



2. Supplement to the agenda for

Cabinet

Tuesday 20 January 2026

2.30 pm

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

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Agenda item no. 4 - Questions from members of the public

| Question No. | Questioner | Question | Question to |
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| PQ 1. | Mr Peter McKay, Leominster | <i>Reply to question 1st May were advised that you would consider an addendum to the 2018-2028 Rights of Way Improvement Plan comprising an amplification of the Public Right of Way Glossary that says CRF's and CRB's were intended to be shown as Roads Used as Public Paths, but in fact were shown as Footpaths and Bridleways, identifying them as being prospective upgrades when redrafting the plan in 2028, and on 17th July that you would consider drafting this addendum now, in consultation with Members, Officers and the Local Access Forum members. May I enquire if this is progressing?</i> | Councillor Hurcomb |
| Response: | | | |
| Following an officer review, this is not something that we are able to include in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). Herefordshire recorded Carriage Road Footpaths (CRFs) as footpaths and Carriage Road Bridleways (CRBs) as bridleways when the Definitive Map was created in 1952. These legal records can only be changed by submitting an application for a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) which has supporting evidence. The Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) process is legislated and is already covered in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan with each application being considered according to the Statement of Priorities on a case-by-case basis. | | | |
| Supplementary Question: | | | |
| Supplementary Response: | | | |
| PQ 2. | Merry Albright, Co-Chair of the Herefordshire Construction Industry Lobby Group | <i>Given that Herefordshire Council are experiencing significant financial pressures, does the Cabinet think that it is now prudent, and ethically fair, to review the housing ban that has been in place since 2019? Now that agencies have confirmed in their DWPP that housing is a negligible source of the phosphorous load and that Welsh Water have reduced more than their 'fair share' of phosphate, would cabinet agree that the catastrophic social and economic losses caused by the long</i> | Councillor Swinglehurst |

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| | | <i>moratorium are not justified, and that these impacts should have been assessed and balanced against possible ecological gains before a moratorium was put in place almost 7 years ago?</i> | |
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Response:

Whilst there is not a ban or formal moratorium on housing development in the Lugg catchment we acknowledge that there has been a significant impact to planning applications, and the resulting constraints on housing development, due to the government's necessity to demonstrate that development is nutrient neutral before planning permission can be granted.

At our meeting with you in December, we agreed to write to government (due by the end of January) to express our concerns regarding the impact of these requirements on housing development and our wider economy, whilst recognising the need to find a sustainable long term solution to protecting and restoring the health of our rivers. In the meantime the council continues to bring forward projects to create phosphate credits such as the proposed new wetland at Dilwyn, and to accept private mitigation schemes through the planning process wherever possible (in consultation with Natural England).

Supplementary Question:

Supplementary Response:

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| PQ 3. | Ben Albright, Border Oak Design & Construction Ltd | <p>“Herefordshire has a very strong tradition of producing and supporting successful small and medium family businesses which serve the local area and operate further afield - representing the county and creating jobs, making products, delivering services and generating inward investment. Trading conditions for small business and family firms has become increasingly difficult - with government changes to inheritance tax, business rates, national insurance, minimum wage etc negatively impacting upon small and family businesses and placing intolerable strains upon the Herefordshire business network.</p> <p>Would Herefordshire Council be able to write to the Government in support of your small, medium and family owned businesses, to make clear that the burdens are unsustainable and are most keenly felt in small rural counties such as Herefordshire?”</p> | Leader of the Council |
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Response:

Yes, I will gladly write to government to highlight how the changes to inheritance tax, business rates, national insurance, and minimum wage are all having a detrimental impact on local businesses. The Herefordshire Business Growth Board has raised with government through the national business board network, and I will encourage the Board to write to government (and other relevant parties) to directly to raise their concerns as well.

Supplementary Question:**Supplementary Response:**

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| PQ 4. | Jeremy Milln, Hereford | <p><i>The Capital Strategy 2026-31 at Appendix D under item 8 of today's agenda proposes a capital investment of just £1.7m to bring our network of footways and cycleways back to a 'new condition' over the five year period. It is less than proposed for traffic signals alone and only about 1% of the figure for motor road infrastructure.</i></p> <p><i>BCRs typically confirm that these comparatively tiny sums for footways and cycleways represent far better value in view of their environmental, financial and health benefits over motor roads. How will the cabinet member apply this knowledge to re-assessing his proposed SLR now that its cost has ballooned by another £5m to be funded by local tax-payers at a time of intense cost pressure, so will he add the missing foot and cycleways, discontinue the scheme or ignore advice and carry on regardless?</i></p> | Councillor Price |
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Response:

Maintaining and improving our footways and cycleways is essential to ensuring safe, convenient and accessible travel for everyone. This year we will invest £50 million in Highway Maintenance programme (£23.9 million funded by the Department for Transport), including for footways and cycleways.

