

MINUTES of the meeting of Council held at Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Friday 25 September 2015 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor DB Wilcox (Chairman)
Councillor PJ McCaull (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: PA Andrews, BA Baker, JM Bartlett, WLS Bowen, TL Bowes, H Bramer, CR Butler, ACR Chappell, MJK Cooper, PGH Cutter, BA Durkin, PJ Edwards, CA Gandy, DW Greenow, KS Guthrie, J Hardwick, DG Harlow, EPJ Harvey, EL Holton, JA Hyde, TM James, AW Johnson, JF Johnson, JLV Kenyon, JG Lester, MD Lloyd-Hayes, MN Mansell, RI Matthews, MT McEvelly, SM Michael, PM Morgan, PD Newman OBE, FM Norman, CA North, RJ Phillips, GJ Powell, AJW Powers, P Rone, AR Round, A Seldon, NE Shaw, WC Skelton, J Stone, D Summers, EJ Swinglehurst, LC Tawn, A Warmington and SD Williams

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors PE Crockett, RL Mayo and PD Price.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Agenda item 8 – Youth Justice Plan

Councillors BA Durkin and RJ Phillips declared non-pecuniary interests as Magistrates.

Agenda item 11 – Leader's Report

Councillor LC Tawn declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Director of the Old Market.

Agenda item 12 – Annual Report of Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority

Councillors BC Baker, KS Guthrie, RI Matthews, RJ Phillips, and SD Williams declared non-pecuniary interests as Council appointees to the Fire Authority.

21. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

22. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Council noted the Chairman's announcements as printed in the agenda papers.

The Chairman provided further information with regard to the walk with the wounded on 1 October.

He formally announced that his Chairman's charity for the year was "The Haven" - a local cancer charity providing treatment and support to cancer victims, particularly breast cancer, as well as supporting their close families.

The Chairman also reported the receipt of four petitions relating to:

- No 1 Ledbury Road
- Leominster Library
- Belmont Library.
- a forthcoming planning application for a new single carriageway (Southern Link Road) and associated works.

23. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A copy of the public questions and written answers, together with supplementary questions asked at the meeting and their answers, is attached to the Minutes at Appendix 1.

24. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDERS

Notice of Motion 1 – No 1 Ledbury Road, short breaks and respite care

Councillor Lloyd Hayes proposed the motion. She made the following principal points:

- She expressed concern that parents and carers had heard of service changes through rumour. This had created general fear and insecurity. Some parents had recently been refused provision at Ledbury Road.
- She was concerned that Wye Valley Trust, the Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Social Services were closing the facility. One way of closing a service was by running it down. This created a situation where staff were encouraged to seek other jobs. She noted that the chef at Ledbury road had been redeployed and not replaced.
- The Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Task and Finish Group had already gathered useful evidence and would bring forward some useful recommendations. She questioned whether it was in accordance with the Constitution for any decisions to be taken on Ledbury Road before the Task and Finish Group had reported.
- There had been a lack of strategic planning and no consultation with regard to changes to the service at Ledbury road and no contingency plan. The Council was not fulfilling its duty of care.
- There were many opportunities to increase use of the facility and generate income, for example offering day care there, that had not been adequately explored.
- The facility was an excellent resource and there was no alternative in the City. She commented on a number of providers that it had been suggested to her could provide an alternative, asserting that they could not provide an adequate replacement for the current provision at Ledbury Road.

Recommendation (a) in the Notice of Motion requested the executive to commit to the retention of the option for families and young people to access professionally staffed respite care in Herefordshire. Councillor Lloyd-Hayes indicated that she was willing to add the words "and beyond" to the end of that request.

Councillor Lester, cabinet member – young people and children’s wellbeing, explained that this amendment would permit use of respite carers just across the county’s border.

Some concern was expressed that the wording of the amendment to read “Herefordshire and beyond” was too wide and did not reflect the qualification offered by the cabinet member.

A motion that recommendation (a) be amended was carried with 43 votes in favour, 3 against and 2 abstentions.

Councillor Harvey seconded the motion. She highlighted the specialist nature of respite care, and its importance to families. She considered that there had been insufficient communication between the partner organisations themselves, and between the partner organisations and the parents, to ensure that respite care remained available at Ledbury Road while a broader range of other options were being developed.

