

**SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA FOR**

# **Council**

**Friday 23 November 2012**

**10.30 am**

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

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



<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>23 NOVEMBER 2012</b>
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC</b>
<b>REPORT BY:</b>	<b>MONITORING OFFICER</b>

## 1 Classification

Open

## 2 Wards Affected

County-wide

## 3 Purpose

To receive any questions from members of the public deposited more than eight clear working days before the meeting of Council.

## 4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 Members of the public may ask a question of a Cabinet Member or Committee or other Chairmen. Written answers will be circulated to Members, the press and public prior to the start of the Council meeting. Questions subject to a Freedom of Information request will be dealt with under that separate process.
- 4.2 Standing Order 4.1.14.4 of the Constitution states that: a question may only be asked if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or by electronic mail to the Monitoring Officer no later than midday eight clear working days before the day of the meeting (ie the Monday of the week preceding the Council meeting where that meeting is on a Friday). Each question must give the name and address of the questioner and must name the person to whom it is to be put.
- 4.3 A questioner who has submitted a written question may also put **one** brief supplementary question without notice to the person (if s/he is present at the meeting) who has replied to his or her original question. A supplementary question must arise directly out of the original request or reply. The Chairman may reject a supplementary question on any of the grounds for rejecting written questions set out in these Council rules or if the question is too lengthy, is in multiple parts or takes the form of a speech. In any event, any person asking a supplementary question will be permitted only **1 minute** to do so.
- 4.4 The Monitoring Officer may reject a question or a supplemental question if it:

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from  
Chris Chapman, Monitoring Officer on Tel: (01432) 260200

- Is not about a matter for which the Council has a responsibility or which affects the County or a part of it;
- Is illegal, scurrilous, defamatory, frivolous or offensive or otherwise out of order;
- Is substantially the same as or similar to a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months or relates to the same subject matter or the answer to the question will be substantially the same as the previous answer;
- Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information;
- Relates to a planning or licensing application;
- Relates to an employment matter that should more properly be dealt with through the Council's Human Resources processes.

4.5 There will be a time limit of a maximum of 30 minutes for public questions and of 30 minutes for Members' questions. If either public or Member questions are concluded in less than 30 minutes, then the Chairman may allow more time for either public or Member questions within an overall time limit of one hour for all questions and supplementary questions. There will normally be no extension of time beyond one hour, unless the Chairman decides that there are reasonable grounds to allow such an extension, and questions not dealt with in this time will be dealt with by written response. The Chairman will decide the time allocated to each question. The register of questions put to the Council meeting, both questions allowed or rejected, is available at a Council meeting for members of the public to view.

## **5 Questions**

5.1 Seven questions have been received by the deadline and are attached at Appendix 1.

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2012

**Question from Mrs P Churchward, Breinton**

Question 1

Refurbishment of Hereford's Historic Butter Market

*The Executive Rolling Programme indicated that the Cabinet Member Corporate Services and the Cabinet Member Enterprise and Culture were due to make a decision on the refurbishment of Hereford's historic Butter Market on 18 October 2012 and how the Council plans to fund that refurbishment. Considering that the Council has so far spent millions supporting the ESG retail development could one of these Cabinet Members please advise what the current situation is regarding funding the Butter Market refurbishment?*

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**Question from Mrs E Morawiecka, Breinton**

Question 2

Webcasting of Council Meetings

As part of its drive to make democracy more transparent, accessible and open, Herefordshire Council carried out a trial webcast of a planning meeting in February 2012. The Head of Governance said that this was one of the Council's priorities and it also increased the accessibility of such meetings to members of the public and staff who cannot travel to meetings or miss them because of other commitments. The Council press release stated that "The first webcast of a Herefordshire Council meeting proved a resounding success with more than 1,000 people having viewed it...Consideration will now be given to extending webcasting to all of the council's public meetings".

