight Review para 3.11 says Active Travel Measures are contained in the Herefordshire Council Local Transport Plan 2016- 2031 where one objective is to promote healthy lifestyles by making sure that new developments maximise healthier and less polluting forms of transport by delivering and promoting active travel schemes and by reducing short distance single occupant car journeys on the roads of Herefordshire. Please explain how major new developments at Holmer; Station Approach; Bartestree; Ledbury are delivering safe walking/cycling travel schemes that will contribute to a comprehensive network, reducing short journey car use, particularly the school run?

Response

The council's policy and guidance ensure that any major new developments include where possible infrastructure to support walking and cycling. Developers are required to provide links to existing walking and cycling routes to ensure a continuous and safe access which will encourage new residents to walk or cycle short journeys and this approach is set out in current council planning guidance.

The new developments at the locations you identify have delivered schemes which will support walking, cycling and public transport for new residents and also existing residents within these areas. Examples of schemes which have already been implemented include:

- On and off road cycle routes
- Pedestrian and shared pedestrian/cycle crossings
- New bus stop facilities
- Contributions to enhanced bus services
- Signalised junctions including pedestrian and cyclist facilities

Further improvement schemes will come forward at these locations and other parts of the county as a result of development contributions.

Question 6**Mrs C Protherough, Clehonger****To: cabinet member, infrastructure**

It is reported that the fast-tracking of the delivery of active travel infrastructure was supported by the spotlight review. Residents of South Wye have waited years for improvements to the Holme Lacy road, the active travel measures for the South Wye Transport Package have still not been published years after being promised and the transport hub for the station as part of the City Link Project does not exist; even as a paper drawing. What time scale does the Executive consider to be "Fast tracking"?

Response

The executive is committed to delivering projects as quickly as possible. However these large package projects do take time to develop and to secure funding. We have consulted on possible improvements for both the Hereford City Centre Transport Package (public realm

improvements including the transport hub) and South Wye Transport Package (active travel measures). As I set out in my response to public question number 2 I am due to confirm the programme for active travel measure delivery in the South Wye area next month.

Designs for the transport hub at the city's train station were developed in outline in 2015/2016 and we are currently refining the design taking into account key stakeholder feedback. We have reviewed the current bus provision in Hereford and completed a future needs study. This will mean we will be ready to launch a public consultation in the second half of this year. This consultation will inform a decision on the detailed design of the scheme, which we currently anticipate will be delivered on site from 2020.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 31 January 2019

Question 1**Mrs Morawiecka, Breinton****To: cabinet member, infrastructure**

The SWAP report on the Blueschool House fiasco made significant recommendations for capital projects to be adequately controlled and reported to councillors. The written answer to my supplementary question in Nov 2018 shows that the budget for the SWTP has not been updated in any detail these last 8 years. The executive is using a simple 2010 cost based budget with an “uplift” for inflation. There is no reporting of adverse expenditure to date versus budget. The decision report referred to in the answer relates only to the compulsory purchase of land.

Where is the decision report giving permission for the executive to spend in excess of £5million on professional fees vs a clear budgeted cost (uplifted) of £1million, for the SWTP project?

Response

There is an approved capital provision for the South Wye Transport Package (SWTP) of £35m as contained in both the medium term financial strategy and capital programme. The 2010 figure of £1m you refer to is not an approved budget. It forms part of a scheme cost breakdown within the Strategic Outline Business Case application for funding to the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership, which secured £27m funding for the project.

The decision to progress the scheme was taken by Cabinet on 13 November 2014. That decision authorised officers to prepare and submit a planning application for the SWTP and, subject to planning consent being obtained, to continue detailed design of the scheme and develop proposals for land acquisition. Further authority to spend, and information about how the scheme is being progressed, has been contained in decisions taken on:

- 26 August 2016
- 20 October 2016
- 16 November 2017
- 14 December 2017
- 28 February 2018
- 22 May 2018
- 9 October 2018
- 12 November 2018

All these decisions are published on the council’s website and available to view at:

<http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mgDelegatedDecisions.aspx?bcr=1>

The SWTP budget, spend and forecast is updated regularly. Monitoring of the capital programme takes place that demonstrates spend to date and forecast spend the whole programme of capital projects.

