



Council

Date: **Friday 19 November 2010**

Time: **10.30 am**

Place: **The Shirehall, St Peter's Square, Hereford.**

**SUPPLEMENT - ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS
OF THE PUBLIC AND FORMAL QUESTIONS FROM
COUNCILLORS**

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 19 NOVEMBER 2010

Question from Mrs J O'Donnell, President, Hereford Guild of Guides

Question 1

What is the justification for the closure of the tourist information office in Hereford with the consequent loss of jobs when tourism is a £410 million industry and Hereford is the County town?

Answer from Councillor AJM Blackshaw Cabinet Member Economic Development and Community Services

Answer to Question 1

Unlike some other local authorities in the country, we are not closing the tourist information service in Hereford. We are remodelling the service throughout the county to ensure it is both affordable and fit for purpose in the future; the current arrangement does not represent good value for the public pound, there is no intention to end tourist information services for the city. I would caution against any assumption that decisions taken in respect of individual premises equate to removal of service.

I am pleased that, like ourselves, Mrs O'Donnell recognises the value of tourism to the local economy. However in the current challenging economic climate the council has a responsibility to ensure that public sector resources are used as efficiently and effectively as possible, whilst doing everything in our power to protect front line services. This does mean doing things differently, ensuring that we work with community volunteers and private sector partners to best effect, but it does not mean that Hereford, or any other market town in the county, will be left without a tourism information service.

Question from Mr P Cocks, Hereford

Question 2

What is the overall council policy of equating income from car parks with maintaining a friendly shopper/visitor balance and fairness across the county and will council staff, like most other workers in the city of Hereford, have to pay for parking on the proposed new 600+ spaces car park at Plough Lane?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

Answer to question 2

The Council's Countywide Car Parking Strategy forms part of the Local Transport Plan published on the Council's website. This sets out the approach taken to the provision and management of the Council's public car parks. Charges are set to balance the competing demands for parking by different users and to prioritise spaces for shoppers and visitors. The charges are generally lower than those in comparable centres in neighbouring counties and charges are benchmarked to ensure the county remains competitive and charges are reasonable.

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As part of the Council's continuing drive to ensure resources are used to best effect we are reviewing staff car parking policies.

Question from Ms A Sancha, Hereford

Question 3

Could the Council explain what fuels road transport will be powered by in 2020-25 and what will be the relative importance of each?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways & Transportation

Answer to question 3

We can of course only speculate, but it is likely that transport in 2020-25 will be powered by a variety of fuels both traditional and alternative including petrol, bio-fuels, electricity, hydrogen, LPG, and, in the case of cycling and walking, no direct fuel at all.

It is not possible to be certain of the relative importance of each type of fuel as this will depend on a range of technical, legislative, supply and market factors over the next ten to fifteen years.

Question from Mr L Clements, Hereford

Question 4

Why is the Council sticking to imposed central targets planning targets for house building and retail land requirements.

Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis Cabinet Member Environment & Strategic Housing

Answer to question 4

The targets were initially set out in the Inspectors' Panel Report into the Regional Spatial Strategy published in September 2009 following a very thorough examination of the evidence at a formal Examination in Public in April, May and June 2009.

These targets were not 'imposed' but supported by Herefordshire Council, being securely based on good evidence and having been tested at the Examination in Public. The evidence base and the justification for the targets remain, and the Council continues to promote growth in a planned way as part of the overall strategy which it believes necessary to both meet local need and secure the future sustainability and vibrancy of the County.

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Question from Mr R Priestly, Hereford

Question 5

The term “sustainable economic growth” is used in the LDF without proper definition. Please define both terms “sustainable economic growth” and “unsustainable economic growth”.

Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis, Environment & Strategic Housing

Answer to question 5

A common dictionary definition of “sustainable” is “able to be maintained at a certain rate or level”. That is the sense used in the draft Local Development Framework (LDF) in this regard. The term “unsustainable economic growth” is not used in the LDF.

Question from Ms J Straker, Hereford

Question 6

Has the Council researched the likely impact on traffic numbers of the inevitable steep rise in fuel prices over the life of the Local Transport Plan Strategy and what are the conclusions that have been reached?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways & Transportation

Answer to question 6

The Council has used Department of Transport national trend predictions for transport to inform the development of the transport strategy. The resulting draft Local Transport Plan 3 places significant emphasis on supporting and encouraging the use of non-car modes such as public transport, cycling and walking.

Question from Mr B Widdowson, Kington

Question 7

Could Herefordshire Council say how much the adoption of the Community Infrastructure Levy to pay for the relief road will add to the average cost of a home being built within this plan?

Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis, Cabinet Member Environment & Strategic housing

Answer to question 7

No. The government intends to review the legislation for the Community Infrastructure Levy and it would therefore be unwise to speculate over developer contributions when the legal provisions for requiring them are as yet unknown.

Question from Dr E Parker, Hereford

Question 08

Concerning the buildings within the Northern Magazine Section of the Rotherwas Munitions Factory, which individual, what department, and when was the decision taken to demolish most of these unique heritage assets?

Answer from Councillor AJM Blackshaw, Cabinet Member Economic Development & Community Services

Answer to question 08

None of the buildings on the North Magazine were identified as 'unique' in the specialist historic management study of the surviving factory buildings, which assessed the historic significance of each of the remaining buildings based on English Heritage criteria, and made recommendations for how protection of the historic fabric of the site could be achieved while still accommodating future commercial development.

Some of the most important buildings identified on the site have, however, been identified for retention including In the North Magazine, the shell store, at least one bunker, a group of other buildings, associated blast walls and some connecting roadways. This will ensure they are made safe for the future and, in due course, accessible by the public.

The Rotherwas Industrial Estate, including the North Magazine, has been zoned for employment use for many years with the decision to progress the project through a joint venture with Advantage West Midlands being taken by Cabinet in September 2006. The Rotherwas Futures project remains a key element in the county's overall strategy for ensuring the future sustainability of the local economy.

Question from Ms P Mitchell, Hereford

Question 9

*What does the Council's evidence base (i.e. the 'Hereford Relief Road – Study of Options' Report (Aug 2010) referred to in para 4.13) predict for the amount of time saved on the **average** trip (please give duration and length of the average trip) with a relief road for the PM peaks in 2026 compared to the 2008 baseline?*

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways & Transportation

Answer to question 9

The forecast year of 2026 has been used for all modelling scenarios as this represents the time horizon of the emerging Local Development Framework.

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Based on the preferred option for 2026 (planned growth, western relief road and sustainable transport package 2) average journey times, for **all forms** of transport, will be as follows:-

- Morning (a.m.) peak average journey time will increase by 17.6% compared with 2008
- Afternoon (p.m.) peak average journey time will increase by 18.5% compared with 2008

It is important to note, that these travel times include projected increases in journeys on foot & cycle, over and above those for car journeys, (ie a modal shift away from motorised transport) and therefore although indicate an overall increase in journey times, cannot be taken as an increase in car journey times.

Question from Mr A Simmonds, Hereford

Question 10

Can the council provide clear financial detail demonstrating how Herefordshire can afford both the bypass and the other infrastructure required?

Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis Cabinet Member Environment & Strategic Housing

Answer to question 10

The delivery plan to accompany submission of the LDF will address this question, and will take account of recent and expected government announcements.

Question from Mr A Fisher, Hereford

Question 11

The Vision states that 'dependency on the private care will be reduced' (para 2.5) and that a network of cycleways, footpaths and bus priority lanes will reduce residents' reliance on the private car' (para 2.4). If this is to be the case then how have the 'overall costs of travel' to people travelling on foot by bicycle and public transport been calculated and what weight have these been given in choosing transport and housing options for Hereford?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways & Transportation

Answer to question 11

The Council has followed Department of Transport guidance in its modelling work.

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Question from Ms M Burns, Hereford

Question 12

In its numerous consultations on the Core Strategy (i.e., on issues, vision, objectives, and developing options) which the Council sites as giving popular support for its Hereford Outer Distributor/Relief Road, what information were people given about the traffic reduction effects of a Relief (or Outer Distributor) Road, and alternatives to road building?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways & Transportation

Answer to question 12

The Council has made evidence available as studies have been completed on the growth proposals and transport impacts. The studies, currently available on the Council's website, include:

- Multi Modal Model Forecast Report, September 2009
- Delivering a Sustainable Transport System Study, May 2010
- Hereford Relief Road Study of Options, August 2010

Question from Mr S Horsfield, Hereford

Question 13

Herefordshire needs to shoulder its share of the burden of English population growth. What modelling has taken place of the economic and social consequences and outcomes bearing in mind population/demographic profile of the county, the decline in employment in the private and public sectors and insufficient transport links?