*With this resounding success and the fact that many other councils already provide this service for local taxpayers to engage in democracy, can the Cabinet Member responsible for Governance and Democracy confirm when they are due to extend webcasting of meetings to help deliver this priority of Herefordshire Council?*

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2012

**Question from Mrs BC McHarg**

Question 3

Herefordshire Council Capital Overspend on Supporting Retail Development

*The budget report to Cabinet on 18 October 2012, in Appendix 2, states that there is already a “capital overspend on the Link Road in excess of £1.5million on property purchases”. What other additional costs is the Council incurring in order to facilitate the delivery of this new retail development?*

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**Question from Mr P McKay, Leominster**

Question 4

Car Parking Charges – Traffic Regulation Orders

Leominster Town Council minute 09.09.83 of 21 September 2009 records Leominster Town Council request to review waiting restrictions in Broad Street with objective of bringing parking bays marked double yellow lines outside Hintons into use, with minute 09.10.98 of 19 October 2009 advising will be included on list for ranking, with the June 2010 TRO work program showing review of Broad Street waiting restrictions has a project start date of 28 May 2013. Leominster Town Council minute 11.01.129 & 130 of 17/01/2011 record concern about the way in which other parking bays are marked with single and double yellow lines enforced by wardens throughout Leominster, due to waiting restriction orders dating back to 1977 not having been updated when town centre redesigned, seeking to bring all these other parking bays into use, with minute 11.02.159.2 of meeting 21/02/2011 recording that Leominster Town Council’s request for a review of waiting restrictions in the town was noted and that the request would be included on the lists for ranking in June/July 2011.

*Requests asking for current information regarding these project start dates remain unanswered, so may I enquire just when we may expect these projects to start, aiming to make Leominster more parking friendly in these times of austerity, and to reduce parking demands on adjacent residential streets?*

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2012

**Question from Mrs V Wegg-Prosser, Breinton**

Question 5

5 year Housing Land Availability Target

*Could the Cabinet Member responsible for Planning confirm that the Council's decisions to delay the completion of the 5 year housing land availability target and to delay the preparation of the core strategy were agreed in order to take advantage of the relaxation of planning rules that can occur (in accordance with the NPPF) in the event that 5 year housing land availability and core strategy are not in place?*

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**Question from Mr P Mitchell,**

Question 6

Explanation and justification of capital funding priority over essential service provision

Against a background of tightened central government funding and relatively stagnant council tax receipts, would the Council explain and justify its reduced budgetary allocations to increasing demand and cost of social and health care support against its clear preference towards provision of land and funding significant project costs to underpin developer profit on the Edgar Grid development (thus compounding the reduction impact to budget due to debt financing costs).

I would ask the Council to address this (and any other) capital funding priority in the context of its primary duty to meet essential core services and especially to provide support to the most needy and vulnerable in society. In particular

- *Provide assurance and demonstrate how it will address recently reported management failures to meet adequate (legal minimum) requirements for ensuring safety and care of children at risk or in care and maintain necessary resources to achieve its statutory and more important moral obligation to ensure good or excellent standards of care provision.*
- *Explain and justify reported cuts in the extent of service provision for care of the elderly against an increasingly demanding demographic going forward.*
- *Explain and justify reported cuts in support to vulnerable families at a time when they are suffering particularly badly due to the current economic climate and are increasing in numbers.*
- *How it will ensure required resourcing of care and support to those with mental health problems under reported reductions in available funding having already being been targeted with more stringent benefits requirements (and will otherwise require more care and support getting into and maintaining suitable employment and safeguarding their personal circumstances).*

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2012

## Question from Ms P Mitchell, Hereford

Question 7

Completeness of traffic modelling for policy evaluation and soundness of the Local Development Framework

The Council is about to embark on another consultation on another version of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, in part because of concerns expressed by statutory organisations, including the Highways Agency, the Environment Agency and Natural England.

In their 28 November 2011 letter to the Council on the Revised Preferred Option consultation, the Highways Agency stated:

'The Agency currently finds the Revised Preferred Options Consultation as **unsound** due to lack of supporting transport evidence base.' (Letter from Serena Howell, NDD West Midlands Area 9 to Forward Planning)

To remedy this lack of 'supporting transport evidence base', the Council planners proposed, and the Cabinet agreed (at its meeting on the 12th of July), that from July to September of this year there would be 'continuing work on outstanding elements, including ... completion of road studies and **upgraded modelling**' in preparation for 'Consultation upon a Draft Plan and SA/SEA [Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment] and HRA [Habitats Regulation Assessment]' (para 50)

The Local Transport Plan 2011-12 Annual Progress Report (APR, October 2012) describes the 'Hereford Transport Model Upgrade' as

'a standard process all models go through every 5 years or so, [to] ensure the model accurately represents existing transport conditions for all types of transport and so can be used with confidence to predict transport conditions in the future to help the council develop its transport strategies and business cases for transport investment.' (p6)

However the APR also reports that. due to 'the very poor weather in the spring' completion of the upgraded model is not expected until spring 2013.