The council has been implementing improvements to the clarity of financial information provided in reports informing decisions and in overall performance reporting. It is now the case that each project decision report summarises project budget, spend to date and forecast spend so that the financial implication of each project decision is clear and auditable. The report informing the most recent decision (12 November 2018) for the SWTP contained a summary of this information for the scheme and set out the forecast spend for 2018/2019 (£1.75m) and how this will be funded, as well as spend to the end of 2017/2018 (£4,977,931.67).

Question2

Mrs Wegg-Prosser, Breinton

To: cabinet member, infrastructure

Reference the Capital Programme 2019/20 and Capital Strategy (paragraph 27: 'Revised Forecast' tabulation) could the Cabinet member for Infrastructure please explain his justification for the budget for the Active Travel Measures for the SWTP being £5M, when the same Cabinet member replied to members of the public submitting questions to him in Cabinet on 14 December 2017 that the budget for these ATMs was £8M. He assured everyone this budget of £8M would not be spent elsewhere; it would be spent on "the purpose for which it was there for" (Answer to Public Question No. 10) and "will be used for that purpose" (Answer to Public Question No. 12).

Response

I believe the responses you refer to were given at a meeting on 16 November 2017. In them I gave an assurance that the South Wye Transport Package (SWTP) active travel measures would be funded, and funding for this package would not be spent elsewhere. The figure of £8m for active travel measures I referenced was based on my understanding at that time of the estimated active travel measure costs. The active travel measures costs are set out in the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) and are based on the detail known at that time.

I would also draw attention to a response I gave to another public question at the same meeting in November 2017 about cost/budget estimates relating to complex transport package schemes. That response stated: "I fully expect the final actual figures to differ from these estimates – that is normal and to be expected on a project of this scale being developed over a period of time and in accordance with relevant guidance. Any changes will be authorised and reported as they arise."

It is the SOBC costs which are referred to in paragraph 27 of the Capital Programme 2019/2020 onwards and capital strategy document and the South Wye Transport Package - southern link road land acquisitions cabinet member report dated 12 November 2018.

The full final business case due to be submitted later this year to Department for Transport will provide an updated estimated of both the Southern Link Road and active travel measures and will be published on the council's website at that time. It is entirely appropriate in a significant scheme of this scale developed over a period of years for cost estimates to be revised. My commitment to funding the entire package remains.

Question 3

Ms D Toynbee,

To: cabinet member, infrastructure

Appendix 2 (Capital Programme position Dec 2018/19) shows a prior-year spend of £4978k for the South Wye Transport Package and a further forecast spend of £2508k in this financial year. This total of £7486k is approximately 20% of the total SWTP budget. Please could you explain what this expenditure has delivered?

Response

The spend in 2018/2019 will deliver:

- Completion of the detailed design of the Southern Link Road
- Discharge of the pre-commencement planning conditions associated with the Southern Link Road consent including ecological licences
- Archaeological site works
- Making of Compulsory and Side Road orders for the Southern Link Road.
- Land and compensation costs
- Public Inquiry costs
- Procurement of a contractor for the Southern Link Road construction and mobilisation
- Completion of the full business case for the South Wye Transport Package for submission and sign off to Department for Transport
- Development of a programme for delivery of the active travel measures

Question 4

Mr R Palgrave,

To: cabinet member, infrastructure

The total capital budget for Economy and Place in 2018-19 shown in Appendix 3 is £98.2m. Of this only approximately £2m is related directly or indirectly to tackling climate change - Solar panels, Energy Efficiency and Warm Homes Fund. Renewable energy and energy efficiency investments can provide a good return and will also support Corporate Plan Objectives A and D. There is no specific provision for the Hereford Heat Network identified in the Carbon Management Plan 2017-21. However, other planned capital investments such as roads will worsen climate change. Why is Council budgeting to invest so little to protect the climate and the future security of residents?

