

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 24 JULY 2009

### Question from Ms M Burns, Hereford

As the Cabinet Member has not answered the question:

What studies have Herefordshire Council undertaken into traffic movements (all modes) in and around Hereford since the Hereford Transport Review Multi-modal Study (pub. Feb 2003), and will the data from any of these studies be included in the report on transport for the Local Development Framework? If so, which ones?

(Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member, Highways and Transportation: 'There has been extensive work and studies undertaken to update the 2003 study, and this work is nearing completion, under the working title of "Multi Modal Model". It is hoped that a final version will be published by the end of June 2009 so that it can inform the consultation exercise which the Council's Forward Planning is going to undertake on the emerging Core Strategy for the Council which is a key part of the Local Development Framework. The consultation is due to start later this year.')

Here is clarification:

- 1.1 *Please give the titles, dates, authors, public availability of all studies into traffic movements (all modes) undertaken by the Council since the 2003 Hereford Transport Review. Please indicate which of the listed studies will be taken into consideration in the forthcoming report on transport.*

### Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

- 1.1 A specific strategic transport study has been commissioned to help assess the transport requirements resulting from housing and employment land use options under consideration through the Local Development Framework. This study comprises the building of a new multi-modal transport model which has been developed from the model used for the Hereford Transport Review. As a multi-modal model, whilst the outputs are at a strategic level, it will provide a forecast of transport movements by all modes including car, public transport (bus and rail), cycle and walk. The outcome of this modelling work will be used to inform preferred housing distribution options in the Local Development Framework. The Final Forecasting Report and Local Model Validation Report resulting from this work will be published and made available to the public as part of the LDF process. The work is being undertaken by JMP Consultants and has been commissioned jointly by the Highways Agency and Herefordshire Council. Whilst it was hoped that this work would be complete by June 2009 it is now anticipated that the final reports will be available in the autumn of 2009.

In addition to the above, the Council has undertaken a range of specific transport studies since the Hereford Transport Review in 2003. These include:

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 24 JULY 2009

<b>Transport Study Title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author</b>
Rotherwas Access Road Major Scheme Business Case	July 2005	Owen Williams
Hereford North Park and Ride Masterplan	December 2005	Owen Williams
Edgar Street Grid Car Parking Review	Ongoing	Crowd Dynamics
<b><i>Various Cycle Schemes:</i></b>		
Great Western Way Extension Holmer Cycle Way Feasibility Report	October 2005	Owen Williams
Community Street Audit report of St Owens Street	January 2009	Living Streets
Connect 2: Hereford-Holme Lacy Feasibility Report	April 2007	Amey

Where it is relevant any of the information in these reports will be used to inform the LDF process.

More detailed work will be progressed to fully assess the extent to which demand management/sustainable transport modes can be introduced in the longer term strategy for the Local Development Framework period. It is anticipated that this work will also be used directly in the Local Development Framework, forming a key component of the evidence base.

**No supplementary question was asked.**

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 24 JULY 2009

### Question from Mr A Lee, Herefordshire Area Chairman – The Ramblers Association

On 22 January 2009, Herefordshire Council announced its intention to go forward with the proposed contract with Amey Wye Valley for the management and delivery of a range of services including highways, parks, public open spaces and public rights of way. Our concern for all things relating to Public Rights of Way (PROW) in Herefordshire prompted several questions from The Herefordshire Ramblers.

We did receive answers and although not entirely happy with the responses, they were reluctantly accepted, as we were told in a letter from the Council on 19 May 2009 that “..... negotiations with Amey are continuing and it is anticipated these will be concluded shortly to enable the new arrangements to be put in place over the summer this year. Whilst the management and the delivery of these services would transfer to Amey, the responsibility remains with the Council and client and contract management arrangements are being put in place to ensure the services continue to be delivered and are improved where possible. ....”

We believe these negotiations are still ongoing, with no conclusion in sight. In the meanwhile many PROW issues are effectively held in abeyance pending a final outcome. PROW staff have left and there are vacancies within the PROW department that are not being filled. PROW personnel, part time and temporary staff are performing a valiant fire-fighting role but this is obviously not the way forward or even a solution to hold station.