Ledbury Road remained the only option for a number of families. There was an impression that the service was being dismantled. The council needed to bear in mind that if families fell apart as a consequence of the withdrawal of the service at Ledbury Road the council would be responsible for providing them with support.

Councillor Lester commented that he had met Wye Valley Trust and the Clinical Commissioning Group to explore options. No1 Ledbury Road would remain open beyond March 2016 subject to staffing and financial resources. It had never been the intention to remove residential respite care at Ledbury Road. The aim was to increase the range of care options. Core assessments identified the needs and therefore the options that could be considered.

He added that he could support recommendation (a) as amended and recommendation (b). However, he requested that recommendation (c) “that the executive consider the recommendations from the task & finish group before any decision is made on any changes to the respite care service provision in Herefordshire”, be amended, ending it after the word “group”. Whilst he would welcome the recommendations of the task and finish group he would not wish a requirement to await its findings to delay the ongoing work on alternatives to meet needs. In conclusion he noted that the council did not itself provide respite care; it secured it from providers. Wye Valley Trust and others were the providers, commissioned by the Clinical Commissioning Group.

A motion that recommendation (c) be amended was carried (There were 40 votes for the motion, 9 against and no abstentions.)

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- A number of Members praised the benefits offered by No1 Ledbury Road and the support it provided to some of the most vulnerable people.
- The pressures faced by parents and their concerns about the situation were acknowledged.
- There was a concern that the cabinet member had referred to the facility remaining open subject to staffing and resources. It was suggested that a lack of qualified staff might lead to closure at short notice and it was asked what contingencies were in place. The cabinet member commented that options were being considered and council and parents would be advised as soon as possible.

- It was important that note was taken of the roles of the Wye Valley Trust and the Clinical Commissioning Group and that they were held accountable for their decisions.
- The cabinet member acknowledged that consultation on the future of No1 Ledbury Road had not engaged parents as fully as it should have done. The key organisations responsible had made clear that this was regrettable and had apologised to parents. The Children and Young People's Plan which Council was being asked to ratify in a later agenda item sought to ensure that such a situation would not occur again.
- The council could and should have exercised greater leadership.
- It was suggested that it would have been preferable for council to have awaited the findings of the task and finish group before debating the issue. Councillor Stone, as chairman of the group, informed Council that the group had heard evidence from a number of people and was drawing up its recommendations which he did not wish to pre-empt.
- The Leader of the Council commented that the council was doing its best to seek to resolve a situation that was not entirely within its control. The best course was for the council to continue to explore options in parallel with the ongoing work of the task and finish group whose recommendations could be considered when published.

The motion was carried with 45 votes for it none against and 3 abstentions.

RESOLVED: That in view of the vision contained within the children and young people's plan that our children and young people grow up healthy, happy and safe within supportive families and carers, this Council resolves that:

The executive be asked to:

- commit to the retention of the option for families and young people to access professionally staffed respite care in Herefordshire and beyond;**
- honour its obligations to actively involve parents/carers and children at all stages of any change programme; and**
- consider the recommendations from the task & finish group.**

Notice of Motion 2 – Chinese Lanterns

Councillor Baker proposed the motion. He circulated an example of a Chinese lantern and highlighted the risk they posed to animals and the fire risk to property. He noted that the Chief Fire Officer supported the motion.

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- The lanterns did present a significant risk.
- Some doubt was expressed about the Council's power to enforce restrictions but it was suggested that a measure of control could be achieved through the licensing regime.

- A publicity campaign to raise awareness of the risks posed by the lanterns could only be beneficial.

Councillor Swinglehurst seconded the motion commenting that this was a matter where the council could act and it should do what it could to address the risk the lanterns presented.

The motion was carried with 48 votes for it, no votes against it and no abstentions.

RESOLVED: That the executive consider imposing restrictions on the use of Chinese lanterns on council owned land or at events licensed by the council, and consider implementing a publicity campaign to inform residents of the risks associated with the use of such lanterns.

25. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

Council was invited to approve the Children and Young People's Plan.

The cabinet member – young people and children's wellbeing presented the report.

