

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 2 MARCH 2012**Question from Mr A Powers, Hereford**

Question 1

The budget is proposing further savings in school transport of £220K. The Council's own Local Sustainability Transport Fund bid in April 2011 stated that school traffic could account for a doubling of numbers of vehicles on some radial routes into Hereford during term time. If this analysis is correct would not congestion in the city be more efficiently and swiftly addressed if the £300K to be allocated to yet another relief road study were instead to be spent on improving sustainable transport measures for local schools and residents?

Answer from Councillor AJM Blackshaw Cabinet Member Highways, Transportation and Sustainability

Answer to question 1

It would be a mistake to think this is a case of either/or. The proposed relief road is not intended to address issues in the city in the short term, but is an essential longer term component of the infrastructure required to support the future natural and necessary growth of our city.

However I agree entirely that more can be done to encourage individuals to use alternatives to the car and am delighted that the Local Sustainable Transport Fund bid, 'Destination Hereford' secured additional resource to promote alternatives for short car journeys. Around a third of all journeys in peak periods are made by car and are less than 3 miles. The school run is part of this pattern and Destination Hereford is targeting these journeys through a partnership with schools to promote walking cycling and the use of existing bus services.

The school transport savings of £220k will be delivered through good housekeeping rather than the removal of specific services and the Council will continue to fulfil its statutory responsibility to provide home to school transport for eligible scholars.

Supplementary Question

Why is the Council spending £2.9m, which is half of the overall destination Herefordshire budget, on refurbishment of Broad Street when money could be better spent on sustainable transport?

Response at the meeting

The Cabinet Member advised that a written response would be provided.

Written Response

The Destination Hereford project comprises an appropriate balance of physical infrastructure improvements which support sustainable modes of transport and the local economy and behavioural change initiatives. This balance ensured its success in a competitive bidding process to government as it secured 100% funding.

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The project includes the public realm upgrade for Broad Street, which will also improve pedestrian, cycle and tourism access to the city centre. This scheme is identified in the Council's adopted Streetscape Design Strategy. The project also comprises an ambitious behavioural change programme focused on reducing short trips by car in Hereford.

The funding for the Broad Street refurbishment scheme was secured from Department for Transport as part of the overall Destination Hereford bid and cannot be diverted to fund other sustainable transport projects across the County.

The project aims to build on the recent investment in Widemarsh Street, and will improve both the local movement connections for pedestrians and cyclists, whilst maintaining access to businesses along the street.

The Council delivers a programme of sustainable transport schemes funded from its Local transport budget allocation from the Department of Transport and will continue to take all available opportunities to secure additional funding for transport improvements from other sources.

Question from Mrs E Morawiecka, Breinton, Hereford

Question 2

"Herefordshire Council believed that the 1% decrease in traffic volume in 2009/10 was a response to high fuel prices (report to Environment Scrutiny Nov 2010, page 23). As diesel and petrol prices have increased since then by 15% and 12% respectively and with a further duty increase of 3.02p/l due to be implemented on 1st August 2012, what motor vehicle traffic volumes are the transport department forecasting for Hereford City in their Local Transport Plan 3?"

Answer from Councillor AJM Blackshaw Cabinet Member Highways, Transportation and Sustainability

Answer to question 2

The report in 2010 referenced the 2009/10 fuel price rises as a probable cause. Local Transport Plan 3 will not be considered and adopted by the council until later in the year; however the modelling tools used in developing traffic projections are those recognised as national standard. They take into consideration a wide range of factors including projected fuel prices.

Supplementary Question

What reduction in traffic volumes are further expected as a result of the investment in the sustainable transport fund plan Destination Hereford which includes the Connect 2 river crossing and will this bridge be completed before the deadline of March 2013?

Response at the meeting

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The Cabinet Member advised that a written response would be provided.

Written response

The Destination Hereford project aims to reduce peak hour congestion in Hereford by the time of its completion in 2015. The project has a target of a 6% reduction in peak hour vehicle flows compared with the peak hour average for 2010. The programme for delivery of Connect 2 Scheme aims to complete the scheme including the new bridge by March 2013.

Question from Mrs J Morris, Hereford

Question 3

Herefordshire Council supplies a number of private limited companies with staff on secondment and also provides legal and other professional services by sharing public employees. As these private companies have no clear reporting structure to Herefordshire Council, could you tell me the total cost of staff seconded to these companies in the last 3 years and could you include the cost of the hours of professional advice provided by local tax payers through council employees working for these companies?

Answer from Councillor PD Price, Cabinet Member Corporate Services & Education

Answer to question 3

Where secondments to any organisation are, or have been, in operation the receiving employer covers the cost of that secondment.

No legal or other professional advice has been provided by council employees working for private companies.

Supplementary Question

As members of staff have been paid by the substitute employer, can you let me know what has been the specific saving to the Council to those staff costs?

Response at the meeting

The Cabinet Member advised that a written response would be provided

Written Response

The Council has seconded staff to the project to assist its delivery. Where appropriate seconded staff have their posts covered to ensure service continuity.

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Question from Ms C Protherough, Clehonger, Hereford

Question 4

"What is the anticipated impact by 2020 of the ageing population on estimated car use in Herefordshire, taking into account that older people are more likely to rely on public transport, or if still driving use their vehicles for less frequent and shorter journeys ? in addition in the same period what is the projected increase or decrease in school age children needing transport at peak hours?"

Answer from Councillor AJM Blackshaw Cabinet Member Highways, Transportation and Sustainability

Answer to question 4

Local Transport Plan 3, which will be considered by the council later in the year, will include modelling projections to 2031; however modelling outputs are across the whole population and it is not possible to clarify the specific impacts of travel patterns amongst older people or younger people.

