

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 26 SEPTEMBER 2014

Question from Mr M Sandaver, Herefordshire

Question 1

Road repairs

Why are the roads in such an appalling condition and repairs not carried out?

Answer from Councillor P Rone Cabinet Member Transport & Roads

Answer to question 1

Whilst severe weather conditions over several winters in recent years have taken their toll on the 2000+ miles of road in Herefordshire it simply isn't the case that repairs are not carried out. The council is investing an additional £20 million from its own funds over this and next financial year to improve the condition of the county's roads. The council has also been very successful in securing additional funding from central government through the Belwin, severe weather and pothole funds which will see investment in road repairs this year total almost £40 million. This is the largest maintenance programme the county has ever seen. Whilst there is still work to be done, repairs are being carried out across the county in order of priority. In the year to end of August almost 50 miles of roads in the county have been fixed and 1689 defects/potholes were repaired.

Question from Mr M Watson, Herefordshire

Question 2

Hereford United Football Club

Can Herefordshire Council confirm that the officers and any external agents acting and negotiating on behalf of the Council with Hereford United FC have used their best endeavours to protect the public interest in respect of the assets in the matter of Hereford United FC?

Answer from Councillor AW Johnson Cabinet Member Corporate Strategy & Finance

Answer to question 2

Yes the council is satisfied that every effort is being made to protect the public interest.

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Question from Mr W Morrell, Herefordshire

Question 3

Hereford United Football Club

Can Herefordshire Council confirm that the development agreement covering the Edgar Street football ground and associated facilities entered into by the Council and the Club specifically excludes any party from employing external consultants delivering unnecessary services and incurring unwarranted costs thereby failing to secure best value for the public interest and that the Council have secured the right and obligation to approve or dismiss these imported costs?

Answer from Councillor AW Johnson Cabinet Member Corporate Strategy & Finance

Answer to question 3

The council has the right to dismiss imported costs.

Question from Mr C Morris, Leominster

Question 4

Hereford United Football Club

Can the council comment on the seeming habit of discussing vital community issues such as the freehold of the Edgar Street Leases in un-minuted meetings with out of town businessmen, and will the council commit to minuting all future meetings on these subjects?

Answer from Councillor AW Johnson Cabinet Member Corporate Strategy & Finance

Answer to question 4

No discussions have taken place regarding the freehold ownership of the Edgar Street football ground site.

All formal meetings of the council comply with the access to information rules within the constitution. Informal meetings, where no decisions are taken, do not require formal minutes to be maintained.

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Question 5

5 Year Housing Land Supply

Herefordshire Council planning officers repeatedly state at Planning Committee meetings that Herefordshire has no 5 year housing land supply, despite the fact Herefordshire Council is looking to submit a sound Core Strategy to the Planning Inspectorate within the next few months, having spent well over £4million on developing this local plan. Since November 2013 the calculations have been promised, with the latest comment by the Director for Economy, Communities and Corporate (General Overview & Scrutiny meeting 6th January 2014) stating that a planning inquiry would inform the position on the 5 year housing land supply in Herefordshire and it was minuted at the time that “a further written response would be given to Dr. Williams (of CPRE), along with the calculations used”. As officers have recently understated one parish council’s planning permissions since 2011 by 400%, would the Cabinet member please provide the 5 year housing land supply calculations as promised to Dr. Williams, including the exact breakdown of planning permissions granted since 2011, by ward?

Answer from Councillor PD Price, Infrastructure

Answer to question 5

A revised 5 year housing land availability assessment was included as part of the package of documents submitted to the Secretary of State on 22 September 2014 on the Herefordshire Local Plan. This document will be made available on the council’s website shortly.

The revised assessment indicates that the county will have a 5 year housing land supply on the adoption of the plan. This assessment includes an appendix listing sites which have extant planning permission.

Supplementary Question

Would the Cabinet Member please provide the current 5 year housing land supply calculations as previously promised to Dr Williams of CPRE over 8 months ago, including all planning permissions, by ward, granted since April 2011 to date.

Answer from Councillor Price

Supporting evidence for the Core Strategy submission will be put on the website . I will ask the Assistant Director to ensure questions and answers to them are added to the website. I will respond in writing with the 5 year housing land supply calculation.

Written response

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The council's website (<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan-evidence-base>) has been updated to provide information on the current housing land supply calculations; this information has also been provided to Dr Williams.

The calculation does not require a listing of all permissions granted, by ward, since April 2011. However the council's website has a search facility which enables users to conduct ward based searches for planning applications and view the decision made.

Question from Ms P Mitchell, Hereford

Question 6

Progressing the Southern Link Road through the Planning System

What steps are required for the Council to secure planning permission for the Southern Link Road and what is the projected timetable for taking them?

Answer from Councillor PD Price, Infrastructure

Answer to question 6

The council will select a preferred route for the Southern Link Road once consideration has been given to all consultation feedback that has been received during the recent public consultation over the summer. Once a preferred route has been confirmed a planning application, together with appropriate technical and environmental assessments, will be prepared and submitted to the council's planning department. It is anticipated that the submission of a planning application will take place in December this year. Once submitted, the council, as the local planning authority, would carry out statutory consultations and notifications during January and then assess the application before making a recommendation to the Planning Committee. Until the scale and nature of the planning considerations which may be raised during the statutory consultation period are known it is not possible to put a definitive timescale to this assessment period but, in line with planning guidelines and past experience, it is anticipated this would be between nine and thirteen weeks.

Supplementary Question

What is the relationship between the Southern Link Road and the Western Relief Road?

Answer from Councillor Price

The Southern Relief Road is a stand alone project that represents value for money in its own right. The Western Relief Road will join it in due course 2018/22. Funding has successfully been secured for the Southern Link Road which forms part of the whole road package.

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Question from Mrs V Wegg-Prosser, Breinton

Question 7

South Wye Transport Package

Regarding the congestion on roads coming in to Hereford from the South, and South West, if there is evidence to show that the A49 is 'at capacity', (Cabinet Minutes, July 2014), why is there a recommendation in the South Wye Transport Package proposals to ensure that all Heavy Goods Vehicles use this same A49 into Hereford, rather than the A465?

Answer from Councillor PD Price, Infrastructure

Answer to question 7

The South Wye transport package proposals have been the subject of public consultation over the summer months and the council is currently considering all feedback received in relation to these draft proposals. Whilst a decision has yet to be taken regarding these proposals, this option was included as a possible approach to improve conditions on the A465 Belmont Road. The rationale for inclusion in the draft proposals for consultation was to seek views on restricting HGV numbers on the A465 by directing them to the strategic network (A49) via the new southern link road. This would be a higher standard of route more suitable for HGVs and could help improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists on Belmont Road.