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- The cabinet member acknowledged that in the light of a government announcement permitting children with birthdays between April and August to start reception at age of five, rather than four, references to early years being 0-5 might need amendment.
- In relation to page 50 of the agenda papers section 3 bullet point 2 it was asked what measures were envisaged to improve professionals' knowledge in relation to mental health. The cabinet member replied that professionals would be made aware of expectations regarding their training and the matter would be considered again when the plan was reviewed.
- It would be essential to monitor and review the Plan's effectiveness.
- It was requested that regard be had to provision for children who suffered bereavement, noting the effect on mental health and wellbeing. The cabinet member acknowledged this point.
- The cabinet member – health and wellbeing commented that the Plan had been considered and approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board and she looked forward to the outcomes.
- In relation to the aim of reducing the educational achievement gap between children in receipt of free school meals and other children to 5% it was noted that the current gap was 25%. It was asked what the implications would be if free school meals were withdrawn following the Government's spending review. The cabinet member commented that a collaborative approach was needed with partners to meet funding challenges. It was still possible to track children who met the specific criteria for free school meals eligibility.
- The ability to fund the strategy given the funding gaps in the County was of key importance.

- Assurance was sought that the Plan was joined up with the public health agenda, The cabinet member – young people and children’s wellbeing confirmed that public health along with other organisations needed to commit to the plan.
- It was asked how the workforce strategy referred to at section 8.7 of the report would be monitored and reported on. The cabinet member acknowledged the importance of securing the appropriate workforce.
- With reference to section 8.8 of the report on community engagement it was suggested that reference should be made to the need to involve Parish Councils and the voluntary sector. The cabinet member acknowledged this point.
- The Plan involved co-ordinating some 20 different stakeholder groups. It was important to ensure that the Plan was achievable.
- There was already a projected overspend on the Children’s Services budget of over £1m.
- In relation to respite care services, the cabinet member commented that short break provision depended on the needs of the child and family. If the core assessment identified the need for respite care that would be provided.
- The cabinet member agreed to make clear that one of the aims of the plan was to identify mental health problems early in life.

RESOLVED: That the children and young people’s plan 2015-2018 be approved.

26. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN

Council was invited to approve the Youth Justice Plan.

The cabinet member – young people and children’s wellbeing presented the report.

In the course of discussion the following principal points were made:

- It was observed that 37% of young people receiving outcomes that required youth offending service interventions were children in care. The cabinet support member commented that looked after children were very vulnerable and whereas in a number of households minor infringements would be dealt with within a family, looked after children were more vulnerable to being recorded as offenders.
- It was noted that one of the key actions to improve service provision in 2015/16 was to re-establish the Worcester Junior Attendance Centre (JAC) and develop the programme for the Telford JAC. It was asked whether consideration had been given to providing a dedicated JAC in Hereford. The cabinet member – young people and children’s wellbeing agreed to seek clarification.
- Disappointment was expressed that some of the national figures used in the report were two years old. The cabinet member – economy and corporate services speaking as chairman of the Community Safety Partnership commented that the timeliness and quality of statistical information was to be reviewed and improved.
- It was asked whether there was any information showing offences were seasonal and whether long summer school holidays were a factor in offending. The cabinet member agreed to clarify this point.

RESOLVED: That the Youth justice Plan as appended to the report be approved.

27. CAPITAL SUPPORT FOR THE FEDERATION OF AYLESTONE BUSINESSES AND ENTERPRISE COLLEGE AND BROADLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL AND CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Council was asked to approve that provision be made in the capital programme for additional capital funding to support the relocation of Broadlands primary school and children's centre onto the Aylestone Business and Enterprise College (ABEC) site.

The cabinet member – young people and children's wellbeing presented the report.

A Member commented that it was to be hoped that lessons about estimating costs could be learned from the project to avoid a similar situation happening in the future. The leader commented that, whilst care would continue to be exercised, increases in the estimates of future projects could not be ruled out.

RESOLVED: That an additional £250k of funding be approved to relocate Broadlands primary school onto the Aylestone Business and Enterprise College site.

28. DESIGNATION OF POST AS STATUTORY OFFICER (MONITORING OFFICER)

(The deputy solicitor to the council – people and regulatory left the room for the duration of this item.)

Council was asked to designate a specific post to discharge the functions of Monitoring Officer.

A Member commented that it had been requested, in relation to all reorganisations undertaken, that as a responsible employer council was assured that redeployed tasks were capable of being delivered by those to whom they had been assigned and would not overburden them. The assistant director, governance had been discharging a number of governance functions as monitoring officer that were important to the Council's operation. Given the burden on the legal team assurance was sought that there was capacity to deliver these important internal functions.

The director – economy, communities and corporate commented that staff had been consulted on the reorganisation proposals and were satisfied with them. Additional resources had been provided to the legal team. The right resources would be deployed to deliver the agreed work programme.

Formal thanks were expressed to Mr B Norman, former assistant director governance, for his work.

RESOLVED: the post of deputy solicitor to the council, people and regulatory, be designated monitoring officer for an interim period of up to nine months from the date of approval whilst a permanent solution is considered and implemented.

29. LEADER'S REPORT

The leader presented his report on the activities of Cabinet since the meeting of Council in July.

The leader informed Council that at a recent meeting of the Local Enterprise Partnership confirmation had been received that a number schemes from Herefordshire could, subject to final business cases, access loan funding. This included feasibility work on the Leominster southern expansion including potential road infrastructure.

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- It was asked what the council was doing to respond to the current refugee situation. The leader responded that the council was part of the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership and it was considered that the council would be more likely to help more people via that body. People could make individual offers of support through established charities.
- (Paragraph 4 of the report) It was noted that an extraordinary meeting of Council had been called for 16 October to consider the adoption of the Core Strategy. The timing of this meeting was questioned given that the Inspector's report was expected to be received on 7 October. A question was also asked about the notice of the forthcoming decision by cabinet on the adoption of the core strategy that had been published. Assurance was sought that given that the inspector's report had not yet been published the council was complying with all the relevant access to information requirements to meet expectations of transparency and would do so if there were to be any delay in receiving that report. It was also requested that members of the public should be permitted to submit questions to the extraordinary meeting.

The leader commented that Council would be invited to adopt or reject the adoption of the core strategy. The detailed content would not be subject to discussion and it was not clear what contribution public questions could add to the consultation that had already taken place.

The deputy solicitor to the council agreed to provide a written response in relation to the decision notice. She confirmed that it was not intended to permit public questions at the Council meeting. The Council meeting had been called in accordance with the provisions in the constitution.

Disappointment was expressed that public questions were not to be permitted given that changes had taken place since the examination of the strategy in public.

- (Paragraphs 5-8) It was requested that there should be a wider consultation on any submission to be made in response the Government's invitation to authorities to submit devolution bids. The leader commented on the areas that it had been considered might form part of a detailed submission. A consultant had been engaged to co-ordinate the preparation of a submission before Christmas. He proposed to consult group leaders on that submission.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

30. ANNUAL REPORT OF HEREFORD AND WORCESTER FIRE AUTHORITY

Council was asked to receive the annual report of the Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority.

Councillor RJ Phillips, Vice-Chairman of the Authority, presented the report.

The proposed new fire station in Hereford was welcomed. The chief fire officer outlined the planned timetable for development which envisaged planning permission being sought towards the end of 2016. He agreed to keep the council informed of progress.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

31. FORMAL QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS TO THE CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRMEN UNDER STANDING ORDERS

A copy of the Member questions and written answers, together with supplementary questions asked at the meeting and their answers, is attached to the Minutes at Appendix 2.

The meeting ended at 1.17 pm

CHAIRMAN

Public questions to Council – 25 September 2015

Question from Mrs V Wegg-Prosser, Breinton

Question 1

Understanding Herefordshire and the awaited Local Transport Plan

The Council's Local Transport Plan expired in March 2015 and its most recent LTP Progress Report covers the years 2012/13. The Travel Choice surveys on travel to primary and secondary schools have been discontinued. However, the most recent edition of 'Understanding Herefordshire, July 2015' reports that only 1 in 4 people in the County own a car. It also states (according to the notes presented to Cabinet on 23/7/15) that Herefordshire needs to ensure a 'system-level perspective on health and transport planning'. Can the Cabinet member responsible for transport planning please confirm that this emphasis on a system level perspective on health and transport planning will inform the new Local Transport Plan and that the Council's Integrated Public Transport Unit has adopted this perspective so that health and transport outcomes are related?

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

The council's local transport plan has not expired; in July 2014 Council agreed its extension to enable the core strategy to complete its journey to adoption.

The links between health and transport are well understood and have already guided investment in cycling and walking infrastructure and Choose How You Move campaign to encourage healthy travel. The health and wellbeing strategy which has recently been adopted makes clear the links between transport and public health outcomes. These links will also be reflected in the refreshed local transport plan which is being prepared for consideration by the council in early 2016. The integrated public transport unit plans services in the light of the demand for trips to health and social care opportunities and is currently working on a government funded Total Transport fund project to examine further the opportunities to plan transport in greater partnership with the health sector.

Supplementary question

Could Councillor Price confirm that when the next review of the LTP is finally undertaken it will chart how healthy outcome improvements have actually been achieved by the Council's health and wellbeing strategy?

Answer by the Leader of the Council

I will ask Councillor Price to provide a written reply.

Written Answer

The local transport plan (LTP) has and will continue to support a balanced strategy which includes active travel proposals (to support walking and cycling) as well as increasing capacity for vehicular traffic where this is required to address current problems and/or support growth proposals. The council monitors the delivery of both its LTP and health and wellbeing strategy through its corporate performance monitoring and annual progress reports.

Public questions to Council – 25 September 2015

Question from Ms C Protherough, Clehonger

Question 2

Retention of highest grade agricultural land.

In view of the on-going consideration of the future of Herefordshire Council's small holdings estate, due to be decided on 5th November, what measures are likely to be taken to ensure that the highest grade of agricultural land for food production is retained and that young people are encouraged into this important sector of the local economy?

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

It would be wrong to pre-judge the outcome of the review. The core strategy, once adopted, will be the key land use document for the council and will inform future land use in the county.

Supplementary question

Will Herefordshire Council be able to ensure the continued integrity of their smallholdings in proximity of the proposed SLR or is it intended to make short term financial gains by selling them off for development?

Answer by Leader of the Council

The council needs to ensure assets are used to the best effect for the majority of the population. No decision has yet been taken on the future of the council's smallholdings estate. The interests of current tenants will be taken into account and everyone will be informed of any decisions in the normal way.

Question from Ms K Sharp, Hereford

Question 3

School travel plans and traffic reduction

On its website under 'School travel plans and sustainability', Herefordshire Council states that, "We're working to cut the number of car journeys to school and improve safety. We want to cut congestion and pollution, as well as allowing more pupils to get regular exercise by walking or cycling to school."

When "school run" traffic makes up over 50% of peak time vehicle movements in the City of Hereford, and when there is an increase in childhood obesity, could the Cabinet member please explain what progress has been made on delivering these excellent aims in the last 4 years?

Answer from Councillor P Rone cabinet member transport and roads

Since 2011 the council has delivered over 8km of new cycling and walking routes in Hereford. Over £115,000 in grants has been awarded to 18 schools to install measures such as cycle shelters,

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scooter shelters and other improvements. All Herefordshire schools have a school travel plan and are encouraged to regularly review it.

Schools have been supported to promote walking buses, Walk to School week, and to provide scooter and cycle skills training to over 1,600 pupils annually. In addition, over 1,000 year 6 pupils across Herefordshire undertake level 2 Bikeability cycle training each year. The council also provides pedestrian training to almost 5,000 Herefordshire pupils each year.

A range of highway improvements have also been delivered at schools across the county to address issues such as speeding and visibility. This has included provision of traffic calming and 20mph zones in the vicinity of schools. A recent example has been the 20 mph zone introduced along Venns Lane in Hereford for the St Francis Xavier's primary school and the Royal National College for the Blind.

Whilst, these measures are supporting these aims, a research project is being carried out by the transportation teams over the next few months to quantify the benefits of these measures to inform the development of the next local transport plan. However, traffic congestion in the city remains a significant concern. This underlines the need to take forward the proposals outlined in the draft core strategy for a further package of sustainable transport improvements alongside new road infrastructure, in the form of both the southern link road and the Hereford relief road.

Supplementary Question

The council's own evidence shows that 85% of traffic is local to Hereford – through traffic is not the problem, school traffic is the problem.

Could Councillor Rone please explain why, in the absence of the benefits outlined in his answer ever being quantified does he seek to promote the SLR as a way of reducing term-time traffic.

Answer by Councillor P Rone cabinet member transport and roads

Parents can choose where they send their children to school. I will provide a written answer.

Written answer

The southern link road (SLR) is being promoted to enable economic growth within Hereford while tackling specific problems in the South Wye area. The scheme is crucial for the long term vision for growth in Herefordshire, is a key part of the infrastructure requirements set out in the council's core strategy and is consistent with the objectives of the council's local transport plan.

