

## Members' questions at Council – 18 December 2015

### Question from Councillor J Bartlett

#### Support for victims of sexual violence

##### Question 1

The UK government opted into the EU directive (Article 9) establishing the minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime including rape, sexual violence and childhood sexual abuse. This was formally adopted on 4 Oct 2012 with member states having until the 16 Nov 2015 to implement the directive. Can the cabinet member confirm what steps have been taken to meet these requirements to provide effective specialist support to victims of sexual violence within Herefordshire?

#### Answer from Councillor G Powell cabinet member economy and corporate services

Answer to question 1

There are two specialist providers of support for victims of rape, sexual violence and childhood sexual abuse for victims in Herefordshire; West Mercia Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC) <http://www.wmrsasc.org.uk/> and The Glade Sexual Assault Referral Centre (The Glade) <http://www.theglade.org.uk/>.

WMRSASC operates in Herefordshire and Worcestershire to offer specialist support to the victims of rape and sexual violence. Herefordshire services are free and available to survivors who have experienced any form of rape and/or sexual violence at any time in their lives. WMRSASC provides a telephone helpline for female and male survivors and their supporters, face to face counselling for survivors over the age of 11, an independent sexual violence advisory service for survivors over the age of 11, email support, signposting service and internal and external training. This service is funded by a police & crime commissioner grant and other grant awarding bodies.

The Glade, based in Bransford, Worcestershire is jointly funded by the Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS England. It is a dedicated centre which provides a comprehensive service to men, women and children who have been raped or sexually assaulted in the previous 28 days.

Services can be accessed via the police or by self-referral. The Glade offers support from trained professionals and support options may include a forensic medical examination to gather and store evidence, if appropriate, referrals for ongoing and long term support, advice about pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections and referrals to the local genito-urinary medicine clinic for full sexually transmitted infection screening.

The Glade provides a counselling service to its clients. Where appropriate, and with the victims consent, The Glade may make referrals to sexual health services, independent sexual violence advisors), GPs and local organisations

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that offer counselling. If consent is given, The Glade may also share information anonymously with the police about the assault, on the victim's behalf.

Counselling support is available for children under 11 years via the children & adolescent mental health services commissioned by Herefordshire CCG.

For further information please refer to Herefordshire facts & figures.

<https://factsandfigures.herefordshire.gov.uk/about-a-topic/community-safety/sexual-offences.aspx#Vic>

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### **Question from Councillor A Powers**

#### **Support for cultural services**

##### **Question 2**

In his House of Commons statement on the comprehensive spending review the Chancellor of the Exchequer said:

“One of the best investments we can make as a nation is in our extraordinary arts, museums, heritage, media and sport. £1 billion per annum adds £25 billion to our economy: not a bad return. Deep cuts are a false economy.”

Given this council's support for the county's City of Culture 2021 bid, given that the MP for Hereford and South Herefordshire is chair of the culture, media and sport select committee, and to avoid embarrassment to him and the county, will the cabinet member now recognise his chancellor's wisdom by honouring those words at local level and reversing the proposed cuts in funding to our libraries, museums and cultural services?

### **Answer from Councillor H Bramer cabinet member contracts and assets**

Answer to question 2

The reduction in government grant and the need to support those most in need in the county means we must continue to review spending and subsidy across all services.

Although ongoing revenue subsidy is being reduced, the authority is one of the few councils that have invested in the cultural sector in recent years including a purpose built archive centre to complement one of the best museum resource centres in the country. We continue to work with bodies such as the Courtyard to support their plans for development.

In response to the budget consultation we are working closely with the county's network of library user groups to explore a cost effective model for sustaining and improving the library service. In similar vein we are working with the Hereford library users group and associated groups on the opportunities for Hereford library setting aside £900k in the capital programme proposals before Council today to contribute to a community led solution for the library in Hereford. In respect of the wider museum service, work is

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continuing to explore income generation opportunities with a further report due for cabinet consideration in 2016.

As part of the bid for City of Culture Herefordshire should be proud of its achievements in the cultural sector. Rather than just reflect on the investments of the authority, we should celebrate the achievements of voluntary and community groups, businesses and small enterprises, and the significant contribution they have and will continue to make to the cultural life and economy of the county.

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### **Question from Councillor A Powers**

#### **Housing growth**

##### **Question 3**

We welcome the excellent news of the chancellor's support for Hereford's university project. NMiTE's business plan proposes that purpose-built accommodation will be built in the city for all its students – and up to 5000 are envisaged over the next 15 years - throughout their three years of study.

Can the cabinet member please explain how that accommodation, whether purpose-built or in the private rental sector, will be able to be provided, given the planned annual uplift in student numbers and the local plan core strategy's requirement for Hereford to provide over 3000 additional new homes, on non-strategic sites in the city, during the same period?

