

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

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mr Roger, Hereford	To raise more Council revenue with regard to Council Tax based on resident's house value bandings is it now time to re-value everyone's' property to update the real value of residences in today's house market?	Cabinet member finance and corporate services
Response: Every property in England is in one of eight council tax bands, depending on value. These were last set in 1993 and are based on valuations from 1991. What band a house falls into is determined by inspectors from the government's Valuation Office Agency (VOA). To date, central government has ruled out any recalculation of the English council tax bands.			
PQ 2	Ms Ward, Tarrington	Since the last administration scrapped the annual publication of the generic bus timetable, it has made life difficult for people who plan changes of bus when travelling in the county. There are so many different bus companies to change between. The consequence is that fewer people are inclined to use the bus services. Does the proposed budget for 2020-21 include funding to reinstate, print and sell the bus timetable booklet, at cost, to help and encourage people to use buses and to improve communication between public transport?	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
Response: With an increasing move towards providing information digitally, there are no immediate plans to reintroduce printed copies of bus timetables for general sale. All timetable information is provided online including journey planning facilities. In addition, the council continues to provide a countywide bus routes map which provides visibility of the entire bus network such that residents can see what services they might use should they wish to travel by bus. This is available free of charge from the Hereford Library and Hereford Tourist Information Centre. Bus timetables and journey planners are extensively available online including at www.Traveline.info . Information on buses is also available on the council's website www.Herefordshire.Gov.uk , this includes details of how to access real time live bus arrival and departure information. Online journey planners have an advantage over hard copy timetables in that they allow passengers to easily plan journeys that involve multiple buses, multiple operators, or different modes of travel such as bus and train. That all said and done I know some users will struggle with online access and where an individual cannot access information this way officers will provide hard copy service timetables for any residents on demand – libraries or Council offices being places these may be requested from.			
PQ 3	Ms Simpson, Hereford	Would the councillors let us know please what provision exists in the budget for 2020/21 in relation to the introduction in the immediate future of electric buses to replace non-electric ones, including buses which could	Cabinet member

		operate as part of a 'Park & Ride' scheme for Hereford, since that scheme would greatly improve air quality in the city by reducing the number of vehicles to and from the city centre?	infrastructure and transport
Response: The draft capital programme 2020/21 includes details of capital cost to replace the Hereford and wider county bus fleets with electric buses. Funding for this will need to be secured from external grants such as the recently announced 'all electric bus town' scheme announced by government. The total cost of replacing the fleet is estimated at £35M which would provide around 80 new electric buses. This Council is determined to develop a co-ordinated and focussed bus strategy, good public transport is an essential in providing choice for people to move around the County and City and will help tackle congestion. Park and rides will be considered as part of that strategy.			
PQ 4	Mrs Wegg Prosser, Breinton	The Council has launched an innovative and user friendly Travel Survey, as part of its Transport Review. Regarding the City Centre Transport Package, would the Cabinet member responsible for Infrastructure agree to make provision in the budget to arrange for a new assessment of the proposals for the rail station transport hub and public realm improvements to include analysis of responses to this Travel Survey, thus becoming more contemporary, and delivering better value for money?	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
Response: The draft capital programme already includes funding for the development of the transport hub and public realm schemes and this will take into account stakeholder and user feedback. I am due to take a decision shortly to enable consultation with key stakeholders about the proposals and a public consultation will follow when people will be able to tell us their priorities for both the hub and public realm improvements and this will include consideration of the feedback people are currently giving in the current travel survey.			
PQ 5	Dr Geeson, Hereford	The Capital Programme shows that the Hereford City Centre transport package (that includes the City Link Road), has about £7million left to spend on the new station transport hub. With the City Link Road costing a lot more than originally expected, has sufficient budget been left after the road construction to complete such an important transport interchange for the people of Hereford and the wider County, along with the pedestrian/cycle improvements along Commercial Rd?	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
Response: The total approved budget for the HCCTP project was £40.651m. Of this the budget for the City Link Road (CLR) was £34.160m and the remaining £6.491m was allocated for transport hub and public realm improvements. Spend to date on the CLR has not exceeded the budget of £34.160m and the budget allocated for the transport hub and public realm scheme is available to deliver the planned improvements.			
PQ 6	Ms O'Neill, Richards Castle	Is there any provision in the proposed budget to stimulate large-scale tree planting across the county, including the use of the council's own estate for the planting of trees, as a way of helping meet the commitments in the Council's climate change declaration of March 2019?	Cabinet member environment,