It is however, only one element of the overall south wye transport package and will be complemented by a range of active travel measures in the South Wye which will support walking, cycling and public transport.

Highways crossed by the SLR are proposed to remain open for use by pedestrians and cyclists, including Grafton Lane, along which runs National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 46, where an underpass will enable connection to be retained. Connections on the existing PROW network are also retained, with diversions put in place where necessary.

Public questions to Council – 25 September 2015

Question from Mrs E Morawiecka, Breinton

Question 4

Housing land supply

Herefordshire Council reports in continuing planning applications across the County that it still has no 5 year housing land supply. The Assistant Director – Economic, Environment and Cultural Services reported to the Planning Inspector admitted in March 2015 that a number of planning approvals had been omitted from the calculation of the 5 year housing land supply. In the continued absence of the Annual Monitoring Report for the planning department would the Cabinet member please confirm exactly how many new homes have been granted approval by for development since March 2014?

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

Mrs Morawiecka is correct that until the local plan has been adopted the county does not have a five year housing land supply. However the provision of such a supply is addressed in the emerging local plan and the questioner will recall the debates that took place at the February 2015 hearings on this matter.

The point to which the questioner refers in March 2015 is the statement which the council prepared on this matter and at the request of the Inspector. That statement was then subject to its own technical consultation. The statement indicated that the 2014 position had not included those applications with a resolution to grant permission but where the S106 agreement had not been signed prior to April 2014. On this basis those decisions had not been issued.

The annual monitoring report for 2014/15 is scheduled for publication by the end of the calendar year as required. In relation to the specific question raised on numbers there have been permissions for 2068 “gross” dwellings permitted during that period. However, there will need to be a significant element of analysis undertaken to determine the “net” completions total. This includes ensuring there is no double counting (with applications superseding existing permissions, reserved matters on outline sites) and ensuring that planning proposals involving the loss of housing are also taken into account (e.g. any conversions and change of use out of housing or demolitions). This work is on-going. It will not directly affect the Inspector’s report.

Supplementary question

The Council is meeting its 5 year housing land supply. However, if officers are unable to update the 5 year housing land supply calculations until the end of 2015 by continuing to maintain it has no 5 year housing land supply the Planning Department is allowing developers a free for all on many greenfield sites across the County. Why is the Council not taking control of the allocation of new housing? Is it because it is generating large sums in planning fees?

Answer by Leader of the Council

I refute the assertion that we do not take control of housing. The implication made in relation to planning fees is untrue. The local plan contains the detail on housing supply. I will supply a written answer.

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Written answer by Councillor Price

There is no direct relationship between the calculation of the five year land supply and the fees that are generated by the submission of planning applications for new dwellings.

The position on the calculation of the five year housing supply was fully rehearsed at the local plan hearings in February 2015. The position is comprehensively and definitively set out in paragraphs 46 to 51 of the inspector's report. Paragraph 51 in particular sets out that the now current five year supply is 'marginal but realistic' and highlights the need for ongoing monitoring against the agreed trajectory.

There has never been a 'free for all' on housing planning permissions in the county as suggested by the question. A wide range of environmental matters as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework have been assessed in the round both by the council and inspectors on appeal. Plainly however the adoption of the local plan puts the council in a far stronger place to resist inappropriate or unsustainable residential development.

Question from Mr D King, Tillington

Question 5

Government funding reductions

The Leader of the Council said, as recorded by the Council Minutes of 17 July 2015, that there were "financial pressures including an expected reduction in Government Grant, which was currently £35m pa to zero by 2020." As a consequence the Council is preparing service cuts which will impact on the residents of Herefordshire. What is the evidence that Government Grant will be reduced from £35m pa to zero by 2020?

Answer from Councillor A Johnson cabinet member corporate strategy and finance

The anticipated reductions in government funding to local authorities have been well documented. The summer budget confirmed local authorities can expect similar funding cuts in this parliament as experienced in the previous parliamentary term. Central government is planning to reduce its departmental expenditure by £20bn by 2010 whilst protecting the funding of health, defence and aid, and giving cash protection for education. This can only mean there is less funding remaining to other departments and will result in higher funding reductions to local authorities.