Answer from Councillor RJ Phillips Leader of the Council

Answer to question 13

Based on Office for National Statistics projections, Herefordshire has an older age profile than both the region and England and Wales, with a noticeably higher proportion of its population in the older age groups. People of state retirement age and over constitute a quarter (25%) of the county's population, in comparison with a fifth both regionally and nationally (20% & 19% respectively). The number of people aged 65+ is forecast to continue to increase, but more rapidly than in recent years, and is expected to be 61% higher in 2026 than in 2008. In particular, the number of people aged 85+ is expected to almost double, from 5,200 in 2008 to 10,200 in 2026.

Conversely, less than a third (31%) of Herefordshire's population is under 30, compared to 38% both regionally and nationally. There are forecast to be 6% fewer people aged 16-64 living in Herefordshire by 2026 than in 2008.

It is therefore essential that the strategies pursued by the council focus on attracting and retaining economically active residents, and ensuring necessary infrastructure is in place

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to support the economic growth needed to ensure the future sustainability and vibrancy of our community.

Question from Mr D Straker, Hereford

Question 14

What evidence does the Council have on whether the single river crossing could be discouraging car use and what studies have the Council undertaken of the potential for an additional river crossing to encourage increased numbers of car trips?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways & Transportation

Answer to question 14

I refer the questioner to my answer to Q12.

Question from Mr C Grover, Much Birch, Hereford

Question 15

In February this year the Standards Committee upheld a complaint (SC0916) against a parish councillor that he had breached the Parish Council Code of Conduct Paragraph 3(1) and failed to comply with Rule 5. Three sanctions were imposed by the Committee but to date (8 November) only one of those sanctions has been complied with and even this sanction, a letter of apology, was delivered to the complainant well outside the time limit set by the Committee and has not yet been considered by the Parish Council as required. Will the Council state what it is doing to resolve this contempt of a decision by the Standards Committee?

Answer from Robert Rogers, Chairman, Standards Committee

Answer to question 15

The Standards Committee, in upholding the complainant in case number SC0916, imposed two penalties on the parish councillor concerned, namely that:

- a) an apology be given to the complainant, with a copy of that apology provided to the Parish Council for their consideration; and
- b) the subject member undertake training arranged by the Monitoring Officer .

The letter of apology had to be sent within 28 days of the councillor's receipt of the letter. I am told that the councillor may have been away around that time so that a precise date cannot be given but it appears that there was no undue delay. A copy of the letter was provided to the Parish Council at that time. Neither the Standards Committee nor Herefordshire Council can require the Parish Council to take specific action upon receipt of the letter.

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Appropriate training has been arranged with Herefordshire Association of Local Councils whose training programme is carried out on an annual basis. I understand the session will take place early in the new year.

The Standards Committee also suggested that the Parish Council carry out a governance review in relation to commons management. This is a recommendation not a requirement.

Question from Ms F White, Hereford

Question 16

Is there a plan or model available for the 'sustainable communities' and energy neutral housing that will be required for these developments?

Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis Environment & Strategic Housing

Answer to question 16

No. The Council is strongly committed to carbon reduction and these issues will be taken into account when decisions regarding developments are made.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 19 NOVEMBER 2010**Question from Councillor MD Lloyd-Hayes**

- 1A *The revenue earned from Tourism is more than £416m a year. The proposed closure of TIC's across the County makes a saving of £200,000. Would the Cabinet member not agree that tourists, visitors and the general public deserve more than a robotic on line booking service?*
- B *Can the Cabinet Member confirm that plans for the new Hereford Library are still on track and when will it be built?*

Answer from Councillor AJM Blackshaw, Cabinet Member Economic Development and Community Services

Answer to question 1

- 1A Yes – I refer to the answer given to Mrs O'Donnell (question number 1 from Members of the Public.)
- B This project is not part of the capital programme. However, in line with all our services, we continue to keep under review options and opportunities for future service delivery, ensuring we make best use of available resources.

Question from Councillor RI Matthews

- 2 *Can the Cabinet Member confirm that all the professional advice that this and previous Councils over many years have received, up until a few months ago, clearly indicated that an eastern route was most appropriate for a Hereford Relief Road, and in particular for the long term economic viability of the county, and would be far more effective than alternative routes in reducing traffic congestion in and around the city generally?*
- A *Can the Cabinet Member also tell Members why there was a sudden change in officers' recommendations so late in the day?*
- B *Did the Executive have any input into this sudden change in thinking?*
- C *Does the Executive agree that it would have been more appropriate if independent consultants had been employed to carry out the study of options for the Hereford Relief Road, because there is a public perception that Amey, because of their close association with this authority, should not have been engaged to carry out this important task? They also changed their recommendations very late in the day.*

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Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis Cabinet Member Environment and Strategic Housing

Answer to question 2

- 2 No.
- A There has been no change in officers' recommendations.
- B See answer to question 2A above
- C There is no basis to question the professional judgement or impartiality of Amey or its sub-contractors. There was no change of recommendation by Amey.
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Question from Councillor PJ Watts

- 3 *Will Hereford Council please confirm that there are high schools within the county that are seeking, or will obtain, the status of academy in the year 2011, January 1?*
- A *Is the number of schools to date five? Please confirm the number and name the school.*
- B *When did Hereford Council first get notification and dates that these schools were about to become academies?*

Answer from Councillor PD Price, Cabinet Member ICT, Education and Achievement

Composite answer to question 3.