This indicates that not only will the evidence base for revising the Core Strategy and presenting it at the forthcoming consultation still be incomplete but so will the statutory components of the plan — the Sustainability Appraisal, the Strategic Environmental Assessment, and the Habitats Regulation Assessment.

Can Cllr Hamilton confirm either that:

a) *further consultation on the Local Development Framework will be delayed until the upgraded transport model is available to inform policy including 'the business cases for transport investment' and the statutory environmental assessments of the LDF;*

*or that*

b) *if consultation is to proceed, reasonable alternative policies whose impacts **can** be assessed will be presented alongside the Council's preferred option which, it appears, must remain unsound until the problem of incomplete evidence has been addressed.*



## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2012

### Question from Mrs P Churchward, Breinton

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### Answer from Councillor RJ Phillips Cabinet Member Enterprise and Culture

Answer to question 1

Options, including the potential for private sector investment, for refurbishment of the Buttermarket have been explored and a detailed survey of the structure and mechanical & electrical services must next be carried out along with an evidence based assessment of private sector market readiness.

The outcomes of this work will help to inform any decision to include the refurbishment of the Buttermarket in the council's Capital Programme. In the meantime we continue to support activities that bring increased footfall into the city and therefore support existing retailers, as evidenced by the recent Flavours of Herefordshire Food Festival and promotional activities such as the Truffle scheme and Shop Herefordshire.

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### Question from Mrs E Morawiecka, Breinton

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*With this resounding success and the fact that many other councils already provide this service for local taxpayers to engage in democracy, can the Cabinet Member responsible for Governance and Democracy confirm when they are due to extend webcasting of meetings to help deliver this priority of Herefordshire Council?*

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2012

### **Answer from Councillor PD Price Cabinet Member Corporate Services**

Answer to question 2

The trial webcast of the planning committee in February was successful and we received lots of positive feedback. This is an initiative that the Council is looking to extend and we are currently reviewing how best to achieve this as part of our new office accommodation plans for a civic hub at the Shire Hall. This approach will enable us to acquire the right technology, in the right place, at the right time and keep costs to a minimum

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### **Question from Mrs BC McHarg**

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### **Answer from Councillor GJ Powell Cabinet Member Education & Infrastructure**

Answer to question 3

Capital expenditure on the Link Road is not linked to the retail development at the Old Market Site; the ‘capital overspend’ noted in the budget report is a matter of spend profile rather than capital budget overspend.

There is no ‘overspend’ on the retail development; as part of the variation agreed by Cabinet the Council will forego £500,000 of capital receipt from the £1.5m to be received from the developer, but there are no additional costs to the council.

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### **Question from Mr P McKay, Leominster**

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## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2012

single and double yellow lines enforced by wardens throughout Leominster, due to waiting restriction orders dating back to 1977 not having been updated when town centre redesigned, seeking to bring all these other parking bays into use, with minute 11.02.159.2 of meeting 21/02/2011 recording that Leominster Town Council's request for a review of waiting restrictions in the town was noted and that the request would be included on the lists for ranking in June/July 2011.

*Requests asking for current information regarding these project start dates remain unanswered, so may I enquire just when we may expect these projects to start, aiming to make Leominster more parking friendly in these times of austerity, and to reduce parking demands on adjacent residential streets?*

### **Answer from Councillor GJ Powell Cabinet Member Education and Infrastructure**

Answer to question 4

It is unacceptable that the requests for an update on the progress of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) remain unanswered. We are currently reviewing our communication channels to resolve the issue.