- 2.1 *What steps is Herefordshire Council taking to ensure that PROW services continue to be delivered whilst negotiations continue?*
- 2.2 *What steps is Herefordshire Council taking to ensure that PROW services improve whilst negotiations continue?*

### Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

- 2.1 Whilst negotiations continue, the Public Rights of Way Section continues to deliver the service ensuring priorities are given to hazardous maintenance issues on the network. With over 4000 calls and reports and over 2100 miles of network, the public rights of way section rely on members of the public and user groups to report defects and prioritise them as per the guidance in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007 – 2011. The Public Rights of Way Service actively seeks to use volunteers where possible and has funded maintenance training programmes for groups to respond to issues on the network. Since April 2009 a further 10 parishes have been recruited onto the P3 Scheme (Parish Path Partnership Footpath Scheme) where a grant is provided to Parish Councils who then take responsibility for maintaining their own footpath network.
- 2.2 The feedback received from the 2009 Herefordshire Walking Festival which was “overwhelmingly good” and the provision of new Loop Walk Leaflets across the county is proving very popular with footpath users. The team is continually ensuring that improvements are being made to the network on the ground. This service has recently produced two Definitive Map Modification Orders with a view to adding

## **PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 24 JULY 2009**

additional routes to the network and demonstrates that improvements are still being made. Herefordshire Council recognises that Public Rights of Way are an increasingly important resource for the community in terms of enhancing health and well-being and appreciation of the rural environment.

### **Supplementary Question from Mr Lee.**

As the importance of the public rights of way network had been recognised within Council documents and strategies, would Herefordshire Council make adequate resources available, both in terms of financial and staffing resources, to support and protect the County's heritage, and specifically that of the Public Rights of Way network?

### **Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation**

The Public Rights of Way activity competed with other Council demands and cost centres all of which needed to deliver best value for money. No assurances could be provided on the availability of additional funds at this stage due in part to the current economic climate.

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 24 JULY 2009

### Question from Mr B Clay, Hereford.

- 3.1 *How many buses enter and leave Hereford City Centre each week day?*
- 3.2 *How many buses currently stop at Hereford Railway Station each week day?*
- 3.3 *What approximate forecast does the Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation have as to the number of buses that would enter and leave the 'Transport Hub' outlined in the ESG Masterplan?*

### Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation.

- 3.1 Average of 478 arrivals and corresponding number of departures.
- 3.2 Average of 75 arrivals and corresponding number of departures.
- 3.3 If the transport hub replaces the Country Bus Station there will be an estimated 192 arrivals and corresponding number of departures based on current service levels.

### Supplementary question from Mr Clay.

The answers given imply a decrease in the number of bus services that would be arriving and departing from the transport hub and railway station than at the current time. No evidence had been provided that there would be an increase in public transport to assist traffic congestion and it appeared that buses and bus services were a low priority.

### Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation.

For clarity, the answers provided at 3.3 related to the estimated number of arrivals and corresponding departures based on current service provision expected in the transport hub. The answer provided at 3.1 related to the number of bus services which enter Hereford City Centre. In having regard to the Integrated Transport Strategy, there were an ever increasing numbers of people travelling by trains and buses, with the use of train travel having increased by 20% since 2007. The number of bus service provision had increased overall. The increase in the use of public transport system was supported by the Council and reflected in the local Integrated Transport Plan's Improvement Plan.

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 24 JULY 2009

### **Question from Ms B Evans, Kings Thorn, Hereford.**

- 4.1 *What mode of travel would be recommended to a business person from London visiting Hereford for the day?*
- 4.2 *What mode of travel would be recommended to a Hereford business person visiting London for the day?*

### **Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation.**

4.1 – 4.2 The recommendation would be rail.

### **Supplementary question from Ms B Evans.**

The Cabinet Member would be aware that the service from Hereford to London was poor, with passengers requiring to change trains at Newport and the restrictive train times especially during the afternoon. Would the Cabinet Member agree that a direct line from Hereford to London and Birmingham International Airport should be provided?

### **Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation.**

On travelling to London yesterday the Cabinet Member stated that he caught the train from Hereford, which required a change at Newport, and used the tube system when in London. Major improvement works were currently being undertaken regarding twin tracking together with timetable improvements. The Cabinet Member and Chairman met with the Managing Director of London Midland during the early part of the franchise. Improvements were also being undertaken in respect of the direct line to London through Oxford.

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 24 JULY 2009

### Question from Mr P McKay, Leominster, Hereford.

I have put a number of questions to Council, engaged in the feedback system as encouraged to do, put forward suggestions for Scrutiny, and raised questions at scrutiny meetings re: agenda items, all relating to the value and importance of having complete and correct highway records, yet discovering that it would appear that the possible cost of maintenance of unrecorded ways discourages corrective action, i.e., there is a conflict of interest between your duty to protect the public right of passage v the possible cost of maintaining that passage, with the latter concern appearing to dominate.

- 5.1 *I have suggested in my feedback responses, and by means of question of scrutiny committee re: agenda item, both as yet without reply, that Council raises a report concerning the accuracy of its highway records, along with questionable errors and omissions, in order that the issues raised may be fully understood, discussed and policies concerning them agreed in a proper open and democratic manner, and I now ask the full Council if you will raise such a report?*

### Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

- 5.1 Herefordshire Council have a substantial network of highways to maintain including public rights of way and roads. The focus of resources is to ensure the safe and unhindered passage of users along the existing network. There are generally clear procedural methods by which applications can be made to amend that network either through the planning processes or the production of evidence which brings the current records, being the list of streets and the definitive map, into question. The council does not have the resources to go searching for changes to the current highway records, but application made by members of the public are investigated through the Definitive Map Modification Order process on a prioritised basis and changes are made to the network accordingly.

