

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 25 MAY 2012

Question from Councillor GJ Powell of Councillor AJM Blackshaw, Cabinet Member Highways, Transportation and Sustainability

- 1 *The Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership recognises that in order to reduce crime and ensure that our communities feel safer, we need to work with communities in both identifying and tackling issues. The issue in rural Herefordshire is staff related - can we be assured that the review of resources currently being undertaken by West Mercia Police will not further impact police numbers in rural Herefordshire?*

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

Answer to question 1

West Mercia Police is currently reviewing all its services in light of the decision by the Home Office to reduce funding by 20% across the Police Service. West Mercia needs to save £38 million as part of these savings over the next four years.

Operationally any decisions will be made by the Chief Constable in conjunction with the West Mercia Police Authority.

At this stage the force has not made any formal decisions including in relation to police numbers. Once decisions have been made they will be communicated to partners and the public.

West Mercia Police have advised that it will always seek to provide the best possible policing service it can across the force area considering all its resources. Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership will, of course, consider any published proposals and how they might impact on policing in Herefordshire's localities.

Supplementary Question

There is an issue of staffing levels, visibility, respect and value of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO). Could the Cabinet Member write to the Chief Constable and seek his assurance that there will be no further reduction in the number of Community Support Officers?

Cabinet Member Response

Yes. The new Police Commissioner is to be in post by November. I believe there will be an opportunity to review the policing plan.

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Question from Councillor PJ Edwards of Councillor AJM Blackshaw, Cabinet Member Highways, Transportation and Sustainability

- 2 *The strategic Riverside Footway / Cycleway, leading from Belmont Ward to The City remains in a very poor surfaced state despite continued pressure for redirection away from the River embankment and surface improvement. Will the Council please deal with this given Government funding receipt to aid sustainable Travel?*

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

Answer to question 2

The government funding was not secured for routine maintenance purposes and therefore cannot be used to support this work.

The footpath and cycleway is being considered in the context of the future work programme; it is important to note that this process involves prioritisation of competing demands from across the whole county and therefore I cannot confirm that your request will be met at this time. I have asked officers to keep ward members informed of the outcome of this prioritisation.

Supplementary Question

This is the third time I have brought this to the attention of Council. Can the Cabinet Member not agree that the people's highway exactly fits your response to the public question on page 11 of the agenda regarding the Destination Hereford project and infrastructure improvements.

Cabinet Member Response

I will look at this again in conjunction with other pressing projects.

Question from Councillor PJ Edwards of Councillor PD Price, Cabinet Member Corporate Services and Education

- 3 *I understand that future Business Rate Tax will continue to be collected by The Council and that Central Government will ensure Herefordshire Council receives an agreed tax base receipt. Great weight was placed by Cabinet Members relying on Herefordshire further benefiting from additional Business Rate Tax to be forthcoming from redeveloping the former Livestock Market site! Are the figures which were quoted still realistic?*

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

Answer to question 3

From April 2013 all councils will operate under a new business rates scheme. Because councils will be able to keep a significant percentage of business rates from new business in their area it acts as an incentive to promote growth. Whilst we await the final detail from the government it is clear that the new business rates scheme will reward councils that encourage business growth. In the meantime we have taken a prudent and realistic approach.

Supplementary Question

The Government now states that Council's will only be keeping 50% of the business rates. Is Cabinet's approach now considered to be realistic?

Cabinet Member Response

At the time of the Cabinet meeting there was an assumption that the new scheme would be beneficial. I am aware of the new government proposals and if it proves necessary for us to adjust our expectations I will inform Members.

Question from Councillor PJ Edwards of Councillor AJM Blackshaw, Cabinet Member Highways, Transportation and Sustainability

4 *I note The Council Conservative Administration's reluctance to proceed with its LDF programme due to unresolved issues now considered to need further public consultation. Will the Cabinet ensure that the third option link road between the A49tr and A465 Belmont Road (inappropriately introduced during midterm previous consultations) be removed forthwith so to reduce impact on the Belmont Haywood Country Park and established 95 properties (including several Listed Buildings) throughout the area?*

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

Answer to question 4

There is no reluctance to proceed with the LDF programme, rather a desire to ensure that our process supporting the programme is as robust as possible.

Proposals for a link between the A49 and the A465 have been consulted upon twice as part of the LDF process, with a view to establishing a corridor within which more detailed design would establish a route; it is also included in the

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Local Transport Plan. Work is continuing to define that corridor, having regard to a range of considerations. Until that process is complete it would not be appropriate to discount any option.

Supplementary Question

Why not now review the third option in an open and transparent manner?

Cabinet Member Response

I am aware of the concerns, I expect the corridor to be confirmed in July. Design work will then be undertaken with a route defined in the autumn and a planning application after Christmas. I have been assured by officers that there has been consultation.

Question from Councillor EMK Chave of the Cabinet Member Environment, Housing and Planning

Question 5: disallowed on the grounds that it is the same or substantially similar to a question put to a meeting of Council in the last six months, HC Constitution Part 4, 4.1.15.4 c. Member question 14, 2 March 2012.

Question from Councillor EMK Chave of Councillor LO Barnett, Chairman of Council

6 *On what theological grounds does Herefordshire Council claim to be “a Christian organisation” (Clause 8, report on Prayers and Council Meetings, pages 25-26 of the Agenda for 3rd March 2012); what are its Christian values, and how does the Council intend to demonstrate those values?*

Answer from Councillor LO Barnett, Chairman of Council

Answer to question 6

The council makes no claim to be a Christian organisation. However, in agreeing to continue the practice of including prayers in the agenda for meetings of Council, for those who wish to participate, Council was making a statement to the general public about the values it holds.

You will of course be aware that the council has adopted the following values that underpin its work:

People: Treating people fairly, with compassion, respect and dignity
Excellence: Striving for excellence, and the highest quality of service, care and life in Herefordshire

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Openness: Being open, transparent and accountable for the decisions we make

Partnership: Working together in partnership and with all our diverse communities

Listening: Actively listening to understanding and taking into account people's views and needs

Environment: Protecting and promoting our outstanding natural environment and heritage for the benefit of all

We expect staff and Members equally to strive to demonstrate these values in the work that they do, and to support each other in holding to them.

Question from Councillor EMK Chave of Councillor JG Jarvis, Leader of the Council

7 *Given that the electorate in the city is roughly one third of the county's total electorate, shouldn't the Cabinet have a more representative and proportional number of councillors from city wards? (I also note that the market towns represent approximately one third of the county's total electorate – but have NO representation on Cabinet).*

Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis, Leader of the Council

Answer to question 7

Cabinet, and indeed committees of the Council such as Overview & Scrutiny Committee, are not geographically representative bodies.

Supplementary Question

Given this lack of geographical representation, what consideration does Cabinet, or indeed any other committee, give to listening to the experience of councillors who do represent particular geographical areas when decisions will affect those areas?

Leader of the Council Response

With regard to the Cabinet the wider Cabinet support team members provide representation and they feed information into Cabinet. Information is also fed back to Cabinet through the localities; most of which are represented by a Cabinet Member.

Question from Councillor RI Matthews of Answer from Councillor PD Price, Cabinet Member Corporate Services & Education

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- 8 *Could Members be informed who agreed and signed the 250 year lease of the Edgar Street Football Ground to Hereford United and how much adjoining land is included in the agreement?*

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

Answer to question 8

A 30 year lease has been negotiated by officers acting under delegated authority in accordance with the constitution; subject to certain conditions being met a further lease period to a maximum of 250 years may be entered into. As part of the finalisation of the lease arrangements and in the interests of effective land management a minor 'land swop' was agreed; the net effect on the land coverage is minimal.

Supplementary Question

Can you confirm that there was no Cabinet Member involvement in negotiating that lease and that it was negotiated by officers? The Hereford Times refers to a new hotel announcement. Can you confirm how much land is involved and what is its value?

Cabinet Member Response

A thirty year lease is under negotiation but this will come to Cabinet and Members before any decision is made. If an application comes forward for a hotel it will be dealt with as part of the usual process, but I have no knowledge of this at the present time.