In regard to this particular scheme, which affects Broad Street Leominster, it currently ranks at number 55 out of 99 TRO projects that are with the service to pursue. Realistically this means a projected start date of July 2014. I am working closely with the highway service to improve timescales for TROs as a consequence of greater productivity, improved resource management, and a revision of the current process. I anticipate issuing a briefing to all Members within 30 days.

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### **Question from Mrs V Wegg-Prosser, Breinton**

Question 5

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### **Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning**

Answer to question 5

No, the Leader's Report to Council (appearing elsewhere on the agenda today) provides an update regarding the progress of the Core Strategy, which itself will be used to establish the future 5-year housing land availability target for Herefordshire. There is certainly no hidden agenda as may be inferred from the question.

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2012

### Question from Mr P Mitchell,

#### Question 6

#### Explanation and justification of capital funding priority over essential service provision

Against a background of tightened central government funding and relatively stagnant council tax receipts, would the Council explain and justify its reduced budgetary allocations to increasing demand and cost of social and health care support against its clear preference towards provision of land and funding significant project costs to underpin developer profit on the Edgar Grid development (thus compounding the reduction impact to budget due to debt financing costs).

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### **Answer from Councillor PM Morgan Cabinet Member Health & Wellbeing**

#### Answer to question 6

I would like to make it clear that we have not reduced budgetary allocations to social care support or our support for vulnerable families. It is of course true that reducing central government funding and rising demographic pressures mean that resources are being stretched more thinly, that difficult choices around prioritisation of those resources are and will continue to be needed; however we remain committed to ensuring that vulnerable people receive the services they need, and to ensure that we do our best to support activities which help to prevent people requiring such services in the future. It is a principle underpinning our budget setting that resources are directed towards supporting the most vulnerable.

It is important to take an holistic approach to overall health and wellbeing. Without jobs and homes we know that people's health suffers and costs to health and social care services increase. That is why we must continue to invest in things that contribute to

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2012

overall health and wellbeing within our community whilst ensuring that the most vulnerable receive the support they need.

We are very disappointed by the findings of the recent inspection of children's safeguarding but accept the findings and are using them as an opportunity to change and improve the support we provide to vulnerable families. The improvement plan in response to the findings has already been presented to the Health & Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the council and its partners are committed to maintain improvement over the coming weeks and months. Additional resources have already been identified to support these necessary improvements.

The scale of the issue we face is significant, and it is not Herefordshire's alone. Our proposed corporate plan (appearing elsewhere on the agenda today) makes clear our continued commitment in this area. Despite the challenge that exists we will, through our root & branch reviews and the budget planning process, continue to ensure that the right resources are in the right place to meet the needs of the most vulnerable as well as the wider community.

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### Question from Ms Paige Mitchell, Hereford

Question 7

#### Completeness of traffic modelling for policy evaluation and soundness of the Local Development Framework

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### **Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning**

Answer to question 7

I believe that there is widespread recognition and support for the need to have an agreed Core Strategy in place and that it is important that progress continues towards adoption, including the consultation that is planned for the spring. The council is continuing to work closely with the Highways Agency and others in respect of a number of important local proposals including the LDF Core Strategy and development of the Rotherwas Enterprise Zone. We are seeking to ensure that the Agency is supportive of the Core Strategy and its evidence base as this will be important in progressing it through to adoption. Officers are meeting with the Regional Director of the Highways Agency in the near future for further discussions on this issue.

**Question from Councillor DC Taylor of Councillor PD Price Cabinet Member Corporate Services**

Your Community Your Say Public Event

- 1A *What is the total number of members of the public that attended each of the Your Community Your Say public event?*
- B *How many public questions were submitted at each event?*
- C *What was the total cost of holding all of the events and can this be seen as providing value for money for the public?*

**Answer from Councillor PD Price Cabinet Member Corporate Services**

Answer to question 1

We held a total of 21 “your community – your say” (YCYS) events across Herefordshire with attendance numbers provided below:

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Ross-on-Wye	20 <sup>th</sup> September	40
St Peter's Centre, Peterchurch	22 <sup>nd</sup> September	20
Ledbury	24 <sup>th</sup> September	60
Ewyas Harold	25 <sup>th</sup> September	30
Leintwardine	26 <sup>th</sup> September	18
Dorstone	27 <sup>th</sup> September	19
Weobley	1 <sup>st</sup> October	23
Hereford (Belmont)	2 <sup>nd</sup> October	15
Shobdon	8 <sup>th</sup> October	9
Bromyard	9 <sup>th</sup> October	45
Kington	10 <sup>th</sup> October	52
Herefordshire International School	13 <sup>th</sup> October	18
Leominster	15 <sup>th</sup> October	14
Hereford (St Barnabas)	17 <sup>th</sup> October	20
Hereford Disability United	17 <sup>th</sup> October	14
Leominster Area Regeneration Company meeting	22 <sup>nd</sup> October	12
Burley Gate	23 <sup>rd</sup> October	10
Fownhope	24 <sup>th</sup> October	30
Ledbury children's centre	31 <sup>st</sup> October	10
Herefordshire Carers Support Group	7 <sup>th</sup> November	20
Cleghonger	8 <sup>th</sup> November	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>489</b>

In addition to these locality based events we also worked with eleven local organisations that helped us to hear the views of seldom heard and hard to reach groups, including Age UK and West Mercia Women's Aid. For those who didn't wish to or were unable to attend an event, there was the opportunity to have their say online.

In total we believe we reached approximately 1,000 residents through the YCYS process.

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The events were deliberately not based on a traditional public meeting format with questions and answers; rather the approach taken was designed to engage residents in a discussion around a number of key questions about future priorities. Of course any questions that attendees had and which we were not able to answer immediately are being followed up and answers will be provided to all residents who asked to be kept informed about the YCYS process and will be included on the council's website.

The total cost for the YCYS process is approximately £42,700. This does not relate solely to the events but includes, for example, production of an introductory DVD which can be used for future consultations. We have also created an online forum to capture the views of those people who did not wish to or could not attend the events. The online forum will be used for future public consultation.

Engaging the community in the future of service delivery has always been important and, as we face significant reductions in funding from central government together with increasing demographic pressures on services for the vulnerable, the need to inform the community of these issues and include their views in the process of prioritising those resources becomes even more important.

A members' seminar on the YCYS process is planned for 12 December and I would encourage all members to attend.

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### **Question from Councillor RI Matthews of Councillor R Hamilton Cabinet Member Environment Housing & Planning**

#### Eastern Access Road

2 *It is a well known fact that local businessmen generally support an eastern access road to serve the existing, and hopefully expanding, Rotherwas Industrial Estate. I understand that such a road could be constructed for substantially less than the proposed city link road, owing to the considerable cost of compulsory purchase orders and other associated expenditure. Which of these schemes does the executive believe would be of most benefit to the local economy in these difficult times?*

### **Answer from Councillor R Hamilton Cabinet Member Environment Housing & Planning**

Answer to question 2

The council has, of course, already invested significantly in improving road access to the existing industrial estate at Rotherwas; indeed this investment contributed to the success of the bid for Enterprise Zone status which was in no way dependent on the additional access suggested by Cllr Matthews.

The already approved City Link Road and talk of any potential eastern access road to an expanding Rotherwas Industrial Estate that would serve a very different purpose and should not be confused or linked. Whilst I am aware that some members of the business community support the idea of an additional access road I know that this is not the view of the business community as a whole as may be inferred by the question. As Cllr Matthews



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knows, a recently commissioned assessment of the economic and wider social impacts of a potential eastern link road extending from the Rotherwas Enterprise Zone to the A438 recommended that the construction of an Eastern Link Road should be dismissed as providing insufficient economic impact and poor value for money.

In times of reducing finances we must ensure that future investment is directed towards those projects which best meet the needs and ambitions of the county as a whole; this prioritisation will inform our proposals for the future capital programme to be considered by Council in February.

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Question 3 disallowed under Herefordshire Council Constitution Part 4, 4.1.15.4 c on the grounds that the answer to the question will be substantially the same as a previous answer, public question 4, 20 July 2012.