The Council is aware that the following 3 high schools are seeking to achieve academy status in 2011:

- John Kyrle High School – Academy Order received by the Council on 18 October 2010 from Department for Education(DfE) confirming the school can move to academy status as from 1 January 2011
- Wigmore School (federation of high & primary schools) – School applied to DfE on 22 September 2010 to date no order has been received by the Council
- Fairfield High School – School has commenced consultation with parents etc re a potential move to academy status; no application has yet been submitted.

Cllr Watts will of course be aware that there are already two academies in the county: Hereford Academy (formally Wyebridge School); and the Steiner Academy

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Question from Councillor GFM Dawe

- 4 *Is the rumour some of us have heard that Councillor Roger Phillips intends resigning as Leader of the Conservatives before or shortly after the next election (assuming he is re-elected) true?*

Answer from Councillor RJ Phillips, Leader of the Council

Answer to question 4

Rumour and truth are rarely happy bedfellows!

Question from Councillor GFM Dawe

- 5A *The Rotherwas Access Road was opened over 3 years ago now. We were promised the £12.5m for the road and £5m for estate enhancement that would create 1000 jobs, at a cost of £17,500 per job. (There have been various other estimates, yet to come to fruition.) How many jobs has it created?*
- B *Will you list the jobs created at Rotherwas since the Rotherwas Access Road was created and the range of salaries?*

Answer from Councillor AJM Blackshaw, Cabinet Member Economic Development and Community Services

Composite answer to question 5

Major projects such as these are intended to support long term economic growth, and no timetable was set for job creation. Projected job creation is linked to development of the site. In the current economic climate it is as important to sustain and protect existing employment to ensure a sound basis for future growth, and the access road has supported this, protecting existing jobs in companies such as Arctic Circle and KGD Engineering that were being constrained by the poor access. Arctic Circle has invested over £1M and brought all its development work back to Rotherwas as a result of the access road. It has also opened up significant areas of land for future development & job creation; businesses that re-locate onto council land at Rotherwas will be required to provide job and investment information that can be monitored in the longer term.

Question from Councillor GFM Dawe

- 6 *A large number of documents support the proposed Outer Distributor Road (ODR), these include:*
- *The Hereford Relief Road; Study of Options, Amey Report; September 9 2010*

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- *The Sustainability Report (for the Relief Road), August 2010*
- *Environmental Assessment Report (for the Relief Road), August 2010*
- *Growth Point Connectivity Phase 1, April 2010 (the DaSTS report)*

How much has been spent on the development of the ODR plans from 2006 to the present day?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

Answer to question 6

The Council has spent a total of £479,034 since 2006.

Question from Councillor GFM Dawe

- 7 *Is the Council committed to maintaining the current level of bus services, despite the pressures from the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR)?*

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

Answer to question 7

The cabinet is currently assessing the impacts of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) on all of its budgets, taking into account potential impacts on the residents and the wider community. The Council is well aware of the importance of bus services and the vital access they provide to employment, education, health and other services often for the most vulnerable members of our community. The full implications of the CSR on Council budgets will not be known until after the Council's Local Government funding settlement is known in December. Subject to this the Council will do all that it can to focus on the delivery of front line services such as these.

Question from Councillor GFM Dawe

- 8 *What is the current cost of holding a local election?*

Answer from Councillor H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources

Answer to question 8

Costs will vary depending on what other elections/referenda are taking place at the time, as well as the number of contested seats. Costs for the unitary

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elections in May 2011 are estimated at £290,000. Further enquiries should be addressed, in writing, to the Returning Officer.

Question from Councillor GFM Dawe

- 9 *Dinedor Parish Council are concerned that the planning designation of the Village as Open Countryside is severely limiting the possibility of the minor developments that are necessary to ensure the sustainability of the community and wish to request Herefordshire Council to reconsider the designation, or other means of providing some flexibility to allow infills, development of derelict property, and developments for existing residents needing to up or down size? Will Herefordshire Council be willing to take into account flexibility on this matter?*

Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis, Cabinet Member Environment and Strategic Housing

Answer to question 9

The key to this lies in the policies being developed as part of the Local Development Framework, and all parish councils have been encouraged to engage in this process.

