

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 4 FEBRUARY 2011

Question from Councillor A Seldon of Councillor AJM Blackshaw, Cabinet Member Economic Development and Community Services with regards to Agenda Item 7

- 1A *How much money, if any, has the Courtyard Theatre complex received in subsidy in 2007/08, 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11?*
- 1B *Is there any subsidy projected for 2011/12?*
- 1C *What are the attendance figures for the same periods?*
- 1D *What percentage utilisation does the complex achieve?*
- 1E *Do any other theatres in Herefordshire receive a subsidy?*

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

Answer to question 1

- 1A & B Funding provided to the Courtyard is on the basis of a commissioning agreement not subsidy. The funding is:

2007/08	£386,080
2008/09	£387,588
2009/10	£385,931
2010/11	£366,520
2011/12	£348,194

1C

2007/08	82,576
2008/09	95,390
2009/10	95,316
2010/11	NYA

- 1D It is not clear whether the question refers to building utilisation percentages in relation to event capacity. If Cllr Seldon would care to let me have more precise details of the information he is seeking I will be happy to provide a written response.

- 1E No

Supplementary question from Councillor A Seldon of Councillor AJM Blackshaw, Cabinet Member Economic Development and Community Services

Given that the figures outline that the Courtyard is funded by the Council of almost £1,000 per day, and given that there have been reports of member of the public being turned away when trying to access catering facilities, is it not

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time to reconsider funding for the benefit of other theatres in Herefordshire e.g Conquest Theatre in Bromyard, which is a sustainable community theatre?

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

The theatres in market towns are held in high regard and admired. The Courtyard is a Centre for the Arts and in the difficult economic environment there has been a reduction to their support from the Council. Market towns were urged to continue to support their domestic theatres.

Question from Councillor AT Oliver of Councillor PD Price Cabinet Member ICT, Education and Achievement with regards to Agenda items 7 and 8

2 *In the proposed budgetary savings for 2011/12, reference is made to £46,000 savings on school transport.*

2A *Is this saving being achieved by cutting out the discretionary travel subsidy to all 16+ students?*

2B *How many students will be affected and what is the current annual cost per student?*

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

Answer to question 2

2A For the 2010/11 academic year, parents/carers make an annual contribution of £405 towards the cost of providing discretionary travel assistance to post-16 students. The level of this contribution is being reviewed.

2B The annual contribution is paid by the parents/carers of approximately 900 students. The average cost of travel assistance, per student, is £600.

Supplementary question from Councillor AT Oliver of Councillor PD Price Cabinet Member ICT, Education and Achievement

In view of the scrapping of the Educational Maintenance Allowance, could the service consider maintaining the level of travel assistance grant provided?

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

As stated in the original answer, the level of contribution is being reviewed.

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Supplementary question from Councillor AT Oliver of Cllr H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources with regards to Agenda item 7

- 3 *The new homes bonus is estimated to be worth £660,000 plus each year to Herefordshire. What plans are there to use this funding in the budgets for 2011/12 and 2012/13 to increase the housing stock in the county and in particular the stock of affordable homes?*

Answer from Cllr H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources

Answer to question 3

- 3 I refer to the answer provided to Mrs J Straker (public question number 3) – *noted below in the minutes for completeness.*

Answer to Question 3

The Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out the Council's future spending plans; anticipated income from the New Homes Bonus is not ring-fenced for any specific purpose, and is being used as part of the overall funding target.

Supplementary question from Councillor AT Oliver of Cllr H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources

Could it be confirmed that the £660,000 would be subsumed into a general fund despite the need for affordable housing?

Answer from Cllr H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources

It was confirmed that the new homes bonus would be received into a general fund.

Questions from Councillor AT Oliver of Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation with regards to Agenda item 7

- 4A *What funding, if any, is provided within the local transport plan budget for 2011/12 for improvements to the Holme Lacy Road?*
- 4B *As the proposed improvements were a condition of planning agreement being given for the Rotherwas Relief Road, should not this funding be a priority for the Council?*
- 4C *Is the Council preparing a bid for a grant from the Government's local sustainable transport, and if so, what is the size of the bid and how might it help the local transport budgets for 2011/12 and 2012/13.*

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Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

Answer to question 4

- 4A LTP funding contributes to the Council's programme of highway works. The Holme Lacy works are among those being considered for inclusion in the 2011/12 programme.
- 4B The Council remains committed to delivering this scheme and this will be taken into account when prioritising delivery within the available budget for 2011/2012.
- 4C Yes. Government guidance on bid submission is awaited, and will inform the size and content of the bid.

Supplementary Questions from Councillor AT Oliver of Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

Given that the Rotherwas Relief Road was opened three years ago, how much of a priority are the improvements?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

The Council was committed to making the improvements a priority. Whilst there had been a 17% reduction in Government grant in 2011/12, it was stated that the improvements would be a main priority.