Response

I cannot agree with the questioner's view that we are investing little to protect the climate and future security of Herefordshire residents. The council is committed to tackling climate change and has a strong track record of investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency measures across its estate, and is on course to deliver its 40% CO2 reduction target by 2020/21.

Our proposed capital programme in 2019/20 includes over £3.2m investment in energy efficiency, invest to save and renewable energy projects. These will continue our investment in solar and photovoltaic energy, improvements to public buildings energy efficiency, warm home grants available to low income households looking to install central heating for the first time, further investment in LED lighting, and a more fuel efficient vehicle fleet.

In addition to our own capital investment:

- the council is able to use this resource to draw down significant external funding. This includes access to up to 50% capital grants for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, energy efficiency grants for businesses, and significant funding from the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) to support residents with home energy projects. This will not only increase the total available funding for these projects, but will also offer the council better payback periods and improved value for money.
- Our proposed budget includes planned revenue expenditure of almost £1m for energy efficiency, active travel and affordable warmth activity. This revenue investment includes utilising £150k of grant funding from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to undertake a detailed project development study for the Hereford Heat Network.

The significant investment in a bypass for Hereford will address a range of other issues facing the county that include improving air condition in certain city hotspots, improving traffic flow in the city and enabling necessary housing growth. All the bypass phases of delivery are supported by packages of active travel measures that we are investing significant amounts of money in. Indeed, we are currently consulting on proposals to support increased walking, cycling, and bus use with associated public space improvements as part of the Hereford Transport Package. Details of this consultation can be found at: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/http> and I would encourage all residents to participate in the consultation.

Councillors' questions at Cabinet – 31 January 2019

Question 1

Councillor RI Matthews, Credenhill Ward

To: cabinet member, infrastructure

A few years ago, this council paid approximately £6,000,000 (six million pounds) for the Rockfield DIY premises. A narrow strip along the one side was utilised for highway improvements. The administration has recently announced that the site is to be disposed of for the sum of £500,000 to a private developer for the construction of student accommodation. I would like someone to inform us what financial benefits or other will be obtained for the TAXPAYER from this project.

Response

The acquisition of the Rockfield site (costing £5,638,494.30 inclusive of fees) enabled the construction of the City Link Road which in turn opened up areas of previously inaccessible land for regeneration. The detailed business case published on the council's website demonstrates both the transport and regeneration benefits the overall investment in the Hereford City Centre Transport Package including the City Link Road scheme will deliver, including a net regeneration benefit of £86.6m. That business case resulted in £16m growth funding being secured from the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership. The business case is available at:

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/1819/hereford_city_centre_transport_package_business_case.

Without that purchase the scheme would not have been capable of being delivered.

The costs of acquisition cannot be compared to any current site valuation as they include legal and professional fees associated with the sale and the costs of compensation arising from the loss of the business (calculated in accordance with statutory compensation practice) which could not be relocated in the remaining land available. Any land valuation now would also take into account the fact that only 70% of the original site remains following completion of the City Link Road.

Cllr Matthews appears to have misunderstood the information provided in the report to cabinet on 13 December. The Station Approach site is not being disposed of for £500k. That financial receipt relates to the issuing of a long-term financial lease of the site so that the council does not incur build costs. The council will remain the freeholder. If at any point in the future a decision to dispose of the freehold is to be considered, it will be informed by a valuation at that time, as is usual practice.

Along with the economic benefits arising from delivery of the road that I have already referenced, the Station Approach development will support Hereford College of Arts achieve its strategy for growth and support the early development of NMiTE. The success of these higher education institutions will contribute to the growth of Herefordshire's economy creating jobs and educational opportunities in the county, bringing new students into the county and providing educational opportunities for our own young people.

