

Appendix 2 - Questions from members of the council

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 1	Councillor Roger Phillips, Arrow	Cllr Sebastian Bowen and myself have been working with officers from the Council, Balfour Beatty and West Mercia police for a considerable time on improving the safety of the Lawton`s cross junction between the A4110 and C1035 (the previous A44). Working in consultation with our Parish councils and communities we have identified a roundabout solution giving way priority to the left on all approaches. Can the Cabinet member reassure us and our communities that this remains a priority for the administration and in the emerging capital programme for 2020/21?	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
Response: The design of the scheme to improve safety at Lawton`s Cross junction remains a priority for delivery. We are concluding the detailed design and costing of the scheme which will be complete in the 2019/20 programme, delivery is included in the annual plan for early 2020/21. There is a section of hedge to be removed to improve visibility, this has been commissioned and will be carried out early in 2020 to avoid the impact to nesting birds and infringement of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Balfour Beatty Living Places are currently awaiting the return of the tenders for the scheme, there will be the tender evaluation and mobilisation, it is anticipated the scheme will commence on site April / May 2020. The scheme traffic management plan and construction programme will be developed with the successful contractor, this will be communicated with the local members, parish councils and communities once agreed.			
Supplementary Question: Will the Cabinet Member join with local members to monitor the length and cost of the scheme?			
Cabinet Member response: Yes – the member could be assured this would happen.			

MQ 2	Councillor Shaw, Bromyard Bringsty	In reply to my question at GSC on Jan 20 th the cabinet member responsible for the phosphate emergency in the Lugg suggested that the new homes bonus would, if necessary, be able to assist in bringing forward “appropriate measures”. I note that neither revenue nor capital proposals to address this issue have yet been specifically included in the budget. Councils in Hampshire, Wiltshire and Portsmouth have already designed and implemented measures following the warning letter from Natural England and are able to continue with their economic development. Given that this emergency is now seriously endangering the viability of local construction companies and their workforces and is stymying growth of all kind across North Herefordshire can this Council now stop dragging their feet and give firm dates for when this issue will be addressed and the ban lifted?	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
Response: The Nutrient Management Board met on 29 January, chaired by Cllr Swinglehurst, to whom I am exceptionally grateful to for all the hard work and expertise she is bringing to our efforts to address this issue as quickly as possible. This Board considered the report given by its Technical Advisory Group and agreed to a number of its proposals as to how phosphate levels in the Lugg catchment could either be reduced or offset. The budget proposals to be considered by Council today include funding to enable suitable proposals to be delivered– see para 13 p281 and again at para 1a on p359 of the meeting agenda pack. Subject to the budget proposals being approved today, I can assure you that the officers are and will continue to be working with the utmost speed and continue to work closely with partner agencies to overcome this moratorium as soon as possible. I can also assure you that the Herefordshire Construction Industry Lobby Group are being kept fully informed throughout the process, as I am conscious of the impact that this moratorium is having on local companies. This underlying issue of pollution is a historic issue and we are doing more to tackle that now and address the core causes than has ever been done before.			
Supplementary Question: Responsibility for the phosphate issue needed to be clarified with partner agencies including Welsh Water and the Environmental Agency. If the issue caused the council’s housing land supply to decrease to below three years what would the cabinet member say to parish councils and citizens when all neighbourhood development plans and our core strategy were rendered out of date, effectively voided, which could lead to predatory development in the south of the county?			
Cabinet Member response:			

The performance of the previous administration to address problems recorded by the nutrient management plan were questioned. The environmental agency (EA) was the responsible body. A group had been established to oversee the issue and correspondence had been sent to the EA recently to request detail of a timeline for the resolution of the issue. Integrated wetlands were being implemented and a briefing note would be shared with all members shortly.

MQ 3

Councillor Matthews,
Credenhill

Recently I chaired a public meeting at Marden regarding the possibility of the general use of 5G technology within the county. The Council Leader, Cabinet member commissioning, procurement and assets attended and a number of elected members. Evidence-based issues were raised about the impact of 5G usage on public health, because many leading scientists have expressed safety doubts. The Cabinet Member undertook to look into the matters raised, and report back; this was later confirmed by the leader.

As of today, no response has been received, so can the Cabinet Member inform us of the outcome of her investigations, confirming the view of this administration with regard to the use of 5G within the county particularly in light of the ambition in the corporate plan to 'Strengthen communities to ensure that everyone lives well and safely together'.

Cabinet member
commissioning
procurement and
assets

Response:

Thank you for question on this matter and your continued efforts to ensure that this remains a priority for the administration.

I apologise for the delay in providing back a report regarding this matter. As you are aware there is a wealth of evidence and information, including working with colleagues across the country, that we have to go through before coming to a point where a report is ready. In the meantime I am working with other members of the administration to look at other technological solutions that do not require 5g.

I attach the latest briefing from public health for your information:

Public Health England's (PHE's) Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards (CRCE) takes the lead on public health matters associated with radiofrequency electromagnetic fields, or radio waves, used in telecommunications, including 5G. They have issued guidance which is based on published evidence.