Question from Councillor RI Matthews of Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation with regards to Agenda item 7

- 5 *Under the funding arrangements for Capital Investments, one of the funding opportunities is the Local Sustainable Transport fund [for sustainable transport initiatives]. Have the Council submitted a bid for any of this funding, considering that the first bidding round closes in April 2011?*

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

Answer to question 5

- 5 I refer Cllr Matthews to the answer to Q4c above.

Supplementary question from Councillor RI Matthews of Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

Given that the deadline for bid submission was in eight weeks time, when was Government guidance expected?

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Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

Initial guidance was published in January 2011 from which many queries had arisen and clarity sought on some ambiguities in the document. Further information from Government was due to be published in March 2011 and many local authorities would be waiting for this in order to submit an appropriate bid. Bids for up to £5million would need to be submitted by 18 April 2011, with those bids up to £50million submitted by June.

Question from Councillor MAF Hubbard of Councillor H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources with regards to Agenda item 7

Impact of cuts on service delivery and capital investment.

- 6A *How far does the Council plan to secure developer gain to make up for the projected rapid contraction in capital expenditure and how will both the cuts and the developer gain be prioritised (please indicate by directorate, programme and relative proportions for each)?*
- 6B *What are the largest sources of developer gain for the Council and what calculations has the Council made into the impact of the current economic climate on future income from developer gain?*

Answer from Cllr H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources

Answer to question 6

- 6A The council's capital programme makes no assumptions around potential developer gain. There is a well-established principle that the council does not incur capital expenditure on the basis on potential planning gain - developer funding is only planned to be spent when the necessary triggers occur and the funding is received.
- 6B Developer contributions at present are based on the published policies for Section 106 Planning Obligation Agreements. These deal with the detailed aspects of individual development proposals and only seek developer contributions where there is a specific impact of that development which needs to be addressed – and the contribution is ring fenced to addressing that impact. As I detail above, developer funding is only planned to be spent when the availability of that funding is confirmed.

Supplementary question from Councillor MAF Hubbard of Councillor H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources

Could the Cabinet Member confirm that developer contributions were no longer locality based and whether the contributions were put in a general pot or locality specific?

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

The current situation was that the authority was still working under the existing section 106 rules which tied monies to the immediate locality. The Community Infrastructure Levy will be introduced towards the end of the year, and whilst specific detail is awaited, the contributions could be used for infrastructure around the county.

7 Question withdrawn

Question from Councillor MAF Hubbard of Councillor AJM Blackshaw, Cabinet Member Economic Development and Community Services with regards to Agenda item 8

Projects under the Joint Corporate Plan

8A *How much money has been spent so far on the new Plough Lane accommodation for the Council? Is this project to continue?*

8B *How much money has been spent so far on the plan to build a 600 space car park at Plough Lane for Council employees? Is this project still going ahead?*

8C *How much has been spent on the new Ledbury Library so far and has the funding for actually building Ledbury Library entirely disappeared?*

Answer from Councillor H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources

Answer to question 8

8A £4.887m, of which £4.25m related to acquisition costs. This investment in the council's property portfolio has not only reduced future costs against the revenue budget, but provides a sound basis on which to undertake the property rationalisation needed within the public sector in the county. It provides an opportunity to reduce operating costs, work more efficiently and effectively and make a significant reduction in our carbon footprint.

8B Costs included within above. Yes. Given reducing staff numbers, the car park size has been reduced to 350 spaces.

8C £420,453 has been spent in prior years and £100,000 is expected to be spent in this current financial year on the Ledbury Project. This figure includes the costs of refurbishment works to convert St Katherine's to a TIC.

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Supplementary question from Councillor MAF Hubbard to Councillor H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources

Given the joint corporate plan's commitment to reduce congestion and increase walking and cycling, how can a brand new facility be built with 350 car parking spaces?

Answer from Councillor H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources

The planned number of car parking spaces had been reduced to 350 and a review of car parking charges undertaken.

Question from Councillor JD Woodward of Councillor H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources with regard to Agenda item 7

Council and council tax payer exposure to risk

9A *Are there any contracts for service delivery or capital expenditure in the lifetime of the Joint Medium Term Financial Strategy that the council will be unable to honour as a result of the cuts?*

9B *If so what are the contracts for and what are the cancellation costs, if any, for each?*

Answer from Councillor H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources

Answer to question 9

9A No

9B Not applicable

No supplementary question was asked.