Alongside this, we are investing £1 million in the Public Rights of Way network next year, with a further £250,000 available to parish councils to support locally identified improvements.

However, our commitment to active travel extends well beyond maintenance. The development of the Holme Lacy Road and Quiet Routes programme is a strategic part of the wider bypass plans. From the outset, the approach has been to enhance key active-travel corridors ahead of the construction of phase one of the bypass, ensuring that safe, attractive alternatives for walking and cycling are in place as the road scheme progresses. This is why the council has been delivering major active-travel improvements across Hereford in parallel with moving the bypass forward. As previously set out, phase one of the bypass does not include footways or cycleways; instead, the strategy has been to focus investment where it will have the greatest benefit for everyday local journeys - such as Holme Lacy Road - while ensuring new strategic road infrastructure can be delivered efficiently.

Supplementary Question:

Supplementary Response:

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| PQ 5. | Karen Ennis, Ledbury | <i>The budgeted project development costs of the Hereford Bypass Phase 1 are now shown as £9m, and the previous costs written off were £20m. I would like to ask whether bringing Phase 1 to fruition before Phase 2 (which is a long time in the future, if ever) will in fact increase traffic in the City Centre; traffic will increase due to development around the Phase 1 road, and this is only 'balanced' by the minimal reduction (which will only be at the 'Asda' roundabout and not in the City Centre) of traffic travelling between the A465 and the A49; can you provide the data to show that traffic in the City Centre will reduce when Phase 1 is built?</i> | Councillor Price |
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Response:

The Hereford Bypass is more than just a road – it is the key infrastructure that will unleash Herefordshire's future. Phase one, in the south, is the prerequisite to the full bypass to the west. This completes the southern relief, directly serving Rotherwas employment area, connecting key industrial sites to the south of the city. Our initial modelling indicates that construction of Phase One will see improvements in transport resilience; it does not indicate increased traffic in the city centre. At the same time will reduce traffic on portions of Belmont Rd, Walnut Tree Ave and Holme Lacy Road.

Supplementary Question:

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| <p>Supplementary Response:</p> | | | |
| PQ 6. | Mrs Morawiecka, Brienton, Hereford | <p>At the last cabinet meeting to confirm the CPOs for the Southern Link Road, Cllr Price was unable to confirm that the road would be built within the budget of £40.3million.</p> <p>We now see that just one month later the road cost is now budgeted at £45.3million with £40million to be secured through Prudential Borrowing.</p> <p>Para 3.4 of the borrowing strategy says that “ If borrowing is required, then the council will favour short term loans because the interest rates on long term loans are relatively high”.</p> <p>In view of Cllr Lester's October 2025 letter to the Dept of Transport and the £30million funding gap what is the impact on the Council's revenue services of the increased cost of this road?</p> | Leader of the Council |
| <p>Response:</p> <p>The Hereford Bypass will unlock economic growth, housing and jobs. It will unleash Herefordshire's future – a future we must invest in. The £5.0m proposed addition to the capital programme for Hereford Bypass Phase 1 will have an annual impact of £0.4m on the council's revenue budget from 2028/29 onwards. This proportionate and responsible investment represents 0.2% of the proposed net revenue budget of £234.1m in 2026/27.</p> | | | |
| <p>Supplementary Question:</p> | | | |
| <p>Supplementary Response:</p> | | | |
| PQ 7. | Hayden Osborne Brooks, Leominster | <p><i>"The Council says that it is making difficult choices to address the £30million funding gap in its budget. At the same time borrowing for the Southern Link Road (Hereford Western Bypass Phase 1) has increased by £5million, bringing total borrowing for the road to over £45million. In October Cllr Lester told the</i></p> | Councillor Price |

