

**Supplement to the agenda for**

# **Council**

**Friday 6 December 2024**

**10.00 am**

**Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane  
Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE**

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**Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from members of the public**

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mrs Watson, Kington	Last month, CPRE Herefordshire won an international award for its Dark Skies Herefordshire project. What actions will Herefordshire Council put in place to reduce obtrusive outdoor lighting in schools and the public buildings it owns? Herefordshire Council's website guidance and advice to reduce energy and carbon does not promote the Five Principles of Responsible Outdoor Lighting and in the Guide for Schools on Energy Savings and Carbon Reduction - the School Lighting and Heating Audit does not mention targeted lighting or installing warm tone LEDs.	Cabinet member environment
<p><b>Response:</b>                      The council's Sustainability &amp; Climate Change team is currently reviewing our carbon management plan which actively seeks to minimising energy and carbon emissions from across the Council's entire operations, schools and partners.</p> <p>As part of this officers are currently undertaking a review of best practice and are looking into a potential new policy on light pollution. We will also update our school's energy guidance to include this. It is expected that this guidance will be completed in the summer 2025.</p>			
PQ 2	Mr McGeown, Weobley	Thank you for the answer, recently received in writing, by Cabinet Member C&YP to my Supplementary question PQ1 from 17th September meeting.  So I thought I would get an overview of my PQ with relation to all other recent Public Questions and went to use your Public Question Register Six Month Record:  <a href="https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ecSDDisplayClassic.aspx?NAME=PDQR1&amp;ID=50000106&amp;RPID=26289390&amp;sch=doc&amp;cat=13518&amp;path=13518">https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ecSDDisplayClassic.aspx?NAME=PDQR1&amp;ID=50000106&amp;RPID=26289390&amp;sch=doc&amp;cat=13518&amp;path=13518</a>  So I downloaded your Register:  <a href="https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50096669/Public%20Question%20Register%20-%20Six%20Month%20Record.pdf">https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50096669/Public%20Question%20Register%20-%20Six%20Month%20Record.pdf</a>  Much to my dismay I found:  "Last updated 20 December 2021"	Chairman of the Council

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		So why don't you want the public to easily overview recent public questions?	
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**Response:**  
 Previous versions of the council's constitution, prior to May 2022, made provision to reject a public question if it had been raised within the last 6 months. This provision was supported by a question log, and answers given, at committees up until December 2021. In May 2022, the Council agreed and adopted an amended constitution. The six-month rule was removed as part of those changes. As a result it was no longer necessary for the council to maintain a public question and answer log. See: [Appendix 23 - Part 5 Section 8 Public participation guide tracked.pdf](#).

It is possible to see all questions, and the answers provided, by reviewing the relevant minutes to council committees (that permit public questions); the original question and answer provided is published as a supplement prior to the meetings. Any supplementary questions (if/where received) and answers that are provided can be found within the appendix to the published minutes of the meeting.

PQ3	Ms Ward, Hereford	<p>It is good news that Herefordshire Council has been granted additional government funding of £3.257 million for bus services. However, I note that the revenue element of the grant funding, around £1.8 million, will be used to extend the services that are currently supported by grant funding, but that the spending of the balance will be made by Herefordshire Enhanced Partnership.</p> <p>Please would the cabinet member explain in detail how the £2 million government grant received in 2023 for Bus Service Improvement Plan Funds has been spent so far and provide a breakdown of plans for the remainder of these funds which remain unspent.</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Response:**  
 The Bus Service Improvement Plan plus (BSIP+) phase 3 funding that has been allocated to Herefordshire Council. This is governed by the Enhanced Partnership.