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### **Question from Councillor AJW Powers of Councillor RJ Phillips, Cabinet Member Enterprise and Culture**

#### Board Meetings of Hereford Futures

- 4 Following a Freedom of Information request from a member of the public it has been confirmed that minutes of the Board meetings of Hereford Futures Ltd are not held by the Council, that no copies of minutes are kept by any Council staff present at those meetings and that, under Schedule 1 of the Freedom of Information Act, Hereford Futures is deemed not to be a 'public authority' and therefore not obliged to respond to FOI requests. The Old Cattle Market Development Agreement has finally been signed, and has gone unconditional, so "commercial confidentiality" ought no longer to be the justification for the non-disclosure of minutes.

*As the providers of funding to Hereford Futures, when will members of the public, Councillors and Council officers be entitled to receive the minutes of previous and forthcoming HF Board meetings?*

### **Answer from Councillor RJ Phillips, Cabinet Member Enterprise and Culture**

Answer to question 4

Cabinet agreed with Overview & Scrutiny Committee's recommendation (number 5), and a review is underway.

Of course, as with any project or organisation that receives funding from Herefordshire Council there are financial and performance reporting arrangements in place to ensure that funding is used for the purposes intended and to deliver agreed objectives or outcomes. If there is a particular performance concern that you have I would be happy to look into this for you.

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## MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2012

### **Question from Councillor GA Powell of Councillor PM Morgan, Cabinet Member Health and Wellbeing**

#### Co-operation between the Council and the Health Authority

- 5 *During these difficult financial times can Cllr Morgan assure us that the co-operation between the council and health authority is still providing satisfactory results?*

### **Answer from Councillor PM Morgan, Cabinet Member Health and Wellbeing**

Answer to question 5

Following the national changes to NHS commissioning structures it is true that the council, as with other local authorities across England, is developing new relationships with the Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group. We are of course building on existing section 75 joint funding agreements to ensure that we effectively commission services that provide efficient and effective care pathways.

Whatever the structural changes, it remains true that all partners working across the health and social care system, under the leadership of the Health & Wellbeing Board, must continue to work together to ensure that our reducing resources are directed in the most effective way, to meeting the priority needs of the community.

The Health & Wellbeing Board has identified three priority work streams:

- Sustainability of the local health and social care system – focusing on financial sustainability and overall effectiveness of the system;
- Demand management – improving care pathways, raising awareness of factors influencing health and wellbeing and enabling individuals to take greater responsibility for their own health and care management
- Crisis prevention – ensuring the most vulnerable including older people, families and children have access to the services they need, when they need them

The Health and Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee will have a key role to play in providing robust challenge to all partners to ensure that our resources are used effectively and efficiently in delivering positive outcomes for Herefordshire people.

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### **Question from Councillor MAF Hubbard of Councillor GJ Powell, Cabinet Member Education & Infrastructure**

#### Negotiations with Royal Mail and Delivery of the Link Road

6 Please would the Cabinet Member explain:

- a) what stage the negotiations with Royal Mail have got to with regard to the acquisition of part of their site to enable the delivery of the Link Road?
- b) an estimate of how much the deal with Royal Mail will cost?
- c) whether delivery of the Link Road will be within the £27million budget set aside by this Council to deliver the project?

## MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2012

### **Answer from Councillor GJ Powell, Cabinet Member Education & Infrastructure**

Answer to question 6

- a) Following the latest meeting with Royal Mail on 4<sup>th</sup> October, they have reconfirmed they are supportive of the scheme in principle and will be working with HC to agree options for re-provision of facilities to meet the current operational requirements of this site. However once a Compulsory Purchase Order is published, it could be expected that Royal Mail would be likely to lodge an objection to protect their position until formal agreement is reached regarding the delivery of any agreed works.
  - b) The cost will be subject to commercial negotiations and agreement with Royal Mail regarding the extent of works required to meet their operational requirements.
  - c) The budget for the scheme remains at £27million. Scheme cost estimates will be regularly reviewed during the project as the scheme design and accommodation works are developed in detail. Any changes to the estimated cost of the scheme would be reported in accordance with budget monitoring procedures and at key stages in the project.
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### **Question from Councillor WLS Bowen of Councillor RB Hamilton, Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning**

#### Energy Efficiency for all New Builds

7 *Is the Cabinet Member aware that I have asked many times that our Planning Department should demand much higher than national standards of energy efficiency for all new builds in Herefordshire? When can we expect to see some positive action taken on this matter?*

### **Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton, Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning**

Answer to question 7

I was not aware of Cllr Bowen's long-standing interest in this matter, but I would like to thank him for his interest.