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| | <p><i>Department for Transport that the prudential borrowing would “significantly impact our revenue budget at a time when we face substantial cost pressures in social care, temporary accommodation and home-to-school transport”.</i></p> <p><i>With no detailed evidence, how has the Council assessed that a £45million road scheme is better value for county taxpayers than say reopening stations such as Pontrilas, which this administration said was a priority, improving bus services and safe active travel to reduce congestion and improve access for all, including those accessing education?”</i></p> | | |
| <p>Response:</p> <p>In relation to borrowing costs, I refer you to the answer given at PQ6. For your substantive question: The Hereford Bypass is more than just a road – it is the key infrastructure that will unleash Herefordshire’s future. As well as more jobs, housing and employment land, it will unlock opportunities to integrate existing - and new - transport connections. Officers are working on commissioning a rail study looking at potential stations across Herefordshire so that future investment can be prioritised. This administration continues to invest in improving roads, rail, bus and active travel and this is clearly demonstrated with the work that is currently taking place on the development of the Transport Hub, active travel improvements on Holme Lacy Road, improvements to the Great Western Way, school streets scheme and quiet routes development.</p> | | | |
| <p>Supplementary Question:</p> | | | |
| <p>Supplementary Response:</p> | | | |
| PQ 8. | Jim Smith, Herefordshire Headway | <i>What impact in relation to the budget cuts will this have on our council funded clients with ABI, will any of the qualifying criteria for funding change and if so, how?</i> | Cllr Gandy |
| <p>Response:</p> <p>Herefordshire Council greatly values the excellent work undertaken by Herefordshire Headway, supporting adults living with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI). I can reassure those with this condition that the qualifying criteria for funding will not change, and that council- funded clients with ABI will continue to receive the care and support they require. The council remains committed to working with specialist organisations like Headway to ensure high- quality, person- centred support for those living with ABI in Herefordshire.</p> | | | |

Supplementary Question:

Supplementary Response:

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| PQ 9. | Carole Protherough, Clehonger | <p><i>The Capital budget for the Western Bypass Phase 1 shows that additional borrowing of £5million is needed to fund this road scheme, taking the current estimated cost to £45.3Million. In the written answer to a public supplementary question at the last Cabinet meeting the public were told “The construction of Phase One could potentially lead to some of the constraints on the Bloor Homes site being reduced allowing for more houses and the potential for S106 funding to be sought to support the costs of construction of Phase One”.</i></p> <p><i>If this road will unlock land for housing, why do the capital budget and the MTFS not show the borrowing costs to Herefordshire taxpayers being reduced by contributions from developers for this road scheme rather than increased borrowing?</i></p> | Cllr Price |
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Response:

The construction of the bypass will release some additional housing sites in the future, but these are not known at this point and can't be estimated or accounted for in the current budget setting. As and when developments come forward the Council will seek appropriate contributions to support the bypass and these will help to reduce budget pressures in future years.

Supplementary Question:

Supplementary Response:



Agenda item no. 5- Questions from councillor

| Question No. | Questioner | Question | Question to |
|---|------------------|---|--------------|
| PQ 1. | Cllr Hitchiner | <i>The outline business case for Phase 1 of the bypass (page 137) sets out anticipated benefits. A claimed benefit is a reduction of traffic in the city centre. What evidence is in the public domain to support this claim? What evidence does the Council have to support this? If such evidence exists why is this not being made public?</i> | Cllr Price |
| Response: Our initial modelling indicates that construction of Phase One will see improvements in transport resilience; it does not indicate increased traffic in the city centre. At the same time will reduce traffic on portions of Belmont Rd, Walnut Tree Ave and Holme Lacy Road. The traffic modelling that underpins these forecasts is still going through our formal validation and verification processes. It would not be appropriate to publish this data until those checks are complete, as the results need to be robust, accurate and fully assured. The modelling will form part of the investment and business case documentation, which is scheduled for publication in July 2026. However, we expect the modelling work to be completed ahead of that date and will look to make the information public as soon as it has been fully verified. | | | |
| Supplementary Question: | | | |
| Supplementary Response: | | | |
| PQ 2. | Cllr Ben Proctor | <i>Given the "deeply concerning reports of the Grok AI chatbot account on X being used to create and share undressed images of people – which may amount to intimate image abuse or pornography – and sexualised images of children that may amount to child sexual abuse material (CSAM)" (I am quoting the OfCom news release of 12 January 2026). Will the Cabinet close all council accounts on X and ensure that the X or Twitter logos are no longer used on council communication materials?"</i> | Cllr Hurcomb |
| Response: | | | |

We fully acknowledge the seriousness of the recent misuse of Grok's image generation capabilities, which has enabled the creation of non-consensual and harmful deepfakes - an issue that has rightly drawn widespread condemnation. xAI has responded by imposing restrictions on creating sexualised images for all its users, and the government has confirmed the changes bring the platform into compliance with UK laws. We will continue to monitor developments closely and will reassess our use of the platform should substantive improvements not materialise. In the meantime, maintaining a presence on X, alongside a range of other channels, allows us to communicate with the public, especially at times of crisis where it often becomes the go-to place for breaking news and updates.

Supplementary Question:

Supplementary Response: