

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 NOVEMBER 2012

Question from Mrs P Churchward, Breinton

Question 1

Refurbishment of Hereford's Historic Butter Market

The Executive Rolling Programme indicated that the Cabinet Member Corporate Services and the Cabinet Member Enterprise and Culture were due to make a decision on the refurbishment of Hereford's historic Butter Market on 18 October 2012 and how the Council plans to fund that refurbishment. Considering that the Council has so far spent millions supporting the ESG retail development could one of these Cabinet Members please advise what the current situation is regarding funding the Butter Market refurbishment?

Question from Mrs E Morawiecka, Breinton

Question 2

Webcasting of Council Meetings

As part of its drive to make democracy more transparent, accessible and open, Herefordshire Council carried out a trial webcast of a planning meeting in February 2012. The Head of Governance said that this was one of the Council's priorities and it also increased the accessibility of such meetings to members of the public and staff who cannot travel to meetings or miss them because of other commitments. The Council press release stated that "The first webcast of a Herefordshire Council meeting proved a resounding success with more than 1,000 people having viewed it...Consideration will now be given to extending webcasting to all of the council's public meetings".

With this resounding success and the fact that many other councils already provide this service for local taxpayers to engage in democracy, can the Cabinet Member responsible for Governance and Democracy confirm when they are due to extend webcasting of meetings to help deliver this priority of Herefordshire Council?

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Question from Mrs BC McHarg

Question 3

Herefordshire Council Capital Overspend on Supporting Retail Development

The budget report to Cabinet on 18 October 2012, in Appendix 2, states that there is already a “capital overspend on the Link Road in excess of £1.5million on property purchases”. What other additional costs is the Council incurring in order to facilitate the delivery of this new retail development?

Question from Mr P McKay, Leominster

Question 4

Car Parking Charges – Traffic Regulation Orders

Leominster Town Council minute 09.09.83 of 21 September 2009 records Leominster Town Council request to review waiting restrictions in Broad Street with objective of bringing parking bays marked double yellow lines outside Hintons into use, with minute 09.10.98 of 19 October 2009 advising will be included on list for ranking, with the June 2010 TRO work program showing review of Broad Street waiting restrictions has a project start date of 28 May 2013. Leominster Town Council minute 11.01.129 & 130 of 17/01/2011 record concern about the way in which other parking bays are marked with single and double yellow lines enforced by wardens throughout Leominster, due to waiting restriction orders dating back to 1977 not having been updated when town centre redesigned, seeking to bring all these other parking bays into use, with minute 11.02.159.2 of meeting 21/02/2011 recording that Leominster Town Council’s request for a review of waiting restrictions in the town was noted and that the request would be included on the lists for ranking in June/July 2011.

Requests asking for current information regarding these project start dates remain unanswered, so may I enquire just when we may expect these projects to start, aiming to make Leominster more parking friendly in these times of austerity, and to reduce parking demands on adjacent residential streets?

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Question from Mrs V Wegg-Prosser, Breinton

Question 5

5 year Housing Land Availability Target

Could the Cabinet Member responsible for Planning confirm that the Council's decisions to delay the completion of the 5 year housing land availability target and to delay the preparation of the core strategy were agreed in order to take advantage of the relaxation of planning rules that can occur (in accordance with the NPPF) in the event that 5 year housing land availability and core strategy are not in place?

Question from Mr P Mitchell,

Question 6

Explanation and justification of capital funding priority over essential service provision

Against a background of tightened central government funding and relatively stagnant council tax receipts, would the Council explain and justify its reduced budgetary allocations to increasing demand and cost of social and health care support against its clear preference towards provision of land and funding significant project costs to underpin developer profit on the Edgar Grid development (thus compounding the reduction impact to budget due to debt financing costs).

I would ask the Council to address this (and any other) capital funding priority in the context of its primary duty to meet essential core services and especially to provide support to the most needy and vulnerable in society. In particular

- *Provide assurance and demonstrate how it will address recently reported management failures to meet adequate (legal minimum) requirements for ensuring safety and care of children at risk or in care and maintain necessary resources to achieve its statutory and more important moral obligation to ensure good or excellent standards of care provision.*
- *Explain and justify reported cuts in the extent of service provision for care of the elderly against an increasingly demanding demographic going forward.*
- *Explain and justify reported cuts in support to vulnerable families at a time when they are suffering particularly badly due to the current economic climate and are increasing in numbers.*
- *How it will ensure required resourcing of care and support to those with mental health problems under reported reductions in available funding having already being been targeted with more stringent benefits requirements (and will otherwise require more care and support getting into and maintaining suitable employment and safeguarding their personal circumstances).*

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Question from Ms P Mitchell, Hereford

Question 7

Completeness of traffic modelling for policy evaluation and soundness of the Local Development Framework

The Council is about to embark on another consultation on another version of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, in part because of concerns expressed by statutory organisations, including the Highways Agency, the Environment Agency and Natural England.

In their 28 November 2011 letter to the Council on the Revised Preferred Option consultation, the Highways Agency stated:

'The Agency currently finds the Revised Preferred Options Consultation as **unsound** due to lack of supporting transport evidence base.' (Letter from Serena Howell, NDD West Midlands Area 9 to Forward Planning)

To remedy this lack of 'supporting transport evidence base', the Council planners proposed, and the Cabinet agreed (at its meeting on the 12th of July), that from July to September of this year there would be 'continuing work on outstanding elements, including ... completion of road studies and **upgraded modelling**' in preparation for 'Consultation upon a Draft Plan and SA/SEA [Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment] and HRA [Habitats Regulation Assessment]' (para 50)

The Local Transport Plan 2011-12 Annual Progress Report (APR, October 2012) describes the 'Hereford Transport Model Upgrade' as

'a standard process all models go through every 5 years or so, [to] ensure the model accurately represents existing transport conditions for all types of transport and so can be used with confidence to predict transport conditions in the future to help the council develop its transport strategies and business cases for transport investment.' (p6)

However the APR also reports that. due to 'the very poor weather in the spring' completion of the upgraded model is not expected until spring 2013.

This indicates that not only will the evidence base for revising the Core Strategy and presenting it at the forthcoming consultation still be incomplete but so will the statutory components of the plan — the Sustainability Appraisal, the Strategic Environmental Assessment, and the Habitats Regulation Assessment.

Can Cllr Hamilton confirm either that:

a) *further consultation on the Local Development Framework will be delayed until the upgraded transport model is available to inform policy including 'the business cases for transport investment' and the statutory environmental assessments of the LDF;*

or that

b) *if consultation is to proceed, reasonable alternative policies whose impacts **can** be assessed will be presented alongside the Council's preferred option which, it appears, must remain unsound until the problem of incomplete evidence has been addressed.*