			economy and skills
<p>Response:</p> <p>Whilst there is not a dedicated budget for tree planting in this year's budget, we are however exploring a number of different options for local carbon offsetting which will form an important part of delivering carbon neutrality. We are actively discussing a substantial increase in the county's tree cover with environmental partners who would also be in a position to play an active role.</p> <p>For example, as part of a recent funding application to the Department for Transport we have included the proposal for a local tree planting and carbon offsetting scheme so that we can locally offset the carbon emissions from this project. Our approach to this project will form a case study in the pursuit of carbon neutral highway maintenance.</p> <p>In addition, the Council continues to make effective use of the planning system where we have been successfully requiring the additional planting of new trees and hedge rows on new developments across the county.</p> <p>We will also continue to work in partnership with organisations such as the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, so that we can not only promote additional tree planting, but to also help to make sure that the right type of trees are planting in the right places so that we can also enhance and protect local the wildlife</p>			
PQ 7	Mrs Morris, Hereford	Nottingham Council introduced a workplace parking levy to help fund public transport improvements. With many private car parks located within the centre of Hereford, what likely income could be generated by such a policy in the City?	Cabinet member finance and corporate services
<p>Response:</p> <p>I understand that the Nottingham workplace parking levy has generated £61M since introduced in 2012, this equates to approximately £8.7M income per annum. Nottingham is a large city with an urban population of 768,000 and is part of the larger east midlands conurbation. As a smaller city, the likely income from such a charge in Hereford would be significantly less. However, the transport review for Hereford will be considering a wide range of alternative options including demand management measures, such as this, to help inform the future transport strategy for the city. I have asked that the review includes an assessment of the potential costs, benefits and income which could be generated from such scheme in Hereford which would relate to the number of parking spaces affected and the level of charge.</p> <p>Clearly, the introduction of any such scheme would need to be coordinated with the implementation of a range of alternative travel options for people who work in the city centre, as has been the case in Nottingham.</p>			
PQ 8	Mr Geeson, Hereford	<p>My question relates to agenda item 9 the Capital programme and in particular the Hereford Transport Package/Active Travel Measures within the programme.</p> <p>Making the railway bridge on the Roman Road two lane is long overdue and I welcome the fact that this will now be considered. As part of improving connectivity through the Hereford Transport Package and making walking and cycling more attractive and safer options for short journeys through Active Travel Measures; can</p>	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport

		the Cabinet member confirm that consideration will also be given to improving other railway bridges such as those on College Road, Old School Lane and the Northern end of Barrs Court Road?.	
Response: I can confirm that I have authorised the delivery of active travel schemes in Hereford alongside the transport review which commenced further to my decision last month. You may recall we consulted on a range of possible active travel schemes last year (January – March) and we presented key routes in Hereford city where improvements could be delivered for pedestrians and cyclists. These early proposals recognised that improvements to these bridges would enable better walking and cycling provision along these roads into the city. Further detailed design, which will take into account feedback received through our current Transport review, is planned as I am committed to delivering improvements such as these whilst the wider transport review takes place.			
PQ 9	N Fletcher, Hereford	Cycling is the most efficient and sustainable method of urban travel whatever the time of day, Hereford is a wonderful compact city, but the cycle network is meagre and disjointed. I note that the capital programme contains a scheme for super cycle highways, please expand on what plans you have to extend the network and promote this form of travel?	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
Response: I agree with the questioner that cycling is an ideal mode of transport for Hereford. The super cycle highways project is ambitious and will take time but it aims to deliver a comprehensive network of active travel routes across the city, market towns and key long distance rural links between them. The project will bring together and extend the active travel components of current transport projects to form a county wide coherent network of active travel schemes. This will not only continue the development of the existing cycle routes already identified in transport packages, but it also includes other schemes identified in both our emerging Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan and Sustainable Modes of Travel to School strategy. I am also pleased to confirm that the Council was also successful in securing £500,000 from the Department for Transport's 'Access Fund' competition. This will support the continuation of our successful Choose How You Move campaign which includes a wide range of walking and cycling projects such as Beryl Bikes, Business Travel grants and our active travel in school project. We also expect shortly to hear confirmation of a significant capital award via Highways England for cycle routes along the central corridor of Hereford City.			
PQ 10	Ms Sharp, Hereford	The work on the South Wye Transport Package and Hereford Transport package has been previously treated as just an extension of Balfour Beatty's existing Public Realm contract without ever going out to tender. In view of the poor quality, but expensive transport schemes and a lack of any Full Business Case for the SWTP by March 2019, will the current administration confirm that in accordance with the Council's own Constitution, future capital transport projects will go out to tender to ensure value for money for the local taxpayer?	Cabinet member Commissioning procurement and assets
Response: Thank you for your question on this important area of my portfolio that has received much public interest. The engagement of BBLP to provide the professional and technical resource to deliver the SWTP and HTP projects was done through the use of the public realm contract as these design and technical services are within the scope of that contract. The public realm contract was itself procured following an open competitive tender OJEU procurement in 2013. The delivery of the Southern Link Road construction works was not intended through the BBLP contract and an OJEU procurement was selected at that time. A			