Cllr Bowen will hopefully be aware of my own commitment to energy efficiency as evidenced by my recent significant announcements of energy efficiency measures including greater use of LED units in public street lighting, installation of photo-voltaic panels on public buildings and the installation of a network of electric car charging points throughout the County.

The national standards for energy efficiency in new development are applied through the planning process and by the Building Regulations; these national standards are regularly reviewed. With respect to the planning process in order to be able to apply a standard there must be an appropriate policy in place.

## MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2012

The Unitary Development Plan 2007 does not contain such a specific policy so progress on this issue has to date been through negotiation with the developer. However I believe that this needs to change and that the council will demonstrate leadership in this important area. I can reassure Cllr Bowen that I will be doing all that I can to ensure that policies that will be included in the emergent Local Plan (Core Strategy), will go as far as reasonably possible but as a minimum, conform to national policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. In addition to this I would strongly encourage local communities to embrace the opportunity to develop Neighbourhood Plans through which they will be able to develop their own planning policy in this regard should they choose.

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### **Question from Councillor WLS Bowen of Councillor RB Hamilton, Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning**

#### Protection of Locally Important Buildings

8 *Is the Cabinet Member aware that many, usually small, cottages which have recognition as being of local significance and importance are all too often wantonly destroyed? Can it be ensured that these locally important buildings can be given the protection that they deserve? Is the Cabinet Member aware that these cottages can be saved and adapted for modern use and thereby preserve the historic, and beautiful look of our villages and also retain important relics of our local vernacular architecture? Please, can action be taken before these local treasures are torn down to appease the greed of developers?*

### **Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton, Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning**

Answer to question 8

I am aware of the importance of character buildings to the environment and diversity of the county.

Clearly buildings which are listed buildings and/or those in a Conservation Areas are subject to protection. For other buildings the Unitary Development Plan 2007 contains a policy which protects "locally important buildings". A similar policy context will be included in the emerging Local Plan (Core Strategy). Local communities if they choose to develop a Neighbourhood Development Plan could chose to include more locally specific policies in this area. In every case there is of course a balance to be struck between retaining the historic character and adapting the building for modern use.

I know that the Council's development control officers, local communities and town/parish councils attach great importance to the desirability of retaining local buildings of character; and buildings considered to be of special architectural or historic interest and in danger of demolition or alteration in such a way as to affect their special character may receive temporary protection through issue of a Building Preservation Notice. Local members are best advised to raise issues of concern directly with the relevant case officer when a planning application has the potential to impact on any building of local character, or should they become concerned about a particular building of local interest.

## MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2012

### **Question from Councillor SJ Robertson of Councillor PM Morgan, Cabinet Member Health and Wellbeing**

#### Ofsted Safeguarding Report

- 9 Following release of the September 2012 OFSTED Safeguarding report, it was noted that there had been significant improvements in early help services. Therefore:
- a) *How is the Cabinet Member going to ensure that this continues, particularly with the government reducing the size of the early intervention grant and the predicted rise in the number of children in care and children in the early help system?*
  - b) *With demands on the Council's budget for implementing the Improvement Plan, can the Cabinet Member give an assurance that funds for early intervention will not be siphoned away from this area, especially as resources to support costs relating to the Improvement Plan have yet to be identified?*

### **Answer from Councillor PM Morgan, Cabinet Member Health and Wellbeing**

Answer to question 9

I hope all councillors will be aware, given the importance of this issue, that following the findings of the inspection we have moved swiftly to increase the pace of our improvement under the guidance of an independently chaired improvement board. The improvement plan rightly tackles the areas identified as of greatest risk and lays the foundation for good practice and these improvement actions must be resourced and delivered in a way that minimises any adverse impacts on other valued services.

This council has protected and enhanced the child protection budgets over the past three years at a time when overall council funding has seen significant reductions. We know that we are facing further significant cuts in funding from central government at a time when service demand amongst the most vulnerable in our community is increasing. This challenge will need to be addressed when Council sets its budget in February 2013 to ensure we continue to direct our resources to meet our agreed priorities.