Phase 2 allocation was £952,000 for year 1 (2023/24), £952,000 for year 2 (2024/25) and £1,016,000 (25/26) for year 3. This money is being invested, in line with guidance from the Department for Transport, in extending existing routes, and re-launching new routes, as agreed by the Enhanced Partnership, under a mixture of de minimis and tendered services. A variety of different routes were submitted by bus operators, these were then graded into a priority funding order through a set of criteria, as published in the BSIP+ document on the council's website. This resulted in eight routes that are receiving support for the three years of the phase 2 funding. Namely:

- Support for E & F service
- Extend 78X to Shell Store
- Reinstate hourly 476 Hereford - Ledbury
- Reinstate hourly 492 and later PM service
- Increase 36 (66) service to 2 hourly and pm peak

Re-instate 420 Bromyard to Worcester  
 Instate later journeys on 461  
 Re-instate Sunday services on service 36 (66)

The purpose of the three years of funding is to provide consistency of bus routes over a longer period of time, with the opportunity for these routes to be routes that the public can expect to see running, thus improving the visibility of bus services and hence patronage improvements. These routes are in year 1 of funding, and the expectation is that the money for the next two years will continue to be spent on these prioritised routes. Therefore, whilst the money for years two and three is 'unspent', it is allocated. The plans are to continue with the support for these routes. These routes are being monitored regularly to capture data that can indicate the success, or otherwise of these routes. Decisions for continuation will be made by the Enhanced Partnership, based on this data.

The allocations for phase 3 are an agenda item for the next meeting of the Enhanced Partnership. New priorities will emerge over the three years, and the £1.8m of revenue spend that will be in place for 2026/27 will be used on these new priorities.

PQ 4	Mrs Morawiecka, Hereford	<p>The estimated cost of the Shrewsbury North Western Relief Road is reported to have increased from £81million to £178million, and the auditors for Shropshire Council confirm this new road project poses a significant risk to the council, especially as there is no clear plan for funding this road scheme.</p> <p>With the Hereford Western Relief Road estimated to cost at least double the cost of the Shrewsbury Relief Road, the Herefordshire Council leader's report makes it clear that there is no clear funding for even the first part of the scheme, the Southern Link Road.</p> <p>Where is the updated business case for the Southern Link Road and the Hereford Western Relief Road, to show that continuing to spend public money on these unaffordable and poor value for money road schemes is the best way to use scarce taxpayers money?</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Response:**  
 The Council are aware of the reported increased cost of the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road, but it should be noted that no two road schemes are alike and therefore it cannot be presumed that the same level of increase would apply to the Hereford Western Bypass. The council is in the process of commissioning consultants to undertake an updated review of both the first phase of the Hereford Western Bypass (Southern Link Road) and the remaining route and as part of this work will be developing updated business cases for both elements of the road.

PQ 5	Mr Milln, Hereford	<p>281 people were killed or seriously injured (KSI) on Herefordshire's Roads in the latest period recorded on the Council's website.</p> <p>Speed is the common factor and on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2020 this Council voted to address it first by investigating area-wide 20mph where people live.</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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		<p>Herefordshire's KSI corresponds to an annual rate of 49.8 per hundred thousand, significantly higher than the 39.7 national and 37.1 West Midlands figures.</p> <p>In spite of the societal and human costs of road crashes and the benefits of safer streets we learn that the Cabinet member will consider addressing speed only on an <i>advisory</i> basis round certain schools and rural roads where enough people have been killed or seriously injured.</p> <p>In the light of this would the cabinet member please explain the evidence behind his <i>volte face</i> on the decision approved by Council in 2020.</p>	
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**Response:**  
It is unclear what data the question is based on. In 2023 the data for Herefordshire shows there were 82 people unfortunately killed or seriously injured in traffic accidents, this was made up of 7 fatalities and 75 seriously injured. The total represents a reduction of 23% over the 2022 figure of 107. Of these 82, only 16 were the result of a collision where the police recorded inappropriate speed as a contributing factor to the accident. 63% of these accidents were recorded on the higher speed rural road network.

The Council will be introducing some advisory 20mph zones around specific schools in Hereford in the coming year as part of our Safer School Streets programme. The Council does not currently have any plans for the introduction of area-wide 20mph zones and does not support this as a policy going forward. Looking at accident statistics across Herefordshire our highest concern remains on high-speed rural roads where we have the highest incidents of killed and seriously injured accidents. As the highway authority we continue to carefully prioritise the funding we have available for road safety improvements using a prioritisation system that takes into account accident statistics, and this will include a number of traffic calming and speed reduction schemes across the Council each year.