### Supplementary question from Mr P McKay

It was noted that the duty to comply with and correct definitive map records would be moving from the Council to Amey. When would the records be made available on-line?

### Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

The detail of the contract was currently being negotiated, however it was expected that current levels of service available would be at least maintained if not improved.

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 24 JULY 2009

### Question from Ms P Roberts, Leominster, Hereford.

- 6.1 *Road traffic is clearly a problem in Hereford, so why is the redevelopment of the train station and 'transport hub' only the third and final stage of the ESG link road plan?*

### Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

- 6.1 It is acknowledged that the amount of traffic on Hereford's roads can be problematic, however the ESG scheme is not designed, or expected, to alleviate the city's traffic issues, rather it will enable the smoother flow of traffic around the city and mitigate the traffic impact created by the development itself.

Solving the longer term transport issues in Hereford will only be achieved by using a combination of methods – for example Park and Ride, sustainable transport options, new cycle paths, and an Outer Distributor Road.

The Transport Hub proposals are one of the ESG scheme's key elements. However its achievement is strongly linked to the construction of the Link Road given that access to the station and "Hub" will be via the new road.

It is likely that the Link Road will be constructed on a West to East basis. One reason for this phasing is that it will enable road linkages between Edgar Street and Widemarsh Street to be constructed early in the development programme.

However there is also a wider issue to be considered with the Link Road and Transport Hub. The Link Road as a project has a local impact given that it will improve traffic movements around the city, whilst the Transport Hub has city, county and region wide impacts given that it will become the focal point for rail and bus access to the city.

This status requires dealing with a number of key stakeholders and interest groups, including the train operators and rail network operators, bus companies, passenger groups etc. Inevitably incorporating everyone's views and reaching an appropriate consensus will be a complicated process taking a considerable amount of time, hence the necessity for placing this element towards the final stages of the development process.

### Supplementary question from Ms P Roberts

Glad that the Cabinet Member supports the twin tracking and the 20% increase in the number of train passengers especially in light of the recent announcement that the outer distributor road may have a significant delay. However, as it appeared that the investment in the transport hub remained in the third and final stage of the ESG link road plan project, should this be reconsidered?

### Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation



## **PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 24 JULY 2009**

The Cabinet Member highlighted paragraph four of the answer which stated that the phasing enabled road linkages between Edgar Street and Widemarsh Street to serve the retail quarter. There was currently no exact date for the transport hub implementation, but it would be progressed as fast as possible within the current economic climate. Discussions were underway regarding issues around the transport hub with stakeholders, which included both bus and train franchises and the public in general. A public exhibition had recently been held in Aylestone on the transport hub.

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 24 JULY 2009

### Question from Mr M Wilson, Lugwardine, Hereford.

Questions 7.1 to 7.4 refer to questions raised by Mr Wilson at the reconvened meeting of Council on the 17 February 2009.

- 7.1 *When is this Council going to require the Chairman of the Standards Committee to act in an open and transparent manner that allows Members and the public to have confidence in the reports and answers that he places before them?*
- 7.2 *What actions have been taken to ensure it does not happen in the future?*
- 7.3 *Were the decision notices valid?*
- 7.4 *Surely it is time that some scrutiny should be given to the work of these committees and their supporting officers?*

At the Standards Committee quarterly meeting on 10 July agenda item 8 was 'to consider the adoption of the Council's Stage 3 complaints procedure as a means of assisting aggrieved complainants.'

- 7.5 *Why were the first two key points on the agenda never even discussed?*

### Advice to Council from the Monitoring Officer

I am taking the step of providing advice to Council on this question. I am the relevant statutory officer and it is appropriate for me to do so.

I would advise the Council not to answer these questions. The operation of the standards framework is a matter for the Monitoring Officer, the local Standards Committee and the Standards Board for England.

I have seen the previous questions put to Council and the answers given.

I have also seen the recent correspondence sent by Mr Wilson to the Council that contained these questions and some of the earlier correspondence with the Council on this subject. I am concerned about the content. There is material in that correspondence that attacks the motives of Council officers and officials and is potentially defamatory.

As the Council's new Monitoring officer I have called for all the relevant papers and will review these issues on the Council's behalf. It is important that the Council has confidence in the local standards regime and accordingly I will report back my findings to the appropriate person or body within the Council. I do not believe it is appropriate for the Council to continue to receive and answer questions on these matters.

If any member has any question about this they should contact me.

### A supplementary question was not permissible.