

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 27 September 2018

Question 1

Mrs Wegg-Prosser, Breinton

To: cabinet member, infrastructure

It's good to note the publication this August of the combined 2016/17 and 2017/18 'Annual' Progress Report on the Local Transport Plan with its reference to 'significantly improved access to the Hereford railway station', but there is much more to be done in this area for which around £7M is available from the remaining budget for the City Centre Transport Package. Is it the building design requirements for the new University that are delaying the roll-out of the current plans for a transport hub at the station, improved safe cycling and walking routes throughout the City, and a realistic Master Plan for Hereford?

Response

There is no delay to our plans to improve Hereford's infrastructure. The Hereford City Centre Transport Package includes a range of public realm projects which will regenerate the areas of Commercial Road, Blueschool and Newmarket Street as well as the provision of a new high quality transport hub at the train station. These public realm improvements will build on the improvements delivered on Newmarket Street to ensure improvements to the public realm consistent with Widemarsh Street and High Street and the works currently ongoing in Commercial Street. Consultation on the proposals for a transport hub and improvements from there to the city centre on Commercial Road and Blueschool Street are due to be consulted on in the New Year. In addition we have been supporting the work of the Hereford BID team who have implemented a programme of events and promotions and are developing wayfinding signage, bringing people into the in the city centre.

Work is currently underway on Commercial Street to improve the city centre public realm for visitors. This follows similar investment and improvements in High Street. Further improvements are planned in coming years as part of the overall plan for High Town improvements consulted on in 2016. Additionally, following consultation carried out in 2017, improvements in St Owen Street to provide a key link for cyclists into the city centre from the east of Hereford will, subject to due legal process, be delivered next spring.

The Hereford Area Plan, currently in development, will include policies and proposals for growth in the historic city of Hereford including specific proposals for housing, employment and urban regeneration. In doing so, the plan must also protect and enhance its attractive built and natural environment, providing for its current and future community needs. The consultation on housing and employment site options for inclusion in the plan is underway and closes on 8 October; the plan is currently scheduled for adoption in the summer of 2020.

The council is helping to facilitate the development of NMiTE, the new university, in Hereford by supporting the planning process, transport, property, economic, and urban/city planning, ensuring the city is as fit as possible to support a university which will increase the range of higher education provision for our young people, improve the balance between business demand and the supply of skills and qualifications locally, and make a significant contribution to the wider Herefordshire economy.

Question 2

Mr A Morawiecki, Breinton

To: cabinet member, infrastructure

The Cabinet meeting in July approved spend of up to £2.45million in respect of further developing the proposed Hereford "Bypass" project. Would the cabinet member please confirm how much money was spent on the cost of expert witnesses attending and giving advice at various committee and cabinet meetings in 2017 and 2018?

Response

The £2.45m approved in the Hereford Transport Package July cabinet will fund the further development of the red route approved by cabinet as the preferred route at that meeting subsequent to that decision.

Cabinet meetings have not been attended by 'expert witnesses'. In accordance with normal practice, officers of the council and contracted consultants have been in attendance to provide any technical detail cabinet members may have required to support the reports being considered. Attending these meetings forms part of officers' duties and the service we procure from our partner contractors BBLP and WSP; it is not an additional cost to the project.

Question 3

Mrs E Morawiecka, Breinton

To: cabinet member, infrastructure

In Appendix B - the Capital Budget forecast for 2018/19, the South Wye Transport Package budget for 2018/19 is £15.5million with £4.5million spent in the period to the end of May 2018. I calculate that this would bring the total project spend to date to £9.5million. Would the Cabinet member please explain how much of this spend has been funded by the Department for Transport over the whole project to date?

Response

The figures as represented in the question do not accurately reflect those set out in Appendix B. The £4.5m quoted in the question as being spent in the first two months of this year is the forecast spend on the South Wye Transport Package for the financial year 2018/2019. Total spend to date on the project is £5.014m. The council receives no funding direct from the Department for Transport but from the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership, which has to date released £3.844m.