PQ 6	Mr Willmont, Hereford	<p>One of the aims of the Hereford City Link Road was to remove through traffic from Newmarket/Blueschool Streets and Commercial Road. These roads continue to be plagued by through traffic, particularly heavy goods vehicles/vans/tractors.</p> <p>Irrespective of what works might be proposed for environmental improvements to Blueschool/Newmarket Streets why is there not a legal prohibition on through traffic (north to south) along these roads?</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Response:**  
The City Link Road was constructed to allow traffic to go around the city centre and not through it. Heavy good vehicles will still need access the city centre to allow for deliveries. Officers are working closely with the DfT on the designs for improvements to both Blue School Street and Commercial Road. These improvements need to take into consideration the future emerging developments in the city, the connectivity to the Transport Hub and a

future parking strategy, and emerging pressures, in accordance with the council's Transport Strategy. The council's Transport Strategy covers matters such as LTP, network planning, traffic management, transport planning, parking, mobility hubs, public and school transport. The council is also committed to the development of a Western Relief Road which will offer the opportunity to detrunk the A49 and further reduce traffic through the city centre.

PQ 7	Mrs Protherough Hereford	Active Travel England is an executive agency of the Government and one of its roles is to help councils to access state of the art data and analysis to use in active travel planning and design and integrate active travel into the planning and development system. ATE meets monthly with Herefordshire Council and yet the public have been informed that no minutes or records of these meetings are made. How can Council staff, councillors, MPs and the public learn from such experts about how a small City such as Hereford could be made more accessible and sustainable by Active Travel means, if meetings with Government agencies are not recorded and how does this comply with the Nolan principles of public life and the Council's THRIVE values of conduct in particular the two value of Trust and Honesty	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Response:**  
 We recognise there will be public interest in the discussions between the council and Active Travel England. The council does not formally minute these meetings on the basis that they are largely informal 'keep in touch' opportunities.  
 Importantly, meetings between the council and Active Travel England have no formal decision-making powers. Decisions that have been, or may be taken in the future, by the council around active travel measures are subject to the council's access to information rules and our legal obligations. This is to ensure that decisions taken by the council are open, transparent and accountable.

PQ 8	Ms Martin Hereford	In FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST FOI2024/01673 copies of minutes of meetings were requested between Herefordshire Council and Active Travel England from January 2024 to date. The following response was provided:  "A: The Service Area have advised they do not have any minutes to share, as none are taken due to the informal nature of the meetings."  Given that taxpayers fund members of staff to attend these meetings, please explain why they are not minuted, what other meetings with Government bodies are not minuted and how this complies with the Nolan Principles."	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Agenda item no. 6 - Questions from members of the Council**

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 1	Cllr Liz Harvey, Ledbury North	<p>In February 2024, in order to achieve a balanced budget and to mitigate the worst effects of applying the maximum increase allowed in Council Tax, your minority administration gave assurances to this Council that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £2.3m of reserves would be repaid by savings delivered by the Children’s Directorate; and</li> <li>• All income received above that budgeted from council investments would be used to provide additional targeted support to hard hit families.</li> </ul> <p>Please would the Leader confirm that you going to honour these firm undertakings?</p>	Leader
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>We recognise the challenging financial climate and its impact on individuals and we continue to provide support to households in hardship. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme, approved by full Council in February 2024, continues to provide support at the maximum level to those most in need with more than 11,000 households expected to receive 100% discount on their council tax through this scheme – paying no council tax at all. The scheme provides support to eligible households regardless of their council tax banding. In addition, the Council continues to offer support to residents through award of Discretionary Housing Payments, administration and allocation of the Household Support Fund, support services provided by Talk Community and by providing temporary housing solutions for individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. It is expected that this support will continue in 2025/26.</p> <p>As at Period 6 of 2024/25 (September 2024), the Children &amp; Young People Directorate is forecasting a balanced position against the approved revenue budget. This forecast assumes delivery of Savings Targets S2 and S3 in full and that activity in progress over the remainder of the year will achieve Savings Target S3 by 31 March 2025; Savings Target S4 is currently assessed as ‘at risk’. This means that the Directorate will have achieved £2.3m of savings in 2024/25 without using the additional budget allocated from reserves by the Budget Amendment approved by Full Council in February 2024.</p> <p>As at P6, the revised forecast, including management recovery actions, highlights that the additional budget allocation of £2.3m is not forecast to be used in 2024/25. This is currently presented as an underspend and included in the overall forecast position for the year to report performance against the approved Revenue Budget of £212.8m. Due to the volatility of the Directorate’s demand-led activity and risk of impact on the outturn position, until the full year results and achievement of savings are known, the final requirement from the additional budget cannot be confirmed. We are continuing to monitor financial performance and identify recovery action in 2024/25, however, any overspend on the council’s Revenue Budget in 2024/25 must be funded from the council’s available reserves.</p>			