### **Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure**

Answer to question 3

The figure of 3,000 is subject to confirmation. The council will be modelling the likely impacts and constraints of the current trajectory taking into account the specific and unique characteristics of purpose-built student accommodation. We will utilise the Hereford area plan process to identify suitable locations for student accommodation within the city alongside other accommodation needed to meet the city's housing target. This process has begun and will take account of opportunities that may be less suitable for general needs housing, and associated parking/highways requirements.

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### **Question from Councillor J Kenyon**

#### **Parking strategy for Hereford**

##### **Question 4**

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Can the cabinet member please clarify the parking strategy for Hereford, and the timing of delivery for its various planned elements, as outlined in the draft local transport plan 2016-31? What alternative sites are proposed in the short term to the loss of parking at Merton Meadow (including for coaches) and the former Rockfield DIY site at Station Approach?

### **Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure**

Answer to question 4

The proposed car parking policy is set out on pages 26 to 28 of the draft local transport plan, currently undergoing consultation and available at:

[https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/3849015/ltp4\\_policy\\_consultation\\_draft.pdf](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/3849015/ltp4_policy_consultation_draft.pdf)

This draft policy highlights that the provision of car parking will proceed alongside the redevelopment proposals within the city. The draft policy highlights that the council will seek to ensure there is sufficient overall supply of car parking spaces to meet the demands of the city and where necessary will provide replacement car parking in suitable locations. There is sufficient capacity in the city parking stock to accommodate the loss of spaces during the construction of the link road and improved signage will be introduced to ensure people know where those other car parks are. This includes sufficient coach parking at Hereford leisure pool.

As the regeneration proposals for the city, including the urban village, progress, the demand and supply of parking will be monitored and if necessary, the provision of additional parking spaces will be delivered as part of an integrated redevelopment of the area. The timescales for this provision will depend upon how quickly the regeneration proposals come forward and the locations for new car parking will be determined at that time.

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### **Question from Councillor M Lloyd-Hayes**

#### **Smallholdings**

#### **Question 5**

The report by Herefordshire Council's consultants Fisher German was provided, in redacted form, to the general overview and scrutiny committee's task and finish group to inform their work and recommendations on the future of the council's smallholdings estate. Yet the report was deemed not to have been an informative to the cabinet decision on 3 December to sell the entire estate.

The council refused the NFU's Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) request to see the report.

Can the cabinet member please explain:

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- a) why the Fisher German report, even in its redacted form, was not made available to other elected members
- b) why it was not an informative to the cabinet decision, and
- c) why the EIR request by the NFU was refused.

### **Answer from Councillor H Bramer cabinet member contracts and assets**

Answer to question 5

The redacted report (which was received in its draft form some 18 months ago and not taken further given the then alteration to the review's timetable and focus and is therefore an incomplete and outdated draft) was not relevant to the decision in hand.

A background paper is defined by law as being one considered by the proper officer to be a previously unpublished paper which a) contains facts or matters on which the report is based and b) was relied on to a material extent in the drafting of the report. Neither of these criteria applied in this case.

The draft report was exempted from publication under Regulation 12(5) (e) of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 because disclosure is, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of the smallholding tenants and Herefordshire Council; this was explained to the NFU when responding to their request.

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### **Question from Councillor E Harvey**

#### **Local transport plan consultation**

##### **Question 6**

On 23rd November a public consultation was opened on the county's 15 year transport plan. It runs until 31st December. Unfortunately it won't be until this week (more than half way through the five week consultation period) that hard copies of the plan are made available to the public in the council's information centres. A third of the consultation period takes place during the Christmas holidays. At least a week of which will see all the information centres closed – so that means that hard copies will be unavailable to the public for two thirds of the duration of the consultation period.

The council's website states: "Consultations are an essential part of policy development. They provide the necessary feedback on proposals for legislative change in local government. As well as having your say, public feedback makes local government's policies more informed and effective."

Given the length of time Herefordshire residents have waited to see and comment upon the transport plan for the county, and the store the council sets by such commentary:

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- a) will the cabinet member agree to extend the consultation period for this document by at least the four weeks for which hard copies of the documentation have not been available to the public? and
- b) will he consult with the council's parish liaison officer to determine whether a further extension of the timescale is necessary to enable all parish councils - both urban and rural, to have the opportunity to meet and to consider their responses to the proposals?

### **Answer from Councillor P Price cabinet member infrastructure**

Answer to question 6

I would refer Councillor Harvey to the answer provided to public question number 9.

All parish councils have been advised of this extension which provides them with sufficient opportunity to consider making a response.

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