Question from Councillor MD Lloyd-Hayes of Councillor RJ Phillips, Leader of the Council with regards to Agenda item 7

10 *In light of the Council's commitment to working with the Voluntary Sector, would the Leader agree that outsourcing the Youth Service to the third sector would be both financially prudent, more sustainable and community led?*

Answer from Councillor RJ Phillips, Leader of the Council

Answer to question 10

10 I fully acknowledge the valuable role the voluntary & community sector plays working with young people in the county, and have already commissioned a review of options for the future scope and delivery of

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youth services to inform the most effective and efficient delivery arrangements for the future to meet the needs of Herefordshire's young people.

No supplementary question was asked

Question from Councillor MD Lloyd-Hayes of Councillor H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources with regards to Agenda item 7

11A *Question disallowed.*

11B *How much of the Council's budget for service delivery (including capital expenditure) over the lifetime of the Joint Medium Term Financial Strategy relies on outside party suppliers or agencies? Please specify by directorate.*

11C *Question disallowed.*

11D *How many of these third party suppliers or agencies are companies based in or with their headquarters in Herefordshire?*

Answer from Councillor H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources

Answer to question 11

11B

	£000's
Sustainable Communities	28,000
Adult Services	59,000
Children & Young People	19,000
Resources	5,500
Deputy Chief Executive	5,000
Public Health	330
Central Services	934
Total	117,764

NB these figures relates only to current contractual arrangements and does not include the Joint Venture Company, Integrated Care Organisation or mental health trust, the detail of which is not yet available

11D This information will take time to collate and I will provide a written response in due course.

No supplementary question was asked.

Question from Councillor MD Lloyd-Hayes

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12 *Does Herefordshire Council have a strategic action plan for autism?*

Answer from Councillor RJ Phillips, Leader of the Council

Answer to question 12

12 No.

Statement from Councillor RJ Phillips, Leader of the Council

Council was advised that that whilst there was no specific action plan for autism, it was incorporated as an element within other plans for both children and adults.

Question from Councillor GFM Dawe of Councillor H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources with regards to Agenda item 7

13A *Question disallowed.*

13B *Page 44 of full Council report: Government will not make new supported borrowing allocations as part of the Formula Grant. How much from the Formula Grant is projected to be spent on servicing loans in 2012, 2013, 2014?*

13C *How much from Council Tax is projected to be spent on servicing loans in 2012, 2013, 2014?*

13D *The Government has increased the PWLB (Public Works Loan Board) rate to 1% over the gilt rate. How much of the council borrowing does this affect? How much has it added to Council expenditure?*

13E *Can you provide a breakdown of capital expenditure under the draft MTFS (See Table 7.10.2, Capital Investment Programme); can you break this down into named projects? How much is the interest on each of these projects?*

Answer from Councillor H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources

Answer to question 13

13B It is not possible to accurately allocate net borrowing costs to the different sources of finance.

13C The Council's funding for borrowing costs comes from various sources of finance and it is not possible to precisely allocate borrowing costs to the Council's various sources of finance.

13D All council borrowing consists of fixed rate loans and so the impact will not be felt until the council wishes to take out new loans. It will then

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have to pay approximately 0.75% more (or £7,500 per annum per £1 million borrowed).

13E

Scheme	2011-12 £'000	2012-13 £'000	2013-14 £'000
Academy-Wyebridge Replacement School	5,166		
Targeted Capital Fund 14-19	7,090		
Primary grant	5,566		
Co-location	52		
Schools Capital Maintenance	2,695	2,695	2,695
Individual Pupil Needs	2,154	2,154	2,154
Devolved Formula Capital	679		
Sub total	23,402	4,849	4,849
Corporate Accommodation	4,784	7,028	
Hereford Leisure Pool	945		
Small holdings	500		
Sub total	6,229	7,028	
Systems costs	482	208	
Social Care SCP	453		
Mental Health	370		
Community Equipment	300		
Sub total	1,123		
LTP Funded Capital Highway Maintenance	10,348	9,985	9,792
Sustrans Lottery Match Funding	1,460	351	
Yazor Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme	1,648		
Livestock Market	2,314		
Belmont pools	79		
Rural Enterprise grant	1,667		
Ledbury Project	2,402		
Halo Golf Driving Range			

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	347		
Disabled Facilities Grants	1,098		
Affordable Housing Grants	1,000		
Housing Condition Survey	50		
Broadband Pilot	1,000	5,000	
Sub total	23,413	15,336	9,792
Leominster Closed Landfill Site Monitoring Infrastructure	233		
Stretton Sugwas Closed Landfill Site	28		
Strangford Closed Landfill Site	28		
Sub total	289		
Contingency	539	224	147
TOTAL	55,477	27,645	14,788

It should be noted that these figures do not necessarily reflect the whole cost of the scheme and that some will be re-paid to the Council. Approximately three quarters of the total is government funded.

It is not possible to provide figures for interest by project as in some cases the capital grant is received in advance of spend thereby earning interest, whereas in other cases we will borrow to fund schemes at the best interest rate available as and when cash balances deplete.

