

**Supplement to the agenda for**

# **Cabinet**

**Thursday 5 October 2023**

**2.30 pm**

**Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4  
0LE**

	<b>Pages</b>
<b>4. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC</b>	3 - 4
<b>5. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS</b>	5 - 6
<b>8. PROCUREMENT OF NEW WASTE CONTRACT</b>	7 - 8



**PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 5 October 2023**

**Question 1**

**Mrs E Morawiecka – Breinton, Hereford**

**To: Cabinet member, infrastructure and transport**

Regarding reopening of Pontrilas station Councillor Price said "I would be unwilling to saddle the council with the additional financial risk that building a new station would present at this time," despite the support of Transport for Wales, and the local MP.

Worcester Parkway station opened February 2020 and is already performing way ahead of schedule with 544,270 journeys made from the station between April 2022 and March 2023 – the kind of volume not expected to be achieved for at least another eleven years.

The last transport project Councillor Price oversaw cost taxpayers 25% more than budget and failed to deliver the Hereford Transport Hub.

Where is the evidence to justify allocating £12.3million on a new road scheme will offer better value for money, have lower financial risk, and comply with Council Policy on Climate, than opening the Pontrilas station?

**Response**

The reopening of Pontrilas station is a priority for this Council, and my role as Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Transport, working with my colleagues, is to facilitate discussions with all local, regional and national stakeholders, including Midlands Connect, the Department for Transport and Network Rail, to make the case for this station, benefitting not only the rural areas of the Golden Valley but to the wider county and the region, by improving connectivity within the County and beyond.

I have already met with representatives from Midlands Connect, and set out our ambitions for improving infrastructure across the County, and beyond. With the formation of the new Marches Forward Partnership, which brings together the Leaders of Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Powys and Shropshire, we will take every step to explore and promote the project as a priority for future cross-border working

A proposal was submitted to Government to reopen Pontrilas station, as part of the Restoring Your Railway programme, and the response received has provided a number of issues that need further consideration, and I will continue to work with partners to strengthen that case. The original outline business case was very clear on the benefits the reopening of the station would bring, including better access to jobs and health care provision, as documented in the outline business case, including -

- enhance the catchment of Herefordshire Colleges
- 'level up' the local economy
- reduce road traffic in the city of Hereford
- reduce car-parking pressure at Hereford and Abergavenny stations;
- address the decarbonisation agenda by reducing the car mileage associated with accessing long-distance rail services, or driving all the way to one's destination

During a review of the Capital Programme, we have identified an opportunity to invest in essential infrastructure in the County, and the allocation of £12.3m will enable us to develop the necessary business cases, and review this in line with the 2021 South Wye Transport Package report

The council will consider every opportunity to promote a choice of travel for the residents in Herefordshire. Pontrilas offers the potential to improve our transport infrastructure, now and in the longer term.

## **Question 2**

**Victoria Wegg-Prosser, Breinton, Hereford**

**To: Cabinet member, infrastructure and transport**

Councillor Price assured Cabinet (28.9.23) that 'due process' will be followed as regards the SLR and the Western bypass which he proposes to revive. 'Due process' in 2020 revealed these projects to be inadequately costed, in conflict with climate emergency targets, and likely to achieve minimum traffic reduction in the City of Hereford. Cabinet is now being asked to endorse the transfer of £12.3MN Current Capital funds away from critical programmes such as Partnership Activities, Fastershire and Super Hubs to the SLR proposals, all three weeks in advance of the 'due process' of deliberating a Key Decision for the SLR. Is this an example of Councillor Price following 'due process' ?

## **Response**

I can confirm that due process will of course be followed, and the allocation of £12.3m budget for the Southern Link Road will ensure the Council has allocated funds to commence the Strategic Outline Business Case.

The report on the Cabinet agenda – Capital Programme Review and Update sets out the rationale for changes to specific projects and programmes, and how these funds would be reallocated. Subject to the decision of Cabinet, and approval by full Council, governance and decision making requirements will be followed before any spend commences against these budgets.

**COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 5 October**

**Question 1**

**Councillor Hitchiner, Stoney Street**

**To: Cabinet Member, Transport and Infrastructure**

Am I to take it that Cllr Price is asking the Cabinet to start a journey to gain approval to spend up to £12.3m on a project before it is known whether or not that project has a business case in support, and whether, even with a good business case, finance may not be available to complete it?

