

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 19 JULY 2013

Question from Mr P McKay, Herefordshire

Question 1

At present Council has its rights of way data viewable on one web page, with its roads data viewable on another web page overlaid with waste collection data, all viewable though when looking at road data have to keep switching from waste collection data to road data.

At Full Council meeting of March 2011 I was advised that it is Councils objective to have complete and correct highway records and when I asked Full Council meeting May 2012 if the objective of getting the Highway Records online could now be given priority, and the date this could be expected I was advised that positional accuracy checks are currently being undertaken before the information is converted for uploading to the website; I am pleased to advise that this should be completed by the autumn.

I am now advised via Freedom of Information that The Statutory Street Register, also known as the Local Street Gazetteer, is in a format that is ready to be published, but discrepancies between the Local Street Gazetteer and the highways extents have been found, with Herefordshire Council currently reviewing the two data sets to establish the full extent of the work required and have commenced corrective work.

So may I now ask when this information is now expected to be published online, and with a significant number of Definitive Map Modification Order Applications on the register if completing and correcting the highway records with them being published online could be covered by this years, and future years, annually published Authority Monitoring Reports ?

Answer from Councillor PD Price Cabinet Member Highways & Transportation

Answer to question 1

I appreciate Mr McKay's patience in awaiting this information.

We continue to work towards making the Local Street Gazetteer available online. This involves a considerable amount of manual checking to ensure the accuracy of the data provide, due to the need to bring together separate existing data sets. Whilst this work is ongoing, we have to prioritise our limited resources; this has meant that the process is taking longer than was originally anticipated. It is hoped to complete this process in the coming months and make the data available on-line. Once published, we will endeavour, within the resources available, to update it as necessary to reflect changes over time.

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Question from Ms A Sheppard, Herefordshire

Question 2

Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) aged 19-25 years have always had a right to further education, but the historical lack of relevant specialist provision in Herefordshire has prevented all but the most able of these young people from accessing further education locally. These rights have recently been strengthened by statute and the county's only OFSTED graded outstanding provision for learning disability (Barrs Court Specialist School and College) has offered to make specialist provision available to young people aged up to 25 years. Barrs Court is prepared to make this provision available either:

- As a college of further education with funding secured via the Education Funding Agency;

and/or

- As a day care provider with funding secured via personalized budgets and Direct Payments.

Both of these examples have been successfully facilitated by special schools in other local authorities and could be implemented just as well by Barrs Court in Herefordshire.

Although some 5,000 Herefordshire citizens have signed a petition to indicate their support for this proposal, Herefordshire local authority (LA) has never been supportive.

In a press release released in November 2012, an elected member declared that the LA had commenced a review of LDD provision in October, but the terms of reference for such a review had never been shared. The performance indicators on the proposed timeline for this review have not been met either, suggesting that the LA might be struggling to shape a strategic plan that can facilitate LDD provision that will be of an equally outstanding quality as that which is already offered by Barrs Court. Barrs Court already operates a 16-19 years LDD provision at The Hub (formerly St Owens) and with a little re-structuring of the day care services on offer at The Hub, more, or all of the building, could be dedicated to delivering outstanding LDD provision at minimal cost. However, once again the LA has resisted such a proposal out of hand, despite the financial gains this would bring to Herefordshire Council.

My question today is to ask the elected members of Herefordshire Council how the local authority is planning to meet its statutory obligation to make LDD provision available locally that will be of the same outstanding quality as that which can be made so readily available by Barrs Court?

Answer from Councillor JW Millar Cabinet Member Children's Services

Answer to question 2

We are committed to increasing choice, giving more control to young people and their families in planning for their future, and improving the outcomes for young people.

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Herefordshire Council is undertaking a review to develop and ensure suitable, sufficient and high quality education and training provision is available to meet the needs of Herefordshire resident young people aged 16-25 with learning disabilities. While the excellence of Barrs Court is recognised, we are working collaboratively with other providers including Westfield School, which also has outstanding provision for post 16 provision, health services and social care to develop what is collectively the best for these young people.

As a member of the review focus group, Mrs Sheppard will of course be aware of this review and its timetable, and I welcome the contribution being made by all members of that group. Cabinet expects to consider the overall findings of that review at its meeting on 19 September 2013. Meanwhile, building on the early findings of that review, pilot activity is starting in October

Question from Ms L Williams, Herefordshire

Question 3

Public Toilets

Do the council really believe that the withdrawal of the above services will not be detrimental to Hereford citizens and the tourist industry as a whole?

Answer from Councillor RB Hamilton Cabinet Member Environment, Housing & Planning

Answer to question 3

The council is not intending to end access to public toilets; rather it remains committed to ensuring the availability of toilets across the county for the benefit of local people and tourists. However as public funding decreases, council resources cannot continue to support all services to the levels we have enjoyed previously and therefore other ways of delivering services must be explored.

We have established a successful Community Toilet scheme in partnership with local businesses which is improving both the quality and availability of toilet provision. Where this scheme has successfully secured the availability of better quality provision, the council has and will continue to review the need to provide council maintained public toilets and close those that are no longer needed.

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Question from Mr P Newman, Herefordshire

Question 4

Public Footpath KY27 – KINNERSLEY

In September 2006 I received a Consultation re the possible Diversion of this path. In January 2007 I contacted Herefordshire Council Rights of Way Manager advising him that the path was obstructed by a pile of earth and that development appeared to be taking place on the site - in addition the Footpath Sign was missing. In February of this year I discovered that the path had a building and garden totally blocking the path. This type of problem used to occur in Herefordshire, but assurance was received from the Council that it was a thing of the past.

What procedures are now in place to prevent development occurring on Public Rights of Way and can the Cabinet member please ensure the existing processes are in place and being adhered to, and look at an overhaul and strengthening of these procedures which involve more than one Council department?

Answer from Councillor PD Price Cabinet Member Highways & Transportation

Answer to question 4

I can confirm that when a planning application is received which affects the line of a Public Right of Way (PROW) then it is given the statutory publicity and the council's PROW service are consulted. In the event that a planning permission is granted which affects the line of a PROW the developer is advised that work should not be commenced until the PROW has been properly diverted.

If Mr Newman would care to forward to me the details of the site in question I will ensure a more detailed explanation is provided regarding that site.