Bearing all this information in mind, and as any prudent organisation would do in light of that information, we are planning for a range of scenarios including a reduction in revenue support grant to zero by 2019/20. The position will become clearer following the comprehensive spending review in late November, but we cannot wait until then to consult on the options open to us.

Supplementary question

If the Local Government Association figures were applied to Herefordshire, the £35m per year central government grant would not reduce to zero, it would still be £28m by 2019/20 and I can provide evidence for that.

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So, will the Leader as Cabinet Member Corporate Strategy and Finance please investigate the assumptions which he has been given, replace them with the latest LGA forecasts and issue a public statement correcting this error because it impacts directly and adversely on the services which are provided to the residents of Herefordshire?

Answer by Leader of the Council

I accept that it is unlikely that our central grant will reduce to zero. The government's announced intentions are to ring-fence health, education, defence and foreign aid, but it will not raise VAT, income tax and National Insurance. It has also said that it will reduce the deficit to zero by 2020. Local authorities will be seen as a prime source of savings. I expect existing specific grants will be merged into the block grant and the block grant will be reduced. Total income will therefore reduce by 2020.

Question from Mr J Harrington, Herefordshire

Question 6

Alternatives to road building

In light of the documented offer made by the Highways Agency, to carry out a micro-simulation at no cost to Herefordshire Council (estimated at £30k), to assess whether or not traffic light removal from the Asda/Belmont junction (previously a roundabout) and other Highways Agency controlled junctions would reduce congestion by making maximum use of the existing road capacity (as it has in other UK towns and Cities), can the Cabinet and in particular, Cllr Phillip Price, tell me why in times of austerity this free offer was not accepted or progressed further, in line with DfT guidelines requesting authorities explore all sustainable alternatives to road building first?

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

The council has not turned down any offer of such work made by Highways England. Indeed we have worked closely with Highways England (formerly the Highways Agency) to develop a robust transport strategy for Hereford. Whilst the studies that Highways England choose to carry out is a matter for that organisation to determine, I am aware that they have assessed the impact of removing the traffic lights at the Asda/Belmont junction and concluded that such a change would not resolve the traffic problems.

Question from Mr R Palgrave, How Caple

Question 7

Southern link road

Council has failed to show that SLR provides best value for money compared to alternative measures for tackling road congestion in South Wye; and their consultant on this development, Parsons Brinkerhoff, has admitted that they wrongly claimed that SLR was necessary for the delivery of the Enterprise Zone.

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Given that Council is looking to make significant budget cuts and is currently paying over £16million in capital repayments and interest on loans, what justification is there to spend a further £600,000 of taxpayer's money with Parsons Brinkerhoff to try to make a case for the SLR?

Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure

The assertions made by the questioner are incorrect. The business case for the South Wye transport package (which includes the southern link road) clearly demonstrated that the proposals represent value for money; this has been recognised by the government in awarding £27m from the Growth Fund. In preparing the business case a range of alternative options were considered and it was concluded that the best way to achieve the package objectives of enabling full development of the Hereford Enterprise Zone, reducing congestion and delay, reducing traffic noise and accidents in the South Wye area as well as encouraging physical activity was by providing the southern link road alongside a range of active travel measures.

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Question from Councillor C Chappell

Staff redundancies

Question 1

Can the cabinet member confirm:

- a) how many council employees have been made redundant in the last six months
- b) what the total financial saving is to the council of these redundancies, and please give a breakdown of financial saving by directorate/service area
- c) how many assistant directors and service heads have been made redundant and what is the total cost of each redundancy package
- d) that these redundancies have not caused a breakdown in service delivery, especially in adult and children's services
- e) how many more redundancies does he envisage during the next six months?