There is no obvious rush which requires a decision to be made in this extremely risky.

Can he please follow the example of the previous administration and make decisions based on a current business plan and up to date evidence rather than take the huge risks which this proposal represents?

**Response**

Subject to the decision of Cabinet, and the support of Full Council to approve the proposed changes to the Capital Programme, we will of course ensure the necessary business cases are presented as part of the decision making process. The proposal to allocate £12.3m is part of that process to ensure we are able to deliver on those commitments.

**Question 2**

**Councillor Toni Fagan, Birch Ward**

**To: Cabinet member, Adults, Health and Wellbeing**

The removal of Talk Community hub funding from the Capital Programme is a blow to many community groups. Volunteers are on their knees trying to support their communities whilst the state of our community infrastructure crumbles. Since the pandemic most grants have been revenue based to enable the roll-out of additional support and services – meanwhile roofs leak and buildings fall into disrepair – diverting precious voluntary time and energy into trying to keep structures functional for the communities they serve.

Could you please tell me:

1. How many expressions of interest there were for the Hubs Capital Grant Scheme ?
2. The percentage of those expressions of interest which related to the key aims of the Herefordshire Wellbeing Strategy: a) The best start in life for children and b) Good mental wellbeing?

**Response**

Talk Community remains a key strand of the council's work to support individuals and communities to help themselves and help each other. There are 75 hubs across the county of various sizes based within communities. When this capital money was allocated by the previous administration to create Super Hubs, expressions of interest (EOIs) were invited from all local organisations, not just Talk Community Hubs, to deliver a broader range of integrated and co-located services close to local communities, such as health, counselling, midwifery, health visiting, mental health services and physiotherapy and possibly confidential meetings/clinics.

43 EOIs were submitted in total, far more than would be capable of being funded from the capital allocation. In all cases, I recognise the significant amount of work that people have put into developing their EOIs and I understand the disappointment.

Whilst a few organisations submitted an EOI focusing mainly on repair to their buildings with no added value, it is important to be clear that the money was never intended to be used to cover the costs of existing activities at Talk Community Hubs or to pay for the maintenance or repair of the premises in which they operated. It was, as the title states, to potentially create Super Hubs across the county.

We want to be absolutely sure that any funding will bring a real benefit to communities and that is why we are undertaking a wider, strategic review of the Talk Community approach. The recommendation to take the funding out of the coming year's Capital Programme does not mean that we are dismissing the idea of Super Hubs and I can assure members and those organisations who made their submissions that once we have a better understanding of what is being delivered, how many people it is reaching, where the gaps are etc. we will look again at the Super Hub proposal.

In response to the final part of the question, I can confirm that the EOI did not specifically ask applicants to address the key aims of the Herefordshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. However, 20% of applicants stated they would provide services for 0-5 year olds with 51% of applications stating they would provide mental health support services.



## Procurement of New Waste Contract Service Report

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Meeting date:</b>	<b>Thursday 5 October 2023</b>
<b>Cabinet member:</b>	<b>Harry Bramer, Community Services &amp; Assets</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Corporate Director, Economy and Environment</b>
<b>Report author:</b>	<b>Head of Environment, Climate Emergency &amp; Waste Services, Economy and Environment</b>

### Supplementary information

Please note that a Political Group Consultation took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023 and the main areas of discussion are summarised below:

- The Green Party raised concerns about barriers to procurement (in general) for smaller companies
- The Green Party asked whether the phased approach means that the new services would now not be until 2026 and then asked how long it would take to implement.
- The Conservatives questioned as to what effects the changes would have on recycling rates and to the percentage of waste to landfill as well as any impact on CO2 emissions and net zero ambitions.
- The Conservatives asked about garden waste and the continuance of still being able to take to the household recycling centres and this remaining to be free.
- The Liberal Democrats asked what the impacts on disposal tonnages would be of the phased approach of the new service.
- The Liberal Democrats asked about how the new services beginning in September 2024 would improve efficiencies (fleet) through the new contract.
- The Liberal Democrats queried why the introduction of a dedicated food waste collection service has been possible by other local authorities and whether there is any learning from them for its introduction here.
- The Independents for Herefordshire noted disappointment that there appears to be roll back from the ambitions of the previous administration and that there were bolder ambitions than what are being aimed for now.
- The Independents for Herefordshire queried the status of the Soil in the City” project.