Question from Councillor MAF Hubbard

- 10 *Herefordshire Council's finance department recently reported the following levels of debt to a fellow Councillor:*

Year	Council Tax Base	Council Debt
2005-6	67,152.50	£ 66,000,000
2009-10	70,016.60	£118,000,000
2010-11	70,750.60	£125,000,000

- A *How much does each household (Band D) have to pay in council tax to service this debt, and by how much has this amount increased since the financial year 2005-6?*
- B *How much has been spent on the LDF planning and consultation since 2006 to the present day?*
- C *Can the Leader of the Council confirm that the comment he made in a public meeting in Weobley on Friday 13 November 2009 that Section 106 money would be required from every new build house in the County proposed by the LDF to help fund the Hereford ODR is still true?*

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Answer from Councillor RJ Phillips, Leader of the Council

Answer to question 10

- A The figures quoted above include all borrowing regardless of source. Broadly speaking there are two types of borrowing – supported and prudential. The costs of current prudential borrowing, which accounts for some £41m of the funding of the £125m borrowing in 2010/11, are largely met through council tax precepts. Given that the balance is largely funded from other sources generated by the local government formula it is evident that supported borrowing received as part of the annual settlement provides a major contribution to funding the council's borrowing, and is not a cost to the local taxpayer.

A number of factors, including movement in working capital and investment balances, influence when and how much is borrowed so it is not possible to provide a static figure for the split between the types of borrowing, or indeed the allocation of that borrowing to individual schemes. However, on an estimate of the current year's prudential borrowing requirement, the cost to a Band D tax payer would be in the region of £64.00.

Without such borrowing it would not be possible to deliver projects which are essential to the local community including: Riverside School, Leominster swimming pool, the new crematorium, Rotherwas relief road, enhancements to Hereford city centre, Kington library, the mortgage rescue scheme, the museum resource & learning centre at Friars Street, improvements to public toilets and improvements to disability access.

- B From 1st January 2006 to 15th November 2010 expenditure on the statutory process required to develop the LDF was £822,716. It should be noted that much of this sum is supported through external resources such as Planning Resource Grant.
- C My reference to the need for developer contributions on all non-affordable homes was made, and is made, within the context of previous and current government policy regarding infrastructure funding.

Question from Councillor AT Oliver

- 11A *What was the total number of housing units built in the period from 1996 to 2010 across Herefordshire, and what was the total number of affordable homes built in this period?*
- B *What is the number of homes required to meet the current need for affordable housing in Herefordshire and what percentage of the total need is required in Herford City?*

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- C *Is housing need projected to rise over the next decade and, if so, what are the projected figures?*

Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis, Cabinet Member Environment and Strategic Housing

Answer to question 11

- 11A 10,921 dwellings completed in the fourteen year period. Affordable homes built and acquired equates to 1882 (NB this includes all forms of delivery not just new build.)
- B Statistical projections are available on the council's website. A local housing market area assessment is currently being undertaken which will determine the need at local area levels, including Hereford City, by giving consideration to the various methodologies used to date, resulting in an overall level of affordable housing need. Delivery of this is expected in early 2011.
- C National Household projections can be disaggregated down to regional and sub-regional levels. This was done as part of the Examination in Public into the Regional Spatial Strategy last year and, on the basis of that evidence, a figure of 18,000 new homes is projected for the period 2006 to 2026

Question from Councillor AT Oliver

- 12 *There are concerns as to whether all professionals involved in child safe-guarding are sharing the information they hold with other agencies on each case, due to considerations of confidentiality. As the sharing of information is vital to the process for protecting children can we be assured that these confidentiality issues have now been entirely resolved?*

Answer from Councillor JA Hyde, Cabinet Member Children's Services

Answer to question 12

Considerations of confidentiality should not be a barrier to information sharing in the interests of safeguarding. Every effort is being made to ensure that protocols remain fit for purpose and that all staff and relevant professionals are aware of the overriding imperative to protect the vulnerable within our community, and of their responsibilities in this regard.

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Question from Councillor AT Oliver

13A *What is the current amount of prudential borrowing by the Council, and how much of this borrowing has been spent on each project financed this way?*

B *What is the annual cost to each Council Tax payer of financing this borrowing?*

Answer from Councillor H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources

Answer to question 13

I refer to the answer given by the Leader to question 10A.