full review of the Council's procurement and project management of transport projects has been undertaken whereby a clear structure and process is documented. The route to market for all future capital projects will be in accordance with the Council's Constitution and appropriate procurement options will be selected and approved at the appropriate stage of each project.

Ensuring that we can demonstrate value for money and effective, documented and accountable procurement processes is key to the administration as are our external auditors, Grant Thornton.

PQ 11	Ms Dean, Bishops Frome	I note that the county plan 2020-2024 contains an objective to 'Identify climate change action in all aspects of council operation'. What provision has been made to inform the public of the truth of the dire climatic and environmental position that we are in and of the strategies that you propose to adopt to meet this looming disaster.	Cabinet member environment, economy and skills
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Response:

Building on our public declaration of a Climate Emergency in March last year, the council has undertaken significant action to address climate change in all aspects of our operations. This will be set out in our own new carbon management plan, which will be published in March, as well as our plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

We are also working closely with a number of partners and stakeholders to develop a new countywide carbon reduction strategy. This emerging strategy will build on the excellent progress, local action and growing momentum across the county. This collaborative approach seeks to bring together residents, groups, businesses and organisations as we jointly work to meet the current and future challenges, and opportunities, on our journey to become net carbon neutral by 2030.

We will be gearing up both our web presence and our communications to make more information on our county carbon reduction initiatives easy to access and I am pleased to welcome Cllr Ellie Chowns as the new cabinet support member who will be supporting me in this area and will be actively working to further raise the profile of this important issue.

PQ 12	Mr Hardy, Hereford	In view of the widely perceived problem of traffic congestion in the city and the belief in some quarters that this would be significantly relieved by the construction of a bypass some time in the future, what alternative measures for congestion relief does the proposed budget provide for that could be completed within the next three years?"	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
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Response:

I am keen to understand Hereford City's congestion issues as quickly as possible and it is right there is risk that road schemes will take considerable time to be built and may/may not then provide a reduction in congestion. It is essential therefore to have more than one plan and to have some plans that can be implemented and assessed more quickly. The budget includes funding for transport improvements to be delivered whilst a review of the two major road schemes is progressed over coming months. This review gives us the opportunity to consider options for Hereford's congestion relief including the possibility of an eastern link road and river crossing, removal of traffic lights on key routes, emergency response arrangements to remove breakdowns on the A49, an electric bus fleet for the urban bus network and improvements that provide safer routes to school. While the review is under way, I want to continue to deliver

improvements for cyclists and pedestrians across the city to encourage people who currently use the car for short distance trips which contributes to congestion to travel by more sustainable modes.