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### **Question from Councillor MD Lloyd Hayes of Councillor JG Jarvis, Leader of the Council**

#### Cattle Market Development

- 10 *Having provided Stanhope to the tune of £500,000 to prop up the deal for the Cattle Market development – Can the Leader of the council reassure me that no further council assets, in cash or in kind , will be employed ,transferred, paid, waived, channelled or borrowed in aid of this project ?*

### **Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis, Leader of the Council**

Answer to question 10

I do not envisage any further resource requirements beyond those agreed.

## MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2012

### **Question from Councillor MD Lloyd Hayes of Councillor GJ Powell, Cabinet Member Education and Infrastructure**

#### Replacement of Trees in High Town

- 11 *What is the programme for replacing the trees in high town as promised when the Hereford bull was installed?*

### **Answer from Councillor GJ Powell, Cabinet Member Education and Infrastructure**

Answer to question 11

Discussions have taken place with interested parties, including local traders, regarding the location and number of trees. Opinions vary regarding the number and location of trees to be replaced and the provision of benches. A final decision will be taken early in the New Year in consultation with the local ward member.

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### **Question from Councillor JLV Kenyon of Councillor RJ Phillips, Cabinet Member Enterprise and Culture**

#### Council Priorities

- 12 *Where on this Council's list of priorities for economic development does active support to the historic city centre come?*

### **Answer from Councillor RJ Phillips, Cabinet Member Enterprise and Culture**

Answer to question 12

As you will see from the corporate plan report appearing elsewhere on Council's agenda today, supporting a successful economy that includes vibrant city and market town centres that are attractive and keep people spending locally, is and will continue to be a key priority for this council together with our support for vulnerable people.

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### **Question from Councillor EPJ Harvey of Councillor RJ Phillips, Cabinet Member Enterprise and Culture**

#### Town Team Partnerships

- 13 This month four towns in Herefordshire will each receive £10k towards the launch of Town Team Partnerships as a result of the work they have done this year under the Portas initiative to encourage community use and economic enhancement of their town centres.

*If the Town Teams are successful in acquiring further contributions to these projects from parish councils and local businesses by the end of this financial year, what level of additional or matched funding would Herefordshire Council be prepared to contribute to these community-led economic development projects in 2013?*

**Answer from Councillor RJ Phillips, Cabinet Member Enterprise and Culture**

Answer to question 13

Firstly I would like to congratulate Hereford, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross on Wye; the energy they put into their initial bids for Portas Pilot funding and their subsequent activities which have resulted in this award of funding are an excellent demonstration of what communities can achieve when they work together.

We are of course in the process of developing our budget proposals for the coming financial year and it would be inappropriate to speculate at this stage on any of the detail within those proposals. I am however pleased to note that Cllr Harvey is participating in the economic review and would hope that we can identify opportunities for support to market towns through this process.

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**Question from Councillor EPJ Harvey of Councillor RB Hamilton, Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning**

Adoption of the Core Strategy and the County's Economic Future

- 14 The adoption of the core strategy is central to the delivery of the county's economic future.

*What level of importance does this council place on ensuring consistency between this strategy and those policies in development by business, economic and community stakeholders within the county and beyond; and how is this coherence being realised?*

**Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton, Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning**

Answer to question 14

The adoption of the Core Strategy is central to the development and prosperity of the county as a whole. The strategy will address a wide range of important subjects that together will underpin the economic prosperity of the county for the future.

It is critically important that the Core Strategy provides a suite of positive policies and proposals which will meet the needs of business and enable economic development over the lifetime of the plan.

The council has engaged with the business community throughout the preparation of the Core Strategy and will continue with this engagement in on-going work and through the future consultation processes.

In addition I have had helpful meetings with rural members, four of the five market towns and the city (and further meetings are scheduled with those I have not yet met) so that we can collectively ensure that the core strategy provides an effective tool to pull the different housing planning and land use policies together and demonstrate how all areas of the county contribute to its overall prosperity of Herefordshire.

## **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2012**

The Core Strategy continues to be prepared in such a fashion so that it will be consistent with (amongst others) the council's Sustainable Community Strategy, Health & Wellbeing Strategy, the Economic Development Strategy and the Local Transport Plan.