

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 26 September

Question 1

Ms J Morris, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

In addition to their public realm contract, BBLP and WSP have provided additional professional expertise at council meetings as well as extra design resources and environmental assessments. The Council claims that every new fee proposals from these companies, which is treated as an extension to the existing contract, is reviewed and monitored and subjected to detailed change control mechanisms. With the SWTP still not on the new Verto Capital monitoring system in March 2019 and over £4.million spent in professional fees with these companies, would the cabinet member please explain what work has been done to confirm that these additional contract costs are within the detailed, up to date budgets and are competitive despite not going out to tender.

Response

The SWTP project management and design functions provided by BBLP are services which are within scope of defined services of the Public Realm Service Delivery contract and these services were therefore commissioned using this contract and are not an extension as the question suggests. The process of commissioning this work involves detailed scrutiny of fee proposals before commissioning and any changes to commissions during delivery are managed through the contract change control mechanism.

Approved budgets, spend and forecast spend reports are monitored as part of the project management of the programme as well as being reported to cabinet. The £4m figure referred to in the question is not recognised. The scheme is managed using the councils VERTO system and the current forecast project cost remains within the £35m budget set out in the 2014 Strategic Outline Business Case for the project. In addition, each report informing decisions about this project and published on the council's website contains a summary of scheme budget and cost forecasts.

Question 2

Mrs J Tonge, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Can the cabinet member confirm that the time savings quoted for a bypass in the 2018 HTP Consultation leaflets were 'made up', and not the result of any detailed modelling?

Response

No I cannot. Officers have confirmed to me that the journey time statements set out in the 2018 Hereford Transport Package public consultation materials were based on traffic modelling outputs available at the time of publication taken from the traffic model established for Hereford. This model has been developed in accordance with Department for Transport specification and can be used to understand how a wide range of transport projects, including walking, cycling public transport and road schemes would work.

The consultation brochure compares a journey time on the A49 in 2032 with the bypass scheme open to a present day journey time on the A49. The information presented is based on the 2016 traffic model. Should the bypass scheme progress, traffic modelling work would continue and

further traffic modelling information would be set out in future public consultations about the scheme.

Question 3

Dr N Geeson, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

At the last meeting of the General Scrutiny Committee (23 July 2019) I asked about the Hereford Transport Package Consultation on Walking/Cycling/Buses that had closed on 11th March 2019, and when the results of the consultation would be available. I was told that “the HTP consultation feedback is being analysed and a report summarising this feedback will be presented to the new administration cabinet later this summer and will published on the council’s website at that time”. Is this important feedback now available please?

Response

I agree that it is important to publish the results of this consultation.

The public consultation report was not completed whilst the new cabinet took some time to review the Hereford Transport & South Wye Transport projects following the election. However the report will be finalised and published shortly.

Supplementary question

I had asked about the results of the Hereford Transport Package public consultation on walking, cycling and buses that was back in March 2019 and these are still not published. The transport sector currently accounts for around 27% of all greenhouse gas emissions so in addressing the climate emergency how fast do councillors expect to promote more widespread use of clean electric buses, cycling and walking to reduce emissions across Herefordshire?

Response

The short answer is as quickly as possible. We are in a period of pause and review of the two major transport schemes but that does not prohibit us from looking at the schemes and the type of sustainable transport that we have always espoused we would look at and is a major intention of ours. We are in the process of putting capital bids in for budget consultations in February. That should give an indication of how we are moving forward. It remains a huge and very important ambition. It is easy to talk about sustainable transport but if it is not prioritised it will not happen, we intend to do that.

Question 4

Mrs J Richards, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that the number of lorries (HGV’s) crossing the Greyfriars Bridge has actually fallen consistently since 2000?

Response

No it is not possible for me to confirm this. We don’t have automatic count information which separates out HGVs from other vehicles from before 2010. The data we do have access to from the permanent traffic counter on Greyfriars Bridge records the number of vehicles greater than

6.6m (which would include HGVs). We have this data from 2010 from this recorder which shows that the number of such vehicles has fluctuated over this period. This is set out in the following table:

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
AADT (all vehicles)	46522	46304	46388	45735	46464	46701	46386	46018	45511
AADT >6.6m	5350	5337	5107	5096	5285	5098	5149	5338	5552
AADT <6.6m	41172	40968	41282	40641	41179	41604	41237	40680	39959

Supplementary Question

Thank you for your reply, which was surprising, as I have seen graphs from the Department for Transport that do show a decrease in HGVs over Greyfriars Bridge. However, if we can at least agree there has been no particular increase in HGVs over Greyfriars Bridge since 2000, can we also agree that the number of HGVs over the Greyfriars Bridge is not relevant to the need for a bypass or not.