Question from Mr S Brown, Bucknell

Question 5

When will the Council publish the results of last year's consultation on the revised Local Development Framework and the current Local Development Scheme?

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

Answer to question 5

The analysis of the consultation responses will be published as part of the consideration of the final draft version of the Core Strategy, together with a revised Local Development Scheme, scheduled for June.

Question from Mr M Moore, Bredenbury, Herefordshire

Question 6

In March 2011, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, Norman Baker, announced additional (transitional revenue) funding to support local transport authorities and communities specifically in the development of community transport services. He stated that he did not expect authorities to use the extra DfT funding to displace planned expenditure on community transport for 2011/12. Under this arrangement Herefordshire was granted £157,463. Community Transport (CT) schemes in Herefordshire were

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advised of these funds (“Baker money”) through the Herefordshire CT Forum, and initially encouraged to make applications for grants from that source for service development projects. On several occasions subsequently, and as recently as 7 February 2012, Herefordshire’s CT schemes have been informed by the Council that they should delay bids for the CT grant provided by DfT until the Council issued guidelines on the bids which it wished to do in the context of proposals going forward – its aim being to support activity which improved capacity and longer term financial sustainability. The proposals referenced are those within the Council’s Review of CT Services 2012, still on-going and for which the process and, draft, reported outcomes have been heavily criticised by the Herefordshire CT Schemes. As we near the end of the 2011/12 year, no effective and direct action has been taken by the Council to use and dispose the extra DfT funding for the development of Herefordshire’s CT schemes. Furthermore and contrary to the principles of the Herefordshire Compact, access to this funding by the CT schemes is being denied until the Council obtains an agreement and a mandate to pursue its policy on the future arrangements for CT schemes in Herefordshire.

When will the Council enable the county’s CT schemes to access the funds they desperately need to develop and improve the vital services they provide to their communities?

Answer from Councillor AJM Blackshaw Cabinet Member Highways, Transportation and Sustainability

Answer to question 6

Whilst I cannot accept some of the assertions made by Mr Moore in the preamble to his question, I fully acknowledge the importance of community transport services, particularly within rural areas. A review of Herefordshire’s community transport services is almost complete, with the overall aim of increasing the capacity of the community transport services provided in the county. Pending the outcome of this review, the council has protected the budget available for community transport, even at a time when savings have had to be made on bus services.

Additional funding, provided by direct grant from central government, will be allocated in the context of the review findings early in the new financial year. Mr Moore will, of course, be aware that consultation on the review findings was extended at his request.

Supplementary Question

As the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the LDF consultation process, would it not have been better if the recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny had been taken into consideration when drafting the community transport consultation and would it not have made a huge difference if the community transport organisations had been managed differently?

Answer:

The Cabinet Member advised that the £160k funding for rural transport was not specifically for community transport, but there was a strong role for community transport which would

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feed into the transport plan. The Cabinet Member stated a meeting would be arranged with the chairmen of transport organisations and one member from each locality area. A further report was expected at the end of March.

Question from Ms P Mitchell, Hereford

Question 7

Status of the Local Transport Plan

Local transport authorities are required by law to produce and maintain a Local Transport Plan that sets out the authority's strategy, implementation plan and targets for improving transport in their community. The government permitted the Council's second Local Transport Plan to be extended for one year (to the end of March 2012) after the Hereford Preferred Option consultation resulted in rejection of a key element of the draft third Local Transport Plan, the relief road.

In the absence of coverage by a legally adopted Local Transport Plan, what steps subject to public scrutiny is the Council taking to maintain its targets for improving transport in the county and ensure its transport planning and investment processes are lawful?

Answer from Councillor AJM Blackshaw Cabinet Member Highways, Transportation and Sustainability

Answer to question 7

Council took the decision at its meeting on 4 March 2011 to adopt the Local Transport Plan 2 as its interim Local Transport Plan 3 'pending finalisation of the Local Development Framework submission'. Hence, the Local Transport Plan 2 remains the council's legally adopted transport strategy and decisions on investment are being carried out in the context of adopted policy.

Supplementary Question

Will the people of the county be able to see and comment on the LTP3 before it is adopted?

Response at the meeting

The Cabinet Member advised that the LTP would be dealt with in tandem with the LDF with full consultation with Cabinet and Council. He added that a written response would be provided.

Written Response

Extensive public consultation has been carried out during the development of the Local Transport Plan in association with formal consultations in relation to the Local

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Development Framework. The proposed Local Transport Plan 3 will be made available as part of the approval process through Cabinet and Council over the coming months which will provide further opportunity for comments to be made directly or via their Local Members prior to its adoption.

Question from Mr A Fisher, Hereford

Question 8

The October 2011 version of the Draft Revised Preferred Option Background Paper described some 'detailed changes ... proposed for Hereford' (para 4.21) including another crossing of the River Wye (which would 'not be considered to be a substitute for the western relief road currently proposed', para 4.21 iv). Given the rejection of a Western Relief Road in the Hereford Preferred Option consultation and the investment by the Council earlier in 2011 in testing and eliminating the 'East Is Best' partial relief road proposal, given, that is, the very controversial nature of this 'detailed change',

Why was the proposal for an additional eastern river crossing not put forward in last year's Revised Preferred Option consultation and when will it be subject to public consultation?

Answer from Councillor AJM Blackshaw Cabinet Member Highways, Transportation and Sustainability

Answer to question 8

The possibility of additional transport links to the east of Hereford was mooted in the context of the then recent announcement of Enterprise Zone status for Rotherwas. The merits of such links are presently being examined. Any proposals will be subject to further consultation if they are to be included within the Core Strategy.