

Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from members of the public

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mrs Monkley, Much Marcle	<p>On March 8th, Herefordshire Council declared a Climate Emergency. Since then people in India have left their homes due to extreme temperatures and drought. Anchorage, Alaska saw 90 degree F on July 4th. Europe has experienced a severe heatwave with Germany, France, Poland and the Czech Republic all recording their highest-ever June temperatures. WWF has warned of risks from new faster-spreading 'superfires' in the wake of heatwaves and droughts. On 30th June UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, "The climate emergency is evolving faster than predicted. We must accelerate our response, with ambition and urgency. This is the battle for our lives. And it's a battle we can and must win."</p> <p>Given these facts, please explain why the Climate Emergency does not feature in the Chief Executive's Objectives?</p>	Leader
<p>Response: Thank you for raising such an important issue.</p> <p>The Chief Executive's objectives were established by the previous Leader of the Council, following consultation with the then political group leaders. They are not intended to capture everything the Chief Executive does and I know from the response given in answer to a question asked by Mr Palgrave at the March meeting of Council, this council has already taken action to reduce its carbon footprint and improve flood management. However, this administration wishes to give a stronger focus to addressing the climate emergency. Following the resolution passed by Council in March, there is a briefing next week for all councillors on carbon management, in preparation for a members' full day event in the autumn. The council also has a new web page titled 'Climate' with more information about achievements to date and plans for further action.</p> <p>I will be discussing with the Chief Executive how best to reflect this stronger focus, and any other policy changes we wish to pursue, in his objectives going forwards. Any changes to the objectives will be reported to Council in the usual way.</p>			
PQ 2	Mr McKay, Leominster	<p>May I please ask if an addendum could be raised to the HC informative "Parking enforcement and appeals operational guidance" (viewable at https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/directory_record/4853/parking_enforcement_and_appeals_operational_guidance) to cover traffic regulation issues other than parking, following a request from local communities and/or the police that address specific safety, traffic congestion or quality of life issues, such as those mentioned at https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200196/roads/204/traffic_regulations/2 , being speed, one way, weight restriction, plus restricted access both with and without cycling permitted, providing similar guidance concerning enforcement by the Police or your own Civil Enforcement Officers, filling a 'gap' in the operational guidance?</p>	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
<p>Response:</p>			

The enforcement of what are known as 'moving vehicle offences' (speed, one way, weight restriction, and restricted access) are matters that fall to the Police to enforce. The council and its civil enforcement officers do not currently have jurisdiction to do so. Further information about that enforcement can be found on the community safety partnership pages of our website, and I will ask officers to include a paragraph in the parking enforcement policy to make this point clear.

Although the Traffic Management Act 2004 introduced civil enforcement of traffic offences in England and Wales, and Part 6 of that Act allows councils outside of London to enforce various moving traffic offences, further secondary legislation is needed to enable councils to implement those powers (in London the powers already exist under different legislation). The Local Government Association has been calling for this further legislation since 2004. Herefordshire Council would welcome being able to use such effective traffic management powers; we will continue to work with the Local Government Association to press for this secondary legislation.

PQ 3	Mrs Palgrave, How Caple	The latest Air Quality Annual Status Report (March 2019) records that for the pollutant NO2: "All sites in the [Hereford] AQMA generally have shown a downward trend and levels have reduced from 2011 – 2017." The report lists data showing that none of the Hereford AQMA monitoring sites have exceeded the statutory objective level for NO2 since 2014. In comparison however, NO2 levels recorded in the Leominster AQMA are not falling, the report saying that the new Bargates monitoring site recorded the highest concentrations of NO2 in the country in 2017, and that it was the only monitoring site in the county to exceed the objective level that year. It is very encouraging to see such good progress has been made in reducing air pollution in the centre of Hereford, but what is being done to improve air quality in Leominster?	Cabinet member housing, regulatory services and community safety
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Response:

Herefordshire Council has been monitoring air pollution levels for over 20 years and has declared Air Quality Management Areas in both Hereford and Leominster due to breaches of the traffic pollutant, nitrogen dioxide. Each of these areas have action plans.

Although the pollution levels in Hereford appear to have come down in recent years, we need to be cautious about this because some of the monitoring locations had to be altered in 2018, arguably making the situation appear better than it really was, particularly along Victoria Street. That said, the new link road does seem to have had a positive effect on pollution levels along Edgar Street, which we are pleased about. We must also be aware that our current core strategy proposes additional housing sites in Hereford, which will inevitably increase traffic and add to the city's pollution levels, unless the traffic on the city roads can be reduced by other initiatives, possibly including new road infrastructure to alleviate this.

I thank Mrs Palgrave for finding a typo in the last Annual Status Report which highlighted Leominster as having the worst air quality in the UK – the text has now been corrected as it should have read '...Site 61a (29 Bargates) and the newest monitoring site 61b (35 Bargates) have recorded the highest concentrations of NO² in the county in 2017.' and not "country". So please be reassured that Leominster's air quality is not the worst in the country.

The Bargates area in Leominster continues to record Herefordshire's highest pollution levels, which is primarily due to the high percentage of HGVs on the A44 as well as the queuing traffic at the traffic lights there. The close proximity of the adjacent housing combined with accelerating traffic up a slight incline in the road also adds to this problem. This combination is not uncommon in many of the UK's market towns, who also have declared air quality management areas. However, this is not a situation that we believe is acceptable, especially bearing in mind the proximity of housing and the numbers of pedestrians that use this route.

We have therefore looked at encouraging modal shift in Leominster to walking, cycling and public transport, through historic s.106 contributions, combined with the resequencing of the traffic lights to reduce the idling traffic. As long as HGVs percentage remain high and fuelled by diesel it would appear that the local transport plan and core strategy's proposed east-west Leominster bypass may be the only way to truly meet the government targets in Leominster. As this is unlikely to be achieved in the short to medium term, I have asked officers to update the 2014 Air Quality Action Plan to include a focus on active travel measures, reducing the number of in-town car journeys and encouraging pedestrians to use alternative routes within the town.

PQ 4	Mr Palgrave, How Caple	The 2018 Report 'Population of Herefordshire' includes population projections drawn from the 2016-based Subnational population projections (SNPPs), published 24 May 2018 by the Office for National Statistics. They suggest slower growth than the previous (2014-based) projections. The report also comments, "If recent trends in migration were to continue, natural ageing would see Herefordshire's working age population fall four per cent from 112,700 to 108,500 in 2036 – with the sharpest decline after 2025 when the second generation of 'baby boomers', those born in the 1960s, begin to move into retirement age." This indicates the number of new homes now required to meet demand, is lower than the 16,500 county-wide figure in the current Core Strategy which I understand was based on the ONS 2012 projections. Will the latest population projections be taken into account when the Core Strategy is reviewed?	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
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Response:
The housing target set out in the adopted Core Strategy was based on the 2012-based Sub-National Population Projections with an upward adjustment to accommodate economic growth over the plan period.

The Core Strategy review will need to incorporate a new local assessment of housing need in accordance with the advice as set out in national planning policy guidance. The guidance includes a standard method for assessing local housing need using a formula to identify the minimum number of homes expected to be planned for. The standard method uses the 2014-based household projections which the government indicate will provide stability for planning authorities and communities, ensure that historic under-delivery and declining affordability are reflected, and be consistent with the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. Although this method is not mandatory, the national guidance makes clear that an alternative method should only be used in exceptional circumstances and, if an alternative approach is used, councils will be scrutinised more closely at examination. The guidance is specific in advising that the 2016-based household projections are not appropriate for use with the recommended standard method.

PQ 5	Mr Booth, Hereford	<p>I understand that the Council has no housing stock and that it has little or no control over the supply of 'supported' housing or their allocation and occupancy – even with 'local' Housing Associations – particularly in the City.</p> <p>In view of the 61 commitments in 'The Rough Sleeping Strategy' (which ends rough sleeping by 2027), the Homes England 'Making Homes Happen' acceleration on house building and all the funding streams available - including that being provided by Legal & General Affordable Homes (report in <i>The Times</i> 17th April & 13th June) - should the Council as a matter of urgency have a strategy in place to benefit from all this housing activity?</p> <p>The recent consultation 'Tackling homelessness together', ought to be a wake-up call for partnership working to provide homes of the right type and in the right place.</p>	Cabinet member housing, regulatory services and community safety
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Response:

Thank you for your question highlighting the important issue of tackling homelessness and the key publications and recent press coverage. Whilst the Council has both a Housing Strategy and Homelessness Prevention Strategy that together set out the strategic approach to tackling the key housing challenges including new development and rough sleeping, both strategies are scheduled for renewal in the coming year. I will ensure the points you have made are considered during this review so that Herefordshire can remain responsive to changes in policy and funding. We await with interest the Government's response to the recent consultation and look forward to any proposals or guidance which are announced by Government which could assist in tackling these issues in Herefordshire. In the meantime we will continue to work closely with partners including national agencies such as Homes England, housing associations, private developers and voluntary sector organisations both to enable the development of market and affordable housing, and in tackling homelessness.

PQ 6	Ms Steel, Hereford	<p>Herefordshire's sexual health service was run by Worcester Health and Care Trust until 31st March 2019. In addition to work around contraception, terminations and STIs, it also offered education/training to young people, GPs and nurses, and liaised with the police and social services to help safeguard victims of sexual assault.</p> <p>From 1st April, these services have been run by Solutions4Health, a company with no experience of running a clinical sexual health service. Since April a large number of long serving and experienced clinical practitioners have left the service allegedly over concerns for the clinical safety of the new service.</p> <p>Will the Council undertake an immediate review of its contract with Solutions4Health, looking at clinical practices, staffing levels and the range of services offered, to ensure that there is no detrimental effect on the health and well-being of people in Herefordshire?</p>	Cabinet member health and adult wellbeing
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Response:

A comprehensive commissioning and procurement process was undertaken by Herefordshire Council which resulted in Solutions 4 Health being awarded the new contract to deliver sexual health services in Herefordshire from April 1st 2019. Solutions 4 Health provides over 30 services to over 100,000 people. They employ over 360 healthcare staff and have a number of doctors and nurses, 60% of whom have TUPE'd from the NHS, keeping their terms and conditions.

The new service provider initially operated from temporary accommodation but has since moved to its permanent address of 15 St Owen Street. The new service offers improved opening hours for Herefordshire residents and now operates across 5 days per week. The service also offers walk in clinics, young person's clinical support and an appointment system. Since the new service was established there has been an increase in access to the on line STI testing service from local residents enabling them to seek access and support from within their own homes.

During the transitional phase, commissioners are in contact with Solutions 4 Health on a weekly basis and hold monthly contract review meetings with the service. The Care Quality Commission (CQC), the regulatory body for the service, has given assurances that the service is clinically safe and meets all the necessary regulations.

We recognise the service is new to Herefordshire and accept that transitioning from one provider to another can sometimes be unsettling. We do however consider the early signs for this service as overall positive. This position is supported by the recent feedback from the CQC and also from positive feedback from Public Health England's regional lead for sexual health services who visited the new provider on 9th July and reported being "very encouraged to see

what Herefordshire Council and Solutions 4 Health are already achieving in the county, with plenty more still to come". As a result, there are no current plans to review the service.