Question from Councillor MD Lloyd-Hayes of Councillor LO Barnett, Chairman of Council

- 9 *What, if anything, is happening on the River Wye in Hereford during the jubilee celebrations?*

Answer from Councillor LO Barnett, Chairman of Council

Answer to question 9

I am delighted that the main county-wide event to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee will be a special Herefordshire Diamond Day to be held on 11 July when both the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh visit Hereford. The event will be held on the King George V playing fields next to the River Wye.

Building on the heritage of the River Wye, the Wye Trow is a replica of an 18th century working boat, specially designed to be used on the River Wye. The Trow, was officially named '*The Hereford Bull*' by the Lord Lieutenant of

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Herefordshire, Lady Darnley at a ceremony in High Town on 12 May. *The Hereford Bull* will represent Herefordshire in the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant on 3 June, before coming back to the county, and will be on display during the Diamond Day celebrations.

Her Majesty's visit provides a really special opportunity for everyone in Herefordshire to experience a unique opportunity and to have a special part in the national celebrations. I know that communities across the county have really taken the jubilee to heart, developing their own celebratory events and I would encourage everyone to join in their local festivities as well as come along to the Diamond Day on 11 July.

Supplementary Question

I repeat my question what is happening on the actual Wye?

Chairman's Response

A written response has been provided and I am happy to discuss the matter separately outside the meeting.

Question from Councillor EPJ Harvey of Councillor LO Barnett, Chairman of Council

10 *When the Monitoring Officer disallows questions to Council, from councillors or members of the public, why is the full text of the question not published for all to see?*

Answer from Councillor LO Barnett, Chairman of Council

Answer to question 10

The text is not published because if a question has been disallowed it therefore does not form part of the agenda for Council.

Supplementary Question

I am concerned about the publication of written responses to supplementary questions. In relation to disallowed questions I ask that consideration be given to publishing the text of the full question asked to enable the public and Councillors to learn from the experience of others on how to frame their question.

Chairman's Response

I refer the Councillor to the written response and I would also like to invite Councillor Harvey to join me in my office to discuss this matter further.

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

- 11 *What is the most recent meeting date on which the LDF Task Group last met, and what is the most recent LDF Annual Monitoring Report which has been published?*

Answer from Councillor JG Jarvis, Leader of the Council

Answer to question 11

The LDF Group met on 27 February 2012. The most recent published LDF Annual Monitoring report is that for 2009-2010; the report for 2010/11 has been prepared and should be published by the end of the month.

Supplementary Question

Why have no minutes of the LDF Task Group been published since September 2010? Why is there a three month delay in publishing the Annual LDF Monitoring report?

Leader of the Council Response

I will investigate the publication of the minutes. I will confirm when the annual monitoring report will be published.

Question from Councillor MAF Hubbard of Councillor P Price, Cabinet Member Corporate Services & Education

- 12 *In relation to the covenant forbidding alcohol sales on the Old Cattle Market site:*
- A. *Please identify when the covenant was reported to the following: a) the cabinet member responsible b) the cabinet c) the council d) the local ward member. If it was not reported to any of these please explain why?*
 - B. *Please explain the legal process by which the covenant will be removed, including the estimated cost of any such process and where the funding is coming from?*

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

Composite answer to question 12

The issues raised by this covenant were addressed in the development agreement approved in 2009 and by the subsequent decision taken by the

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Cabinet Member on 6 September 2011. In light of the legal and financial advice provided in support of those decisions, no further reporting of this issue was necessary. Any restrictive effect of the covenant was effectively removed when the land in question was formally appropriated for planning purposes (a standard town centre regeneration procedure), a process approved by the Cabinet Member in September 2011. There were no financial implications for the council beyond officer time in processing the appropriation.

Supplementary Question

Please can you tell me whether the owners of the covenant, Punch Taverns, have been informed that their covenant has been superseded by the appropriation of the land and that they have no further financial or legal claim on the land?

Cabinet Member Written Response

Yes, the owners have been informed.
