

MEMBER QUESTIONS TO GENERAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 9 NOVEMBER 2020Question 1**Councillor Jeremy Milln – Central ward**

Many cities sited on major rivers augment their transport needs with water buses; closest to Hereford being perhaps Cardiff's which ply the Taff between the Bay and the city centre. Some European cities have emission-free electric water buses of shallow draught and little wake, essential on rivers with low summer flows and high environmental qualities such as ours. Heather Hurley's Herefordshire River Trade (2013) and Marsha O'Mahony's River Voices (2018), document the Wye as Hereford's HGV artery until the Railway, with passenger ferries, able to cope with its dynamic behaviour, running almost to our own time.

Although its potential as an E-W transport corridor connecting the riverside communities of Belmont, Broomy Hill, Hunderton, Greyfriars, St Martins, St James, Hinton, Putson, Lower Bullingham, Eign, Hampton and Rotherwas was not evaluated by the Study, would there be interest in doing so now?

Response

Whilst a proposal for a water bus did not come forward in the review consultation General scrutiny committee will be invited to consider this suggestion and make a suitable recommendation for cabinet to consider.

Supplementary

Given that the Review Terms of Reference, published in January, had asked the Consultants to consider all transport modes, but overlooked this one, I am delighted to hear that General Scrutiny Committee may consider the electric water bus as part of the sustainable transport mix for Hereford.

Could I ask that if GSC is minded to recommend Cabinet take the suggestion further, it is done so with specialist technical and operational understanding of such a service; its potential to meet Core Strategy objectives for sustainable transport, place-making, environment and economic development (including tourism); and how it may relate to initiatives coming forward under the Stronger Towns programme?

Response

The Chairperson commented that this would be something for the Committee to bear in mind during its discussion.

Question 2**Councillor Nigel Shaw – Bromyard Bringsty ward**

How does the report evidence that the relevant revenue costs of suggested proposals can be met from the revenue budget projected by the MTFs, including the decapitalised £15.2m, particularly in light of anticipated reductions in business rates income and other pressure on reserves during the next few years?

Response

The review sets out high level costs estimates (revenue and capital) for strategic transport packages. However, it does not say that the revenue costs can be met by existing budgets. Nor does it indicate that any capital costs have confirmed funding. It does indicate the potential sources of funding which might cover revenue and capital costs.

As is set out in the report to scrutiny, following identification of a preferred strategy further development work would be required to develop the package proposals in greater detail which would include:

- feasibility and more detailed costings of package elements
- development of the delivery programme
- preparation of funding bids

This will allow for scheme costings to be reviewed, funding sources to be considered and bids developed in support of the package. It would also provide cabinet with sufficient detail for it to allocate council revenue and capital funding and/or seek external funding.

No decision has been taken yet which requires the decapitalisation of the two road schemes. The capital spend to date for both transport packages is £12.2m, of this £0.8m was spent on acquiring assets that will remain eligible capital spend regardless of the outcome of the review. Therefore, the maximum decapitalised costs is £11.4m.

Supplementary

Thank-you for the response to my question, I appreciate that the additional £3.8m making £15.2m is the sum which Shropshire Council's 151 officer claims is due back to the LEP from Herefordshire Council.

Would the committee be able to confirm the action which will crystallise the recapitalisation of the £11.4m of revenue funding in our accounts?

Response

Because the council had chosen to pause and review the western bypass it was still capitalised. When the pause was revisited or the ongoing review was revisited consideration would be given to the accountancy treatments. If the review stopped the criteria would no longer be met and the sum would have to be returned to revenue.

Question 3

Councillor Phillips – Arrow ward

Any transport strategy must be intrinsically linked to the Core Strategy of the Council. Although the Core strategy was listed within the economy key policy context, there appears to be very little if any reference to the core strategy including impacts to the regeneration zones, place shaping outside of Hereford and actions supporting economic prosperity of 87% of small businesses employing 10 or fewer staff (pg 40 of report pack). As a greater proportion of people are now working from home with 2/3rds of the population living outside of Hereford, why was greater focus not given to the core strategy within the review?

Response

The review does take into account the core strategy's land use and growth policies. Modelling which has helped inform assessment of transport packages assumes the delivery of housing and other developments in accordance with core strategy commitments to 2026.

Qualitative assessment has also been undertaken to consider how package options impact on access to the sustainable urban extensions, enterprise zone and other new development in Hereford. This is included as indicator 6.1 within the review.

Whilst it is true that the study focusses on the transport challenges within Hereford, reference has been made in the assessment to the accessibility provided to areas such as Three Elms, Lower Bullingham, Holmer West and the Enterprise Zone (eg page 125 in relation to Package A+C+F).

In addition, the Core Strategy is to be subject to an update to look beyond its current end date of 2031. The form of this update is uncertain given the radical changes to the planning system proposed in the Planning White Paper, but the update will provide an opportunity to look again at the existing spatial strategy and land use policies and the transport review will provide key evidence to support this process.

Supplementary

Thank you for the reply which I think seems to confirm the importance of aligning housing, economic and transport strategies.

Can scrutiny today reaffirm the importance of that alignment and request a timeline of the three strategies be published as soon as possible to give clarity to the residents and businesses of Herefordshire?

Response

The Chairperson commented that this would be a matter for the Committee to consider.

Question 4

Councillor Bolderson – Wormside ward

All the options presented are extremely Hereford centric and there is not enough focus on the 2/3rds of the population who live outside of Hereford. Page 55 of the report pack has a map of Herefordshire's Strategic Highway Network. There is no infrastructure linking the south-east to the south-west. Page 53 also highlights that 65% of commuters from south-west villages travel to jobs in the city.

Every parish within Wormside is concerned with rat running, speeding and road safety. I would like to understand why the South Wye Transport Package was not considered in its own right as an option particularly as it could help resolve road safety concerns within my Ward and is fundamental in alleviating the caps on future growth at the Hereford Enterprise Zone plus the delivery of houses in line with Policy HD6.

Response

The South Wye Transport Package contains both active travel measures and the Southern Link Road. The active travel measures have been subsumed within Package A (focus on walking and cycling) and the Southern Link Road is included as part of

Package A+C+D (as part of the western bypass). The Southern Link Road was also included as part of Option 15a (full eastern bypass with Southern Link Road).

Following consultation, it was considered that separating out the active travel elements from the new road scheme would provide greater insight as to the relative merits of the different approaches available to address Hereford's transport challenges.

The SLR does however remain an option for the council to progress on its own and the draft recommendations for cabinet (as set out in the scrutiny report) allow for cabinet to determine to progress the SLR.

Supplementary

A greater proportion of people are now working from home. With two thirds of the population living outside Hereford, the report does not appear to consider the amount of traffic using alternative routes and rat runs to avoid Hereford. We all know how treacherous the Madley/Bridge Sollars route can be plus the levels of traffic going over the Mordiford Bridge. Before Covid we had almost 2,500 cars a day using Haywood Lane and Knockerhill Lane. When the Planning and Regulatory Committee went to Much Dewchurch Members took their lives in their own hands as the Committee saw lorry after lorry mount the kerb in order to get through the village. Since Covid my parishioners are telling me that speeding and road safety has got even worse and it is a topic at every single meeting of all five of my parish councils which covers about 80 square kilometres of the County. I would like to better understand how the transport strategy will address these pervasive road safety and rat running issues and improve the lives of the people living in the rural south.

Response

The Chairperson commented that the Committee would need to bear in mind in its discussion that the review had implications beyond the City itself.