Response

You are right that there are different figures available. The figures the council use are on the counter that has been in place since 2010. It does not separate HGVs from other vehicles over 6.6m long so includes things like vans and smaller lorries but the relative numbers of anything over 6.5m is comparatively small compared to the traffic movements over the bridge and that is something that is important to remember.

Question 5

Ms H Thomas, H Weston and Sons Ltd, Much Marcle

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

If there is no bypass for Hereford City, is Herefordshire Council now advocating that all HGVs must drive through Hereford City Centre to get to their onward destination?

Response

No this is certainly not what I am advocating. I took the decision to pause the bypass scheme to allow further time to review the scheme (which would include HGV movements and impacts) in more detail. I am concerned that as currently developed, the bypass and the southern link road may not be compatible with the climate challenge, carbon reduction and emerging policy and that there may be other options that could deliver transport and growth objectives and these should be considered. All options need to be considered as we look to the long term and towards providing a high quality, integrated and low carbon transport system for the whole of Herefordshire, not just for the immediate future but for generations to come.

Question 6

Mr R Palgrave, How Caple

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

At Council's Cabinet meeting in January 2018, the minutes report: "The cabinet member infrastructure responded that the eastern route for a bypass was not a viable alternative and that the enterprise zone was booming. The cabinet member economy and communications stated that unemployment in Herefordshire was at an historic low and that the enterprise zone had been highly successful." Does the current cabinet member for Infrastructure believe that in the subsequent 18 months, the Hereford Enterprise zone has gone from boom to bust and that the delay in completing the Southern Link Road is to blame?

Response

I do not believe the Hereford Enterprise Zone to be 'bust'. It continues to be highly successful, a number of major developments are underway such as the £9million development of the Cyber Quarter - Midlands Centre for Cyber Security (through a joint venture between the council and the University of Wolverhampton) and the £7 million development of business incubation space in the former World War One Shell Store.

The council recently approved £5m of funding in August to support the next phase of infrastructure works required to bring brownfield sites back into economic use, in response to a high demand for business space on the Enterprise Zone.

Supplementary question

As I am sure you know, planning permission for the Southern Link Road (SLR) was granted in July 2016. The following May amendments were made to the environmental impact assessment regulations, requiring that development proposals should include an assessment of their climate impacts both from construction and when in operation. No such assessment has been made for the SLR because its planning permission pre-dated this change to the regulations. In 2015, the committee on climate change prepared a report for government which provided a methodology to assess the climate impacts arising from the construction of large infrastructure like roads. Based on this methodology the construction emissions of the SLR would be in the order of 2,500 tonnes of CO2 equivalent and those of the Hereford Bypass would be around 19,000 tonnes. For context the reported emissions in 2018/19 from the councils own estate were 15,600 tonnes. Given the declared climate emergency and the aspiration for the council to be carbon neutral by 2030, will you please ensure that the construction climate impacts of the SLR and the bypass are fully considered as part of the pause and review process you have initiated.

Response

I can confirm that we will be applying any current legislation or requirements to our review. We intend to look at the data as it was presented and as it is presented against climate emergency declarations both nationally and locally and we will take into account any updates on regulations.

Question 7

Mr D Hinksman, H Weston and Sons Ltd, Much Marcle

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

If there is no bypass are the council confident that the alternative routes that drivers currently take to avoid congestion – Holme Lacy bridge, Mordiford Bridge and Bridge Sollers bridge – are routes capable of carrying this additional traffic; not only cars but HGVs too. Increasingly Mordiford bridge is gridlocked as lorries try to negotiate it.

Response

I have not at any time since my election suggested that the rural routes you refer to in your question are the appropriate routes for HGV traffic to travel on and there are already restrictions in place which prevents this on the route through Holme Lacy and Mordiford. As I set out in my response to question 5 the decision to pause and review the bypass scheme will enable options to be considered for a high quality, integrated and low carbon transport system for the whole of Herefordshire.

Question 8

Mr A Morwiecki, Breinton

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

The 2017 investigation into Blueschool House required capital projects to have a fully auditable budget with costs tracked against spend. The Council website reports that in response “the chief executive made a statement in which he:

- apologised unreservedly for what had taken place
- accepted all the recommendations made by the auditors”.

The November 2018 public inquiry on the SWTP heard the only budget available was the 2014 Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). The public have since been told that the 2014 SOBC budget was not an “approved budget”. The funding for the SWTP ATMs has been cut from £8million to £5million and professional fees of £4.7Million are over the £750,000 budget in the SOBC. If the Chief Executive agreed the Internal Audit recommendations, where is the approved detailed budget for the SWTP with costs tracked against it?

Response

Approved budget, actual spend and spend forecasts for the South Wye Transport Project are monitored as part of the project management of the project as well as being reported to cabinet. The scheme is managed using the councils VERTO system and the current forecast project cost remains within the £35m budget set out in the 2014 Strategic Outline Business Case. In addition, each report informing decisions about this project and published on the council’s website contains a summary of scheme budget and cost forecasts. The ATM budget has not been cut from £8m to £5m as your question suggests. The 2014 SWTP SOBC document sets out an estimated ATM cost of £5m within the overall scheme budget of £35m and this has not been reduced. I am not clear what the figure of £750k in your question refers to. It is not from the 2014 SOBC document and it is not correct to suggest that this figure represents the current approved budget for SWTP fees.

Question 9

Mr E Morfett, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Can the Councillor for infrastructure confirm that average annual traffic passing over Greyfriars Bridge has barely increased since 2000 and remained around 45,000 per day since 2012, based on Department of Transport road counts?

See: (<https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/manualcountpoints/36537>).

Response

The council holds automatic traffic count data for the Greyfriars Bridge dating back to 2006. In assessing changing flows since this period we have commenced at 2007 as this is the point at

which the ASDA roundabout work was completed. The table below summarises the data for Greyfriars Bridge which is held by the council. This indicates that traffic flows have fluctuated slightly between a high of 47,133 and low of 45,511 during this period.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
AADT (all vehicles)	46,412	47,133	46,734	46,522	46,304	46,388	45,735	46,464	46,701	46,386	46,018	45,511

Supplementary question

In reviewing the council's executive response to the climate emergency declaration I was disappointed to find after months of research it lacked vision and a strategy to focus effort on actions to address the issues. My concern is that this council, like Oxford, will pay lip service to the climate emergency while pursuing policies that double transport emissions for car dependent housing estates and increase road capacity. The key elements lacking in this councils executive response to the emergency declaration in my opinion are: a strategy and timeline to reduce our carbon footprint in areas of greatest impact, namely power generation consumption and transport emissions; developed economic cost and benefit analysis of such steps including congestion charging, electric bus fleets, low emission zone levies and commuter parking charges; funding to ensure a robust response to take positive actions like the green bond initiative that enables cities to finance green infrastructure through access to public markets. My question is what is the vision of this council to achieve rapid CO2 and NOX reduction and what steps will it take in the near term to achieve this and how will it fund this important strategic development to protect future generations.

Response

My understanding of the response that we have provided today is that it is a response to the motion passed unanimously in March. The appendix gives a bit more meat, perhaps a bit more oomph that you were expecting, and we will then have a policy document that will follow that which will have the detail worked out and pretty much cover the sort of responses you are requiring. In terms of what our commitment is to addressing climate change and the emergency and whether it is lip service or not, it is not. This council is determined to uphold the unanimous declaration and I commend the conservatives in the previous administration for follow through so strongly on that and enabling that to be passed on the day. I comment them also on the Core Strategy, which in fact has as a predominant aspiration to reduce dependency on the car. I think that we will try as an administration to match those lofty ambitions and add some detail of our own in light of the new emergencies.

Question 10

Mr M Churchward, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Can the Cabinet member confirm that Highways England did not require a cap on vehicle traffic leaving Asda or the Old Market shopping development but did so for the HEZ?

Response

The ASDA food store and Oldmarket development did not have an LDO associated with them. The ASDA food store was permitted in March 2005 as part of a planning application for a number of uses whilst the outline planning permission for the Old Market shopping development was permitted in 2011. There were no "traffic caps" required by the Highways Agency as part of these permissions but the planning application for each included a detailed assessment of traffic that

would be generated by the development, the impact on the highway network including the trunk road network and mitigation works to ensure there was no detriment as a result of the development – this involved junction improvements as part of the Asda development.

The Hereford Enterprise Zone Local Development Order contributes to the development of Hereford Enterprise Zone by applying simplifying planning arrangements to avoid the need for individual planning applications where proposals accord with the conditions imposed by the LDO. The conditions of the LDO exclude development that would either on its own or in combination with other development lead to an increase in morning and afternoon peak hour trip generation above a trip limit agreed between Herefordshire Council and Highways England in a separate Memorandum of Understanding.

However, the LDO does not prevent development taking place which is not expressly permitted through the Order. Proposals for such development would be subject to the normal planning application process and may proceed if planning permission is granted. In addition, proposals which constitute permitted development would still be able to proceed without the need for planning permission from Herefordshire Council whether covered by this LDO or not.

Question 11

Mr D Allison, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Can the Cabinet member confirm that the overall traffic across the bridge (@45000 annual average daily flow) has not increased since 2012 and barely increased since 2000?

Response

Please see the response to question 9.

Question 12

Ms L Lewis, Breinton

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Can the Cabinet member confirm that Highway England's own figures show that Herefordshire is in the lowest possible category for businesses dependent on the on the strategic road network?

Response

Highways England has identified Herefordshire as a county with 0-3% forecast growth (2015-2030) in employment in Strategic Road Network-reliant sectors. This is however, not the lowest categorisation, with some parts of the country having less than 0% reliance on the SRN.

Question 13

Ms N Eyles, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

From Freedom of Information requests on the SWTP I note that there is an email in January 2019 from the Marches LEP asking the Head of Infrastructure of Herefordshire Council to re-profile

“the outputs for housing units and jobs created” to bring them forward from 2032/33. The Growth Deal funding agreement between Herefordshire Council & Shropshire Council (for the Marches LEP) showed that the road scheme would be completed in 2018/19 and would do nothing to improve journey times; congestion or pollution. What evidence is available to support the request by the Dept for Transport that, despite the delays on this project, that these jobs and new houses will now be delivered ahead of 2032/33?

Response

The request came from the Marches LEP and not from the Department for Transport as the question suggests. It is not unusual for us to review output dates with funders over the life of a project.

It was not requested because the programme for the delivery of scheme has changed from that set out in the original contract. It is not unusual for the programme of a project of this size to change as events occur which were not originally anticipated. The SWTP scheme programme has been updated regularly and programme updates have been provided and agreed every quarter to the Department for Transport and the Marches LEP since the project began.

Question 14

Ms K Sharp, Hereford

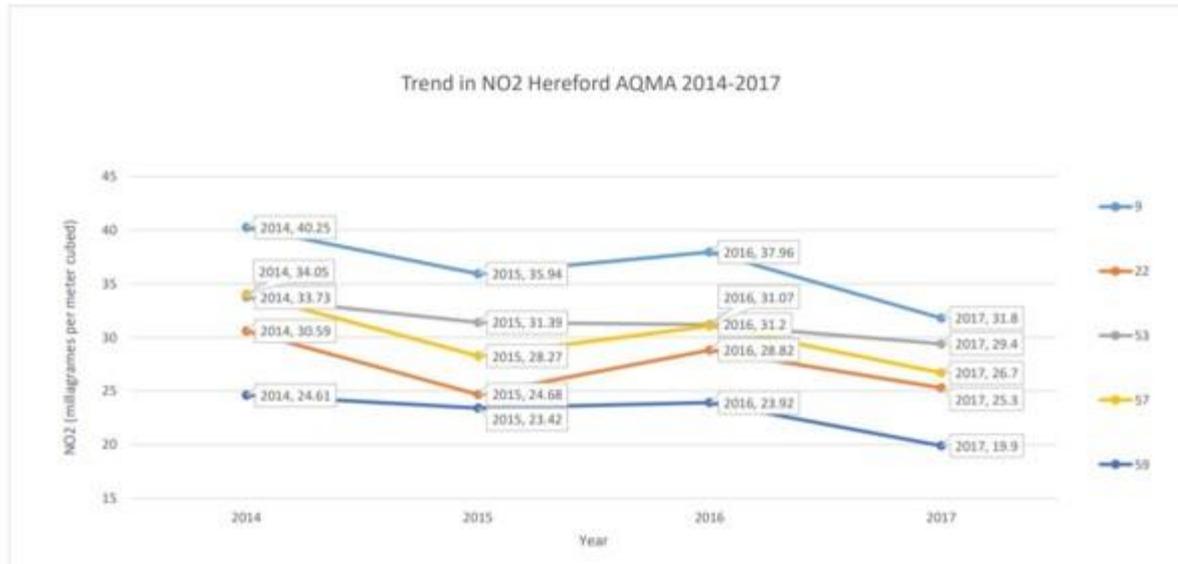
To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Can the Cabinet member confirm that that nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels as an indicator of air pollution have generally fallen, and that the Hereford AQMA now records levels consistently below the national objective level of 40µg/m³?

See:

https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200145/business/133/environment_and_pollution

Figure A.1 – Trends in NO₂ Hereford AQMA 2014 - 2017



Response

I cannot confirm that interpretation. The council's environmental health service continue to monitor nitrogen dioxide across the county, including several monitoring points in Hereford's Air Quality Management Area. Although recent reports have implied a reduction in trend, this may be because several monitoring points have had to be moved and therefore a simple comparison is not possible. This is explained more fully in section 3.2.1 of the 2018 Air Quality Annual Status Report which can be accessed at https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/18377/air_quality_annual_status_report_asr_2018.pdf

For this reason, the council will continue to monitor and observe the trend, reporting on this annually.

Question 15

Mrs C Protherough, Clehonger

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

Can the Cabinet member confirm that Highways England did not require a cap on vehicle traffic leaving Asda or the Old Market shopping development but did so for the HEZ?

Response

Please see response to question 10.

Question 16

Mr T Meadows, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

According to the previous Cabinet Member for Infrastructure the “Destination Hereford” programme has been successful in increasing walking and cycling levels in Herefordshire since it started in April 2011, and has contributed towards a 5% reduction in car use between 2016 and 2017 and a 26% increase in cycling in the same period. Apparently, this council is the only one in the West Midlands to win funding from all three rounds of the Department for Transport funding programme. With such success in getting residents out of cars, reducing pollution, getting residents active, tackling congestion more quickly and at a much lower cost than road building, what offers better value for the local taxpayer – expensive road schemes which are designed to increase car use, or a good comprehensive network of active travel measures across the city?

Response

I agree that behavioural change initiatives like Destination Hereford and investment in active travel measures can offer good value for money and be successful in encouraging people to use modes other than the car. Appropriate road schemes which are not designed to increase car use but to mitigate other issues also can offer value for money in the right circumstances. The review of the Hereford Transport Package will enable us to determine what approach or combination of approaches would deliver the best value for the local taxpayer.

Question 17

Mr D Gillam, Peterchurch

To: cabinet member, environment, economy and skills

What steps will the Council take to publicise the Climate & Ecological Emergency and when will the Council create an appropriate communications strategy that helps everyone in Herefordshire to understand the urgency of the situation we are facing?

Response

We take the climate emergency and the protection of our environment extremely seriously. At cabinet today we will be considering the executive response to the resolutions passed by Council in March and July of this year, and what actions to take. A communications strategy will be considered as part of developing the council’s action plan to address these issues.

Supplementary Question

At the UN climate action summit this week the UN secretary general said ‘science tells us that on our current path we face at least 3 degrees Celsius of global heating by the end of the century. The climate emergency is a race we are losing, but it is a race we can win.’ The UN estimates that the world would need to increase its efforts between three and five-fold to contain climate change to the levels dictated by science, a 1.5 degree rise at most. Bearing in mind the slow pace of the council’s response so far, will you commit to spending five times more next year than you did this year to tackle the climate emergency locally?

Response

We are more focused on the result of the investment so don't think I can promise that we would go times five but one thing we do very carefully is to check the actual impact of interventions we are planning. We have had a very successful five years with the previous plan. I will be confident that we will set this plan and we work out how to make it work but I would not be able to make the commitment about the actual amount of money at this point. We need to write the plan and a future step will be to adopt it.

Question 18

Ms W Ogden, Much Birch

To: cabinet member, environment, economy and skills

In response to the Climate Emergency declared over six months ago please can the Cabinet explain how every Herefordshire Council service and administrative department can give assurance that their actions, policies and contracts are working in ways which support the declaration: in order for the impact of changes/actions needed to be included in the 20/21 budget and longer term plans?

Response

As you will see from the report appearing on today's agenda, in our proposed response to the resolutions passed by Council earlier this year we will be considering the development of a checklist against which our strategies and plans may be assessed going forward, as well as other actions we can take in the short to medium term.

Question 19

Dr K Jamieson, Ross-on-Wye

To: cabinet member, environment, economy and skills

While the commitment to reducing carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 is vital and necessary, carbon is not the only problem. What additional actions will the Council be taking to address the wider ecological crisis that threatens our food supply?

Response

As you will see from the report appearing on today's agenda, in our proposed response to the resolutions passed by Council earlier this year we will be considering what actions to take including potential impacts upon wider ecology and food supply.

Supplementary question

When I read the councils climate response I was shocked. I pinned a lot of hope on your response after you declared a climate emergency last March and I lost that hope. There was nothing in the document that spoke to me about the scale and the urgency of the response that is required. Would you be willing to recognise that we are all facing a life threatening emergency and whether you would be willing to fundamentally change the way you work so that the whole council can act now?

Response

I think the answer to that will come up in the response to the report that we are just about to get to. I think it is best for that to speak for us. Thank you for coming as this is very important.

Question 20

Mrs C Monkley, Much Marcle

To: cabinet member, environment, economy and skills

It is good to hear that the Council has this month changed to a 100% renewable electricity supplier. This encourages the production of more renewable energy. It does not mean that the Council will be using 100% renewable electricity as the electricity comes from the National Grid which is supplied by a mix of sources. Please will the Council commit to producing all the electricity that Herefordshire (not just the Council) uses, from renewable sources within Herefordshire?

Response

As you will see from the report appearing on today's agenda, in our proposed response to the resolutions passed by Council earlier this year we will be considering updating the council's Carbon Management Plan. The extent to which the production of renewable energy in Herefordshire could contribute to meeting the energy needs of the council will be evaluated as part of that work.

Supplementary question

As it has taken from March to September for this council's response to the climate emergency that it declared then, and the response contains aspirations but not commitments, as part of the group who encouraged the council to declare the emergency, I don't feel heard. The system only allows the public a day to respond to the document you put out, because of that I feel only marginally engaged with. The system also means that the public who put in questions, like me, got just hours to digest the answers. That means I feel that my views are considered not very relevant. The specifics in my questions were not answered in the response therefore I feel ignored. I feel these things hamper a constructive relationship between the public and the council and I would like this system to change please. Since March, when this declaration was declared, the rate of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide has accelerated. Since March, the rate of damage to our global oceans has accelerated. Since March, the rate of melting of our polar ice caps and glaciers has accelerated. Since March, the rate of ecological damage we are doing globally has accelerated. All of these things have human consequences. Human displacement and personal devastation is accelerating. In short, the rate of human caused climate destabilisation is accelerating. I ask you to hear and feel my anguish, my fear and my frustration. Will the council commit to producing all the electricity that Herefordshire needs from renewable sources within Herefordshire? Why should we expect anyone else to produce our electricity?

Response

I hear your intense pain at this situation. I know that producing that much renewable energy in Herefordshire would be far from uncontroversial. What we are going to do is look at that as part of the process. It is certainly a possibility but it would not be an easy win.

Question 21

Ms P Cramsie, Newton St Margarets

To: cabinet member, environment, economy and skills

Now that you are endorsing the Climate Emergency motion, does this mean that, since time is of the essence, you will consider signing up to already-existing initiatives such as the the Woodland Trust's Tree Charter, which would include the mass planting of trees, and Bee-Friendly's

Hedgerow Manifesto, which would enable pollinator corridors to be established across the county, aiding wildlife as well as food security?

Response

As you will see from the report appearing on today's agenda, we will be considering in our proposed response to the resolutions passed by Council earlier this year, what actions to take. Subject to Cabinet's approval of these proposals, I will ensure that the potential benefits of joining existing initiatives such as those referred to are explored as part of developing our action plans.