

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 18 OCTOBER 2013

Question from Mr G Perkins, Herefordshire

Question 1

I would like to raise the question of the amount of money spent on floral decorations, grass cutting and similar activities most of which are purely cosmetic and could be scrapped given the parlous financial situation. In Bromyard we see flower beds being re-planted and verges cut where there is no road safety justification. Driving round Hereford one sees the same. Not least in the city itself. This sort of thing could be devolved to the local Town /Parish Councils - if residents really want this - perhaps to compete in pointless "In Bloom" competitions they can pay through the local precept or volunteer to do it themselves.

Is Herefordshire Council going to cut this non essential activity?

Answer from Councillor PD Price Cabinet Member Highways & Transportation

Answer to question 1

There is a long history of volunteering in this county, which Herefordshire can rightly feel proud of, and it is already the case that much of the type of activity referred to by Mr Perkins is supported or supplemented by the Town and Parish Councils, community groups and many public spirited individuals. These activities enhance the quality of our localities both visually and in helping to support wildlife and biodiversity in our more urban areas; as such they do have real value and we recognise that the results achieved do matter to many in our communities.

That said, budgets are under severe pressure and we must focus the resources we have available on the highest priority activities. We have already taken the decision to change the planting in all council planted and maintained flower beds from annual bedding to perennial planting or grass, achieving an annual saving of some £60,000. We continue to work with our Public Realm Service provider, *Balfour Beatty Living Places* and with local councils, to build on the excellent work already carried out within our communities for the self-delivery of a range of key activities that maintain the quality of our local areas, but which Herefordshire Council will no longer have the resources to support.

Question from Mrs E Morawiecka, Breinton

Question 2

Herefordshire Council was awarded significant funding from the Department of Transport for their "Destination Hereford" bid. In the bid to the Government Department, Herefordshire Council made the commitment that:-

"Political engagement will be delivered through weekly briefings to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation and briefings to the Council's Environment Scrutiny Committee".

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A large element of this funding bid was for improvements to Broad Street, Hereford. However, the decision to revise the programme and focus on cycle network development and sustainable transport improvements across Hereford was agreed by the Cabinet Member and discussed directly with the Department for Transport.

I am not aware of any briefings to any Scrutiny Meeting since the "Destination Hereford" bid was successful over 2 years ago. Would the Cabinet member please explain how the funding allocated for the Broad Street works is now being utilised to promote sustainable transport and best value for money for the County's taxpayers?"

Answer from Councillor PD Price Cabinet Member Highways & Transportation

Answer to question 2

The Broad Street scheme, as originally conceived within the *Destination Hereford* Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) funding bid was subject to public consultation in the autumn of 2012, during which concerns were raised that a scheme with a significant focus on public realm improvements did not generate sufficient transport benefits. The council, responding to these concerns, reviewed the allocation in consultation with the Department for Transport and agreed to re-allocate funding to enable the improvement of the city's cycle network comprising a number of smaller schemes which aim to improve sustainable access to the city centre. The council and the Department for Transport share the view that this allocation will assist with the promotion of sustainable transport. A copy of the programme of schemes and a map of scheme locations, which comprises over £2M of LSTF capital funding alongside other funds such as the Cycle Safety Scheme and Local Transport Plan will be provided directly to the questioner, and is available on the *Hereford Active Travel Scheme* pages of the council's website.
