

Public questions to Council – 6 February 2015

Question from Mrs V Wegg-Prosser, Breinton

Question 1

Medium term financial strategy and South Wye transport package

Regarding the approved capital investment programme within the MTFs, please advise why the South Wye transport package is so called when its costings are only related to the building of the Southern Link Road.

Question from Dr N Geeson, Hereford

Question 2

Medium term financial strategy and biological records

Regarding Appendix 1 of the MTFs papers for Council, please provide information as to where the hosting costs of the Herefordshire Biological Records Centre are listed in the Savings Proposal. This was allocated for the period 2015/16 to 2016/17 against some anticipated self-sustaining new funding streams, with the provision for reduced service provision, if necessary, as per Cl. 11.12 of Herefordshire Council's Annual Monitoring Report (2013-14):

P56 "11.12 The council's Planning Service is reliant on biodiversity and geodiversity data collected, managed and supplied by the Herefordshire Biological Records Centre (HBRC). The council has withdrawn direct funding for the HBRC but is continuing to cover the hosting costs. The aspiration is for the HBRC to become financially self-sustaining; it is in a process of expanding existing and developing new funding streams to this end. Should full cost recovery not be achievable, the outcome would be reduced service provision which would impact significantly on the supply and updating of environmental data to the Planning Service and to strategic biodiversity work by other organisations."

Surely the Council needs to pin-point finance for ongoing biological record-keeping for the County? Otherwise it will not have up-to-date information to assess planning applications, it will not be able to make accurate Strategic Environmental Assessments and Habitat Regulations Assessments, and it will not conform with the NPPF.

More specifically, there are other actions referred to in the Annual Monitoring Report (2013-14) that will depend on ongoing provision of up-to-date biological information, e.g. for the Green Infrastructure Strategy (Cl 11.16), for funding management plans for local wildlife sites, (Cl 11.17) and for monitoring Priority Species. (Cl 11.13). How will these actions be continued and funded?