PQ 13	Mr Sherwood, Hereford	Pursuant to its 2019 commitment to take measures locally in response to the Climate Emergency, and in view of the all-important UN international conference on Climate this November in Glasgow (COP26), will Herefordshire Council commit appropriate officer time and financial resources in the budget for next year, so as to promptly support emergent voluntary-sector plans aimed at establishing a public-access Centre for Climate Action in Hereford city centre, with the intention of increasing a) public understanding of the expected impacts of climate change on Herefordshire and elsewhere, b) awareness of all the possibilities for action by local individuals and organisations to mitigate and to adapt, and c) support for local activities and actions related to the Climate Emergency?	Cabinet member environment, economy and skills
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Response:

I welcome the commitment of the voluntary sector to this agenda and whilst I am not aware of the specific proposal to develop a centre for climate action in Hereford City, I am very interested to hear more. As such I have requested that our newly appointed Head of Environment, Climate Emergency and Waste liaises with you directly to see how best we can support this initiative.

I can confirm that Herefordshire Council has allocated substantial officer time and financial resource as part of our commitment to tackle the Climate Emergency. We will be publishing our new Carbon Management Plan in March, which will set out our approach to reducing the Council's carbon footprint and our commitment to achieve net carbon neutrality by 2030.

In addition, as part of our commitment to achieve countywide carbon neutrality, we are also working closely with a range of partners to develop a new countywide carbon reduction strategy. I would also like to welcome the opening of the Queenswood sustainable futures centre next month which is an initiative by New Leaf and I wish this every success.

PQ 14	Mrs Protherough, Clehonger	In the context of the current Pause and Review of Transport Policy how do the budget proposals ensure that the Council is giving consideration to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the 2018 report "The Inclusive Transport Strategy: achieving equal access for disabled people to ensure that the needs of people with a wide range of disabilities have adequate choice of safe, accessible and independent means of getting around Hereford.	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
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Response:

The transport review will enable a wide range of transport options to be considered and assessed. I can assure you that this assessment will consider the needs of all those travelling into and around Hereford to ensure equal access for disabled people getting around in Hereford. New electric bus fleets will address accessibility issues that we have with older vehicles which are still in operation by some providers, when new service contracts are awarded.

PQ 15	Ms Setterfield, Hereford	The Corporate Plan states on page 20 "Our schools enable our young people to achieve and excel intellectually, physically and socially, and prepare them to do well once they move on to college, training or work. What is this council doing to promote more sustainable practices in schools?	Cabinet member
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Response:

Schools are required to follow the National Curriculum which allows for some flexibility in what is taught. As a result all schools help their pupils understand and engage in activities which are designed to build a deeper understanding of sustainable activities in a variety of ways. Academies have wider freedoms to choose the content of their curriculum. Recent guidance from both The Department for Education and Ofsted require a deeper and richer curriculum model than was the case in previous years. Many schools undertake such activity in science or other lessons and report high levels of interest by pupils and staff. There is however no prescribed content beyond good intent. Resources to develop this are emerging around the world and we are aware of the national initiative produced in New Zealand where the government there has produced more detailed published content. We are seeking to access some of this to encourage schools to engage.

In addition to internal taught elements, our schools undertake a wide variety of activity beyond lessons. This includes eco clubs, forest school initiatives, green travel plans to get to school, awards and badges for engaging in sustainable activity. This is widespread and well developed and is well reported by Ofsted.

In order to support schools to become more sustainable, and to help deliver our commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030, we are currently supporting the development of new Zero Carbon Schools conference planned for July. As part of this we are also developing a new sustainability and carbon reduction resource pack to support our schools as they seek to improve their environmental performance and to reduce their carbon footprint.

In addition, the Council also offers free Bikeability training to all schools and has recently secured additional funding to continue supporting Hereford schools with our active travel in school programme in partnership with Sustrans.

It remains the case however that there is always the opportunity to do more. Schools are in general receptive to this. We are also looking again at the transition from school to work, for all groups of students with a view to ensuring all school leavers have access to high quality training, employment or education. In the local context we are happy to work closely with our HE and FE colleges, both of whom offer courses and training specifically to address concerns about sustainable futures. This, together with the work already being encouraged in our schools forms a strong basis for future development. We are also seeking ways of ensuring our capital projects, including new school premises, have a strong sustainability strand.