

**PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 15 February 2018****Question 1**

Mr A Morawiecki, Breinton

The Hereford Transport Package in appendix B shows a cost of just £510,000 when the previous report to Cabinet showed that the spend on this project in 2017/18 was over £2.1million. If the council is seeking to capitalise interest on capital projects, why is it that money taken from revenue budgets and spent on capital projects is not capitalised and reflected in the total cost of the capital scheme?

**Response from Cabinet Member Finance, Housing and Corporate Services**

The requirements for council accounting allow for the costs in relation to schemes that have progressed to detailed options stage to be capitalised. The costs of developing options prior to this stage, including the costs of initial design and feasibility work, must be funded from revenue budgets – some of these costs may subsequently be recharged to capital in accordance with the accounting rules.

**Supplementary Question**

With over £5m planned to be spent on consultants for the bypass, how is this best use of tax payers' money compared to investment in sustainable transport measures?

**Response from Cabinet Member Finance, Housing and Corporate Services**

In any investment of this size and scale we would expect to spend at that level on consultants, taking it through to the best costed scheme.

**Question 2**

Ms K Poulter, Hereford

Many local residents directly affected by the Council's proposed Hereford Bypass were completely unaware of the Cabinet meeting in January 2018 as they never received any letters from the Council until a week prior to the consultation starting. How could the council or its consultants not know the addresses of all those directly affected by the proposed Bypass Routes?

**Response from Cabinet Member Infrastructure**

Notification of the intention to discuss route options within the approved core strategy corridor at the January meeting of Cabinet had been in the public domain for some months. However to ensure that those residents and businesses potentially affected were fully informed our contractor had been instructed to write to all landowners within the core strategy corridor at that time to advise them of the Cabinet meeting. Regrettably there was an administrative error in their mailing process. I am very sorry that this has happened and for any stress or upset this has caused. The matter has been investigated

and we have received the following apology and assurance from Balfour Beatty Living Places Managing Director Steve Helliwell:

“On behalf of BBLP I would like to offer my deepest apologies. A mistake was made during the mailing process which meant that a large proportion of the letters due to be mailed out were not. This was down to human error and I'd like to assure you that our processes have been reviewed and we have taken steps to ensure this does not happen again. It was a matter of importance to Herefordshire Council and councillors that you were informed before the information was in the public domain and if this was not the case, I'd like to sincerely apologise.”

### **Question 3**

Mrs V Wegg-Prosser, Breinton

The corporate budget report authorises the movement of £384,000 from the Severe Weather Reserve to the [City] Link Road which is to date exceeding its original £27m budget by £7m. One month ago, the Cabinet report stated that £383,582 of this reserve was being allocated to the Hereford Transport Package. Why is the £1.3 million Severe Weather Reserve being used to fund capital projects?

### **Response from Cabinet Member Finance, Housing and Corporate Services**

You will note from the supplement to the agenda published on 13 February that reference to the city link road should have read the Hereford Transport Package.

The city link road is not exceeding its approved budget.

External funding sources are being pursued to support the costs of developing the Hereford Transport Package; the use of earmarked reserves such as the severe weather reserve pending the outcome of those reduced calls on the in-year revenue budget. Once the project reaches a particular point in development council accounting rules allow costs to be capitalised and the revenue budgets may be reimbursed accordingly.

### **Question 4**

Dr M Whalley, Hereford

The council's vision for SEND schools (internally debated since June 2016) URGENTLY needs to be publicly disseminated.

Options 3 /5 propose the relocation of Barrs Court (with its inadequate and overcrowded site) onto the same campus as the new Free School SEN provision. Blackmarston could extend its early intervention and assessment provision for the most vulnerable and challenged children. When will the council consult with families on these critical issues?

### **Response from Cabinet Member Young People and Children's Wellbeing**

The council's adopted Schools Capital Investment Strategy sets out our strategic approach and the principles that will underpin and guide our decision-making. This applies to special schools as well as maintained schools. Using these principles, the

council has been successful in drawing in funding to support the special school sector, with the 16-19 SEN free school.

We have been working with SEND schools and education settings to identify and prioritise need using the principles in the Schools Capital Investment Strategy. As these discussions progress and we bring forward individual priority projects we will consult with families to ensure the projects are developed with the benefit of their views. I will ensure that officers contact head teachers and chairs of governors of the special schools to make clear the next steps.

#### Supplementary Question

How will Herefordshire council ensure that families have an input and that views are taken into account?

#### **Response from cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing**

We understand, and when I say about the input process to the capital strategy it does mean all of those inputs. It is a discussion that needs to be between all stakeholders - governors, schools, families etc. I will be asking officers to make sure all involved are fully aware of what the next steps are.