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MQ 2	Cllr Dave Boulter, Whitecross	<p>The Leader's Report states that "1,100 high value jobs have been created" on the Enterprise Zone.</p> <p>What is the evidence businesses on the site are required to provide to evidence the achievement of these jobs, and what is the definition of 'high value' that you are using to test and to agree their figures?</p>	Cabinet member economy and growth
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>The Hereford Enterprise Zone Ltd Board has a Placement Strategy setting out a range of criteria that a business must meet to qualify to locate on Skylon Park. The Placement Strategy ensures only businesses that in key target sectors that will create higher value employment (more better paid jobs) located on the Enterprise Zone. The business commits at the point of contractual sale of the land as to how many jobs they will create as a result of their business growth on the Enterprise Zone.</p> <p>Following a review of the Hereford Enterprise Zone at the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee in November, we are also committed to commissioning an external economic impact assessment to gather and review the evidence required to further quantify the significant impact it has and continues to make to the Herefordshire economy.</p>			
MQ3	Cllr Pauline Crockett,	<p>Many of us have witnessed and experienced the devastation caused by recent and repeated flooding in our County. Every time this happens homes are ruined and lives are thrown into turmoil!</p> <p>Our County's drainage system is unable to cope with the scale and frequency of these severe weather events. Residents need action now.</p> <p>This Council must robustly enforce landowner riparian responsibilities, and take action to better manage water on and off the public highway.</p> <p>The Council must also maintain the operational effectiveness of existing flood defence schemes and ensure that the Environment Agency does likewise.</p> <p>In my Ward all of my Parishes have had to report serious flooding events, I am sure I am not alone!</p> <p>What are this administration's immediate plans to improve the protection of our residents and where will you be investing early?</p>	Cabinet support member
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>This administration is utterly committed to addressing the serious flooding risks that have caused such hardship to residents, and disruption to our schools and economy. It is clear to everyone that the events are becoming more frequent and more intense. In response to the October and November floods, and building on the motion passed by this council at our last meeting, we have set in progress a county wide project to understand each and</p>			

every flood or near-flood event, and then, where possible, take remedial action – whether that be addressing failures or capacity issues in our drainage system, resolving problems with how quickly the rivers can get water away, looking at – as I mentioned in the previous meeting of Council – our plans for new homes in light of their contribution to flood risks, and yes, as you suggest, working with landowners and where necessary taking enforcement action where riparian responsibilities have been neglected. We will also be looking at improving our flood mitigation and emergency response services.

Solving a problem in one area carries the risk of moving it elsewhere. This work will require coordination of all of those risk areas, and as the Lead Local Flood Authority we will be taking leadership of all the various bodies involved in this – the Environment Agency, Welsh Water, Severn Trent Water, The Lugg and Lower Wye Internal Drainage Boards, and so on, as well as the parish councils who we have already partnered with to map any missing assets and develop a deeper understanding of the local drainage network.

To this end we have already seconded staff into a growing flood team so that we have the ability to move forward on this across the county, and they are already hard at work. We are drawing funds from our [emergency response budget] and will be asking this council to support investment in flood response in our capital budget next month. There is much in climate change that is beyond our control. But rest assured we will leave no stone unturned in facing this.