Supplementary question from Councillor GFM Dawe of Councillor H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources

If 13(b) and (c) cannot be answered could an approximation be given?

Answer from Councillor H Bramer, Cabinet Member Resources

All relevant information was available to and reviewed by the District Auditor

Question from Councillor GFM Dawe of Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation with regards to Agenda items 7 and 8

14A *Buses: I am pleased that money has been found to continue with concessionary fares (p. 45 of full council agenda). However, how much money is saved by not allowing concessionary fares before 9.30 am on the buses?*

14B *Question disallowed.*

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14C *Buses: Has the Council's Sustainable Communities Directorate, Transport Section, applied to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (for sustainable transport, initiatives) which is available for both capital and revenue need (first bidding round closes in April 2011) for money to fund rural buses in Herefordshire?*

14D *The Joint Corporate Plan has many stated aims to Preserve and Enhance the Environment, Combat Climate Change and Increase Cycling and Pedestrians. Given that we know from national and local studies, such as the Council's own TPi August 2010 Sustainable Options Package Report that building a new bypass will induce traffic and have a discouraging effect on walking, cycling and public transport, and a severely detrimental impact on the environment, will the Council now do what it says, abandon plans for a bypass and instead plan for easing traffic congestion through traffic management and encouragement of sustainable transport measures?*

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

Answer to question 14

14A It is projected to be in the region of £100k

14C I refer Cllr Dawe to the answer to question 4c above

14D No. As Cllr Dawe will recall, at its meeting on 13 November 2009, Council overwhelmingly resolved that:

This Council affirms that the sustainable future for our City and County depends on creating more and better paid jobs, significantly increasing the number of homes, particularly affordable, improving leisure and shopping and procuring the supporting infrastructure. This must include another bridge crossing over the Wye and relief roads for Hereford and Leominster.

Question from Councillor GFM Dawe of Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

Would the money be reinvested in bus services to maintain services at the current levels?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

The grant would not be received; therefore there was no money for reinvestment.

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Question from Councillor GFM Dawe of Councillor AJM Blackshaw, Cabinet Member Economic Development and Community Services with regards to Agenda item 7

15 *Has funding for the 'Link Road', an integral part of the Edgar Street Grid, now entirely disappeared?*

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

Answer to question 15

15 No. A “package” approach is being pursued with a number of different potential sources being explored.

No supplementary question was asked.

Question from Councillor GFM Dawe of Councillor RJ Phillips, Leader of the Council with regards to Agenda item 7

16 *Can I have Cllr. Phillips' assurance that none of the static (as opposed to mobile) libraries in Herefordshire, which constitute important front line services, are to have their staff numbers cut, and that 'co-location' is not a euphemism for this (paragraph 35, page 52)?*

Answer from Councillor RJ Phillips, Leader of the Council

Answer to question 16

16 No. Co-location means exactly that. It has been a long-standing policy to pursue co-location of services (as demonstrated in Bromyard and Kington), providing a single ‘shop-front’ for services. This both improves access for local people and delivers savings through efficiencies around building, staffing and management costs. It is because we have been taking these actions over recent years that Herefordshire has been better placed than most to manage the current budget reductions with a minimum of impact on front line services.

Supplementary question from Councillor GFM Dawe of Councillor RJ Phillips, Leader of the Council

Does ‘no’ mean nil reduction to the number of staff within static libraries?

Answer from Councillor RJ Phillips, Leader of the Council

With 12% of workforce of the authority being cut, there will inevitably be loss of posts from within the library service. The fact that the council has operated a policy of integrated services and co-locating with other front line services has saved many of the county’s static libraries. Single standalone libraries in

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market towns across the country have become very vulnerable; such a situation emphasises the right policy has been pursued in Herefordshire.

Question from Councillor SJ Robertson of Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation with regards to Agenda item 7

- 17 *In view of the proposed spending cuts what measures are being taken now to ensure that vital bus services for rural areas are protected and not cut, which could lead to wider implications on other Council services caused by social isolation?*

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

Answer to question 17

- 17 The Joint Medium Term Financial Strategy 2011/14 seeks to protect bus services. There will be a review of the bus network in 2011/12 and this will include consultation with members, parish and town councils, bus operators, community groups and other stakeholders to ensure that any changes to the network are focussed on the best outcome for local communities.

Supplementary question from Councillor SJ Robertson of Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

A recent public transport conference highlighted the issue of rural isolation. Does the Cabinet Member agree that rural bus services are vital in reducing rural isolation as well as being essential to those with medical or mental health issues? Bus services were also essential for economic and educational wellbeing. Could assurance be given that no stone would be left unturned to seek to maintain and retain public transport services across the county?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Highways and Transportation

A constant dialogue with providers was underway and all options were being considered. Certain reserves would be used to ensure that the best service could be provided under the current difficult financial circumstances.