

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 15 JULY 2011**Question from Councillor RI Matthews of Councillor RJ Phillips, Cabinet Member Enterprise and Culture**

Can the Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Culture inform Council of the progress of the Broadband Pilot Scheme at present taking place in South Herefordshire, and assuming that the project will be implemented in the near future; can he tell us how the upgrade and installation of the new Broadband lines and other necessary work will be funded?

Answer from Councillor RJ Phillips, Cabinet Member Enterprise and Culture

The procurement progress for the Borders Broadband project is underway and currently at the stage of evaluating the PQQ (Pre Qualification Questionnaire). Once completed the potential suppliers will enter a competitive dialogue with the council to secure the best solution for the county and its partner Gloucestershire. The south of the county and the Forest of Dean are the first phase, with the roll out to the rest of the county as part of the project.

Funding of £14.5m has already been secured from National Government via BDUK for the phase 1 area. These funds will be supported by private sector investment which will be determined as the project proceeds through procurement. Local authorities are being urged to support the capital investment based on the financial benefits that will be achieved through more services being delivered electronically at a reduced cost. Again, the level of support will depend on the outcome of the discussion with suppliers matched with the ambitions of providing a high level of access and speed of broadband.

Supplementary Question

In the light of the Culture Minister's announcement that there would be a cut in funding to the roll out programme for super fast broadband, and a shortfall of £550m had been announced. How would the required additional funding be raised?

Answer from Councillor RJ Phillips, Cabinet Member Enterprise and Culture

The first part of the programme was progressing well, and although the available funding from Central Government would not pay for the entire programme it was expected that a large percentage of funds would be forthcoming from the private sector. This money would come through the construction process in both the first and subsequent phases. It was not advisable to utilise public monies where the private sector was available to provide funds.

Question from Councillor RI Matthews of Councillor RJ Phillips, Cabinet Member Enterprise and Culture

2 *Members have been frequently told that the development of the old Cattle Market site would generate between 12 and 15 million pounds for Herefordshire Council. Can the Cabinet Member tell us if this is still the case, and how much will the first phase of the development raise, and when is this payment anticipated?*

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The development of the old Livestock Market site will progress on a phased basis, phase one will commence in 2011. Additionally the scheme has reduced in size from that originally proposed. The progression of the scheme on a phased basis, and the reduction in size, will realise a range of financial benefits to the Council including a capital receipt and an increased revenue income from those assets within the site, the exact split and amount of these payments remains commercially sensitive.

Consideration has been given to the longer term financial benefits of the scheme rather than short term benefits in the immediate phasing. It is difficult to state at this time what the final value of the site will be but it should be noted that a Cabinet Member report of 17th September 2010 stated that there would be "An increase in overall scheme value and net financial position to the Council".

Supplementary Question

Was it true to say that the first phase of the project had provided no return to the Council?

Answer from Councillor RJ Phillips, Cabinet Member Enterprise and Culture

There was a balance to be struck between perseverance and receipts of funds. It would have been possible to sell such a valuable property to the highest bidder, but the Executive had decided to consider the long term position of the Council when making its decisions, and had ensured that a future Council could be in a position to sell the asset should it so desire.

Question from Councillors WLS Bowen and SJ Robertson of Councillor PM Morgan, Cabinet Member Health and Wellbeing

In view of the restructuring of the Early Years Support by the Local Authority to Childminders:-

- 3A *What measures have been implemented to protect the Quality Childminding Network and Community Childminding Scheme?*
- 3B *Does the Cabinet Member not agree that childminders provide a professional, flexible and diverse service to families and often play a key role in early intervention and safeguarding?*
- 3C *Is the Cabinet Member aware of the economic benefits brought to the local community by good childminding services?*

Answer from Councillor PM Morgan, Cabinet Member Health and Wellbeing

3A Quality assurance remains a key area of focus. This will include training and information sharing to enable childminder settings to develop their own quality assurance.

We will ensure the continuity of the Childminding Network.

3B Yes, and that is why we continue to support the further development of quality provision.

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- 3C Yes, both in enabling parents to return to the workplace and through the childminding services operating as small businesses thus contributing to the economy.

Supplementary Question

What resources were available to Early Years support, and how had these changed?

Answer from Councillor PM Morgan, Cabinet Member Health and Wellbeing

There were four staff available for Early Years support. It had been proposed that the number should be reduced to two, but following consultation, this decision had been changed, and the provision would be three staff. This would enable the team to work better and in a more sustainable way to provide a service in a sector that the Council could be proud of.