Answer from Councillor G Powell cabinet member economy and corporate services

Answer to question 1

- a) From 1 April 2015 to 30 September 2015 there have been a total of 11 people who have left the council as redundant.
- b) The total net savings to the council over three years (i.e. three year savings less redundancy cost) by each directorate are as follows:
 - Adults and wellbeing = £282k
 - Childrens' wellbeing = £249k
 - Economy, communities and corporate = £401k
- c) One assistant director (and no heads of service) has been made redundant in the six months to 30 September. In addition to payment in lieu of notice and the usual termination payments relating to outstanding leave, the redundancy payment was £2,137.
- d) All redundancies have been undertaken in line with the council's managing change policy and procedure and subject to undertaking a full consultation process with staff, trade unions and key stakeholders involved to ensure service changes are fully considered, equality impact assessments are completed, and risks identified and mitigated before the changes are implemented to ensure there is no breakdown in service delivery. That is not to say that overall there will be no impact on service levels and, as is the position across local government as resources reduce, levels of service may need to change accordingly.
- e) Whilst council finances nationally remain under pressure, it is not possible to give a confirmed figure. However, a further reduction of 5-7 managers is currently proposed as part of the economy, communities and corporate directorate senior manager change process, and the directorate leadership team will work with each other to achieve this target. Savings plans will need to be reviewed in line with the budget proposals and any potential workforce impact identified.

Supplementary question

Will the Cabinet Member publish the list of redundancies quarterly for councillors to be kept informed?

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Answer by Councillor Powell

I will consider whether some information can be included in the quarterly corporate performance report.

Question from Councillor B Matthews

Question 2

Old cattle market development

I understand that the contract between the council and the developers of the old cattle market site granted them an option to purchase the car park adjoining the multi storey building. Can it be confirmed that that is the case, and if so is there any indication as to when they might take up this option?

Answer from Councillor H Bramer, cabinet member contracts and assets

Answer to question 2

The development agreement makes provision for a range of options to be exercised, which vary dependant on whether plans for phase 2 of the development are proposed and agreed within a period of five years from practical completion of the phase 1 site. There is at this time no indication of whether any of those options will be exercised.

Supplementary question

What is the sale price?

Answer by Councillor Bramer

I will provide a written answer

Written Answer

As indicated in my written response, the development agreement makes provision for a range of options to be exercised dependent on circumstances. Whilst the terms of the agreement remain commercially confidential I can confirm that the process by which a price would be determined is set out in the agreement.

Question from Councillor B Matthews

Question 3

Commercial vehicle parking

I believe that it is time that some action was taken to discourage commercial vehicles from frequently parking on the footpaths and highways within the residential areas of the city and market towns. Not only are these vehicles unsightly, but they also cause untold damage to

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footpath and road surfaces, brought about by oil leaks and excessive weight. Could consideration be given to implementing on-street parking permits for such vehicles, to help discourage this unacceptable and unsafe practice?

Answer from Councillor P Rone, cabinet member transport and roads

Answer to question 3

Parking on footways causing an obstruction is an offence that can be enforced by the police and specific cases can be reported to them direct for action. Restrictions on where commercial vehicles can park can be introduced through appropriate traffic regulation orders for defined streets. I agree that this issue can be of concern to local residents. Balfour Beatty operate a process for considering requests for new traffic regulation orders and I would suggest that Councillor Matthews identify the areas where such restrictions would be beneficial and discuss the matter further with his locality steward.

Supplementary question

Will the cabinet member write to some of the large businesses asking for their co-operation in this matter?

Answer by Councillor Rone

The matter is not straightforward. I will, however, write to the larger businesses asking for greater consideration when parking.

Question from Councillor M Lloyd-Hayes

Question 4

Respite care

On Tuesday 15 September, the Director of Children's Services, in a meeting attended by Councillor Lester, promised parents' representatives that a list existed of alternative overnight respite providers. Has this been given to them?

Answer from Councillor J Lester, cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing

Answer to question 4

The list, together with accompanying information which may be helpful to parents, is available online at:

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/8060080/herefordshire_short_breaks_provider_market_2015.pdf

and we have notified those parents who had already expressed an interest.

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Question from Councillor M Lloyd-Hayes

Question 5

Social care assessment

Councillors might like to be aware that all children attending 1 Ledbury Road are having their needs reassessed at the moment. As the children's services directorate have been reassessing these children for the past 12 months, why do they feel the need to spend more time, and council money, reassessing them again?

Answer from Councillor J Lester, cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing

Answer to question 5

The expectation is that every child subject to a core assessment has that reviewed at least once a year. Not to do so would be not only remiss, but would also compromise our statutory responsibilities to support children in need. I would remind Members of the OFSTED inspection of 2014, which reminded the council to ensure that its obligations for children with disabilities are met.

Supplementary Question

Why do assessments have to be so frequent and involve so many social workers each time?

Answer by Councillor Lester

I note the point about the number of social workers and want this to be addressed. Assessments are necessary to ensure needs are being met.