Mobile telecommunications technology has developed through several generations and there are now many 2G, 4G base stations installed throughout the environment providing services to users of mobile phones and other devices. Over the decades since the networks were first introduced there has been a general trend towards increasing numbers of smaller transmitters that individually provide services to smaller geographical areas and which have reducing radiated powers.

Against this background, many measurements have been made and these continue to show that exposures of the general public to radio waves are well within the international health-related guideline levels that are used in the UK. These guidelines are from the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) and underpin health protection policies at UK and European levels.

In relation to the implementation of 5G user devices and networks, this technology is at an early stage and reflects the latest evolution in mobile communications technology. Current technical standards that draw on the ICNIRP guidelines will apply to the products that are developed and the UK network operators are already committed to complying with the ICNIRP guidelines. With the increase in the volume of information being transferred, more spectrum is being made available and the highest frequencies being discussed for future use by 5G are around ten times higher than those used by current network technologies, up to a few tens of GHz. Their use is not new, and they have been used for point-to-point microwave links and some other types of transmitters that have been present in the environment for many years. ICNIRP guidelines apply up to 300 GHz, well beyond the maximum (few tens of GHz) frequencies under discussion for 5G.

Exposure to radio waves is not new and health-related research has been conducted on this topic over several decades. In particular, a large amount of new scientific evidence has emerged over the past few years through dedicated national and international research programmes that have addressed concerns about rapidly proliferating wireless technologies.

The main focus of recent research studies has been on exposure to the types of radio signals used by current communications technologies and at the frequencies they use, up to a few GHz. Fewer studies have been carried out at higher frequencies but the biophysical mechanisms that govern the interaction between radio waves and body tissues are well understood at higher frequencies and are the basis of the present ICNIRP restrictions. The main change in using higher frequencies is that there is less penetration of radio waves into body tissues and absorption of the radio energy, and any consequent heating, becomes more confined to the body surface.

It is possible that there may be a small increase in overall exposure to radio waves when 5G is added to an existing network or in a new area; however, the overall exposure is expected to remain low relative to guidelines and as such there should be no consequences for public health.

A summary of PHE advice on radio waves can be accessed in the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/electromagnetic-fields#radio-waves>

PHE advice on Base Stations including 5G can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phone-base-stations-radio-waves-and-health>

PHE is committed to monitoring the evidence applicable to this and other radio technologies, and to revising its advice, should that be necessary.

Public Health will post reliable sources of information for the public on the council website.

Supplementary Question:

It was asked that the council continue to closely monitor the issue.

Cabinet Member response:

This was agreed.

MQ 4	Councillor Symonds, Ross East	In light of the fact that Balfour Beatty set and monitor their own performance measures within their Public Realm contract for Herefordshire, what assurance is the Cabinet Member able to offer residents that the BBLP contract represents good value for money?	Cabinet member commissioning procurement and assets
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Response:

Thank you for your question Cllr Symonds, it raises some really important points that the administration are currently dealing with. Achieving value for money in our contracts is essential not only for us to keep control of our budget but more importantly, reassuring the residents of Herefordshire that we are getting the very best for every penny that they pay into the council.

For clarification, BBLP do not set and monitor their own performance measures. Performance measures in the form of Operational and Strategic performance indicators are set by the Council to achieve our required outcomes. Performance against these is then monitored by the Council's own Public Realm contract management team on a monthly basis. The Cabinet member for Infrastructure and Transport and myself attend fortnightly meetings with the BBLP management and the council's contract team and we have just started attending the performance meetings.

In addition, the contract is "open book" which means that expenditure can be reviewed and scrutinised throughout the supply chain. All applications for payment are scrutinised in detail by the Contract Management team to assure value and correct spend against outputs. The team undertake regular service reviews to ensure that services being delivered are effective, equitable, economic and efficient.

As part of our initiatives to ensure that we are able to demonstrate Value for Money, we shall be reviewing our approach to the management of all contracts and specifically the BBLP contract. We shall ensure that scrutiny has an important part in that process.

Supplementary Question:

It was requested that the cabinet member commit to a timeline to commence the BBLP review.

Cabinet member response:

Six months would be a reasonable timeline to commence the review and a start date in September was seen as reasonable.

MQ 5	Councillor Milln, Central	Might I ask that ahead of expiry in May 2021 of any NJC-related award in respect of members allowances that an IRP (Independent Review Panel) examine also the system of expenses in view of the fact some are assumed to be covered by the allowance and some are separately claimable, a system which may be viewed as unfair to members with large rural wards and which does nothing to promote greener travel in line with our climate emergency declaration.	Leader
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Response:

An independent remuneration panel will be convened following a decision by Council in October 2020 on the future governance model. As part of the IRP's consideration, they will be asked to look at the basic allowance which all councillors receive and the special responsibility allowances. As part of the work on the basic allowance, the panel will be asked to consider what the basic allowance does and does not cover.

Council in May 2021 will need to take into account the views of the IRP and make a decision on the councillor allowance scheme to be adopted as from May 2021.

Supplementary Question:

How might the members' allowance scheme be amended to encourage members to make the shift to sustainable forms of transport and set the example?

Response (*monitoring officer*):

The Independent Remuneration Panel would consider feedback from members and conduct focus groups to consider the members' allowance scheme when it was next convened.