Question from Councillor DC Taylor of Councillor JG Jarvis, Leader of the Council

- 4 *I understand that there is a proposal for an additional committee or working group to be formed which would deal with rural issues in the County. Can the Leader confirm that this is to be the case and advise as to when it is to commence?*

Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis, Leader of the Council

I am actively considering proposals for a committee or member group to deal with rural issues. I envisage that its membership would be drawn from ward members serving those areas outside the major conurbations. The Monitoring Officer will be bringing forward proposals for consideration, with a view to its introduction later in the autumn of this year. In the meantime I will be establishing mechanisms for informally consulting with rural members on the development of this proposal.

Supplementary Question

When would the committee or member group to deal with rural issues be implemented?

Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis, Leader of the Council

I am keen to ensure that this should be brought forward as quickly as possible, but there have been technical difficulties in setting it up. A proposal would need to be approved by Council at its next meeting. Informal meetings of the group would be put in place as soon as possible.

Question from Councillor EPJ Harvey of Councillor JG Jarvis, Leader of the Council

Question 5A disallowed on the grounds that it is the same or similar to a question raised in the last six months (15 July 2011 - the same question has been raised by a member of the public) Herefordshire Council Constitution Part 4, 4.1.15.4 c.

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Question from Councillor EPJ Harvey of Councillor JG Jarvis, Leader of the Council**Public consultation**

Cllrs Jarvis and Blackshaw have both stated publicly that Herefordshire Council's consultation procedures — especially on the Local Development Framework — have achieved 'widespread acclaim' and are regarded as among the best in the country.

5B Could they provide further details on how public consultations carried out by the Council have been assessed and ranked with respect to those of other councils?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Environment Housing & Planning

Typical responses achieved by other local planning authorities to consultations on Core Strategies vary from around 50 (in total) to over 5,000. During 2010 responses to the Place Shaping Paper and the follow-on consultations totalled over 5,000. This is one of the highest figures achieved by any English local planning authority to a Core Strategy consultation.

Supplementary Question

How has the fact that 50% of responses to the surveys in the County were negative, a figure rising to 80% within Hereford, how have the responses to the consultation been taken into account?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox Cabinet Member Environment Housing & Planning

Amendments to the Core Strategy have been made, and there would be a seminar for all Members on this issue on the 1 August.

Question from Councillor MAF Hubbard of Councillor JG Jarvis, Leader of the Council.

Question 6A disallowed on the grounds that it is the same or similar to a question raised in the last six months (4 March 2011) Herefordshire Council Constitution Part 4, 4.1.15.4 c

Question from Councillor MAF Hubbard of Councillor JG Jarvis, Leader of the Council

Proposed poll on relief road

Given the statement by the Leader, para 10 of Leader's report in this agenda (p 17):

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“Finally I must report meeting with both Herefordshire’s MP’s regarding our referendum promise to create a second river crossing and relief road. I am determined to bring plans forward for a relief road that takes traffic from the A49 fully around the city – not half way and not pursuing a route that stands no chance of success. The future without a full relief road is unthinkable, and I am committed to its delivery.”

6B Is the Cabinet still proposing to spend £50k on a postal ballot on a question concerning a relief road when it has already determined its course of action regardless of the results?

Answer from Councillor Jarvis, Leader of the Council

I refer Cllr Hubbard to the answer given by Cllr Wilcox to public question 4. I would also emphasise that an advisory poll would form a part of the wider body of evidence on which the LDF Core Strategy will be based.

Question from Councillor SJ Robertson of Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning

At the Cabinet Meeting in February and the Council meeting in March, we were informed that a consultation on the Local Development Framework and Referendum on the Relief Road would be taking place in July. We are now half way through July and there is no sign of a consultation, although I understand that there will be an announcement at the next Cabinet meeting on 28 July.

7A Why have the responses to the Hereford City Preferred Options not been made public and will these be made available as part of the consultation process?

7B If the consultation commences at the end of July, does the cabinet member not feel that the summer holiday period could have a negative impact resulting in a reduced response rate?

7C Has every effort been made to ensure that any future consultation documents for the Local Development Framework are user friendly and free of jargon?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning

7A These have recently been made available on the Council website at the following link: <http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/housing/planning/34819.asp>

7B I refer Cllr Robertson to the answer provided to public question 4. I would expect any proposals being considered by Cabinet to take account of the impact of the summer holiday period.

7C I can confirm that every effort will be made to present information in a user-friendly way.

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Supplementary Question

In view of the public feeling on the LDF and the last consultation, should not this be included on the programme for Overview and Scrutiny?

Answer from Councillor DB Wilcox, Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning

I take on board the comments that have been made and these points will be made at the seminar on the 1 August.