

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

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Ms Miller, Rowlestone	Further to a promise by the Conservative Prime Minister are the roads in Herefordshire subject to any imminent repairs? With regards to potholes and resurfacing to prevent dangerous travel issues, I refer especially to the road named the Wigga road in Rowlestone, repairs for which requests have repeatedly been sent to the council asking for some attention. This must be the very worse road in the whole of the county.	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
<p>Response:</p> <p>The overall condition of our roads, the scale of the task to return to a good condition and the finite sums available for the task, means that we have to prioritise our programme for delivery, our network, after a decade of cuts to Central Government Funding, is approximately £100 million behind in returning it to optimal condition. By delivering what little we have in accordance with our asset management strategy, we are maximising the impact that we have for the money available. We will continue to meet our duty toward the safety of all roads, including the Wigga road in Rowlestone, but the optimal use of funds to deliver the best overall condition for all is our objective.</p> <p>Whilst the pothole funding recently announced is welcome, when considered alongside the drop in the regular funds that we receive from Government for highway maintenance, Herefordshire will have received approximately £4.5m less to spend on its roads in 2021/22 than in 2020/21.</p> <p>The Wigga road (U74418) has been assessed by the BBLP asset management team for consideration of localised patching. The assessed priority is too far down our current programme works list to receive any works at this present time, nor would it be included in the annual plan for the next few years at current budget levels. However we will continue to monitor this road and should increased deterioration be observed then we will review and update the priority score.</p>			
PQ 2	Ms Rudge, Hereford	What plans are the council making to ensure the electricity infrastructure in Herefordshire is able to provide enough available power for all the charging points that are going to be needed to power the huge rise in electric cars ownership that will happen over the next decade?	Cabinet member environment, economy and skills
<p>Response:</p> <p>As a key stakeholder Herefordshire Council has been actively engaging with Western Power Distribution, who are the district network operator in Herefordshire, through the development of their future investment planning process.</p> <p>The Council has strongly outlined the importance of ensuring the electricity network is fit for purpose and supports the county's ambition to achieve net zero carbon by 2030 and has specifically identified the requirement to meet the future needs for the transition to electric personal transportation and the future electrification of heat for our homes and offices.</p>			

As well as meeting with Western Power Distribution and formally responding to their consultation, Herefordshire Council is also a partner of the Marches Energy Strategy Steering Group which is a subgroup of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership. Through this group we have also formally met with both Western Power Distribution and SP Energy Networks (the network operator for north Shropshire) outlining all three authorities ambitious carbon zero targets for 2030 and have responded to the WPD RIIO-ED2 consultation.

PQ 3	Mr North, Bromyard	We have serious concerns about the residential occupation of a 'Distinctive Environmental Asset' known as Quay Head, Tedstone Delamere HR7 4PU. In particular, with reference to the Adopted Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy Appendix 8, the environmental impact on adjacent Local Wildlife Sites SO75/001 & 017 (Woodland Adjoining Sapey Brook & Sapey Brook) and 1504415 Ancient Replanted Woodland. Is the Herefordshire Council satisfied that no illegal occupation and activity is occurring?	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
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Response:
Our Planning Enforcement Team is investigating this matter and I understand that the officers are currently awaiting a retrospective planning application. Such an application can then be considered by the planning service and determined accordingly, having regard to our planning policy.

PQ 4	Mr McMorran, Bromyard	Is the Council aware that, although an enforcement complaint form was issued on April 14th 2020, together with subsequent supporting documentation, and despite the manifest on-going harm to a 'Distinctive Environmental Asset' of the County, no material action has been taken. Will the Council ensure that the Planning Supplementary Enforcement Policy (Appendix C) Procedures are carried out?	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
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Response:
The Planning Enforcement Team has been resourced as far as the council's budgetary position currently allows, although like many other council services a reduction in level of service has been necessary in order for the council to balance its budget for the coming financial year. Within available resources officers will still have regard to the Planning Supplementary Enforcement Policy that forms Appendix C of the council's 2018 Overarching Enforcement Prosecution Policy, which can be found at https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1472/enforcement_and_prosecution_policy although the team may take longer to respond than previously would have been the case. I understand that officers have provided a more detailed letter to you this week. We will not let anyone disregard planning laws, we may be under pressure through budgets to address reported breaches as quickly as we would like but we will address them; planning rules are to be applied to everyone.

PQ 5	Mr Butler, Whitbourne	The state of the County roads is disgraceful. What are the plans to upgrade the roads in 2021/22 – not just a bit of back filling of pot holes but in general making the roads safer to travel?	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
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Response:
We know the County's roads are not in the condition that we want them to be. The highway network is an extensive (over 2000 miles of roads) and aged asset. It will take time and sustained investment in surfacing works to put it into the condition that we would like to see. In the past, adequate and appropriate Central Government funding has allowed us to do that to a much more satisfactory degree. Unfortunately, this past decade, the government has steadily withdrawn funding to authorities like Herefordshire, roughly equating to 60p in every pound given prior to 2010. Even more unfortunate

perhaps is Bill Wiggin, MP, has chosen to vote at every opportunity to reduce one of those vital funding streams to Herefordshire, the Revenue Support Grant, resulting in a reduction from £62 million per annum received in 2010 to £600K this year. Further, despite assurances from both our MPs – and public statements from Mr Wiggin about increased funding - we will suffer a further reduction of approximately £4.5m from Central Government for our roads in 2021/22 than in 2020/21. In 2021/22 we will be continuing to invest the resources that we have in line with an asset management strategy that has seen an increase in the proportion of the network that is in good condition, albeit that we still have a very significant proportion of the network that is in need of maintenance. As is our duty, we will continue to respond to potholes.

PQ 6	Mr Alexander, Dilwyn	Will the Council now commit to making no increase in City centre car parking charges and no decrease in the number of car parking slots available in the City at least until the next County Council elections?	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
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Response:
 No I cannot commit to that and I will not. The council is committed to the effective management of the demand for parking spaces which not only protects our historic city and town centres, but also help to reduce congestion, improve air quality and provides the Council with vital income at a time of historic cuts of funding from Central Government. We are going through a parking charge review currently. Having not been reviewed for some years all charges will now be reviewed annually to ensure that they continue to be effective and meet local needs.

The council control over 2,100 off street parking spaces in Hereford city, with over 100 on street pay and display parking spaces. Any adjustments to the parking arrangements in and around the city are carefully considered against the benefits that such adjustment may bring to the wider safety, environmental or economic factors involved in providing public services. Our charges remain in line with those of our neighbouring authorities.

PQ 7	Mrs Alexander, Dilwyn	Please confirm there will be no reduction in the current frequency of domestic rubbish collection throughout the County for the duration of this Council.	Cabinet member commissioning, procurement and assets
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Response:
 The current waste collection contract runs until November 2023 and cannot be altered until this contract expires. I can therefore confirm that the frequency of domestic rubbish collection cannot be altered for the duration of this council.

PQ 8	Mr Harwood, Ross-on-Wye	As announced on the Council's website on 26 th February 2019, the much needed development of Ross Enterprise Park was scheduled to start in late spring of that year. This has not happened and the Council has stated a core issue is that the development costs do not provide value for money. Is it possible to have a clear definition of what value for money is in this instance?	Cabinet member environment, economy and skills
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Response:
 The council considers each proposed capital project through the assessment of a detailed business case in terms of what it will deliver against strategic priorities such as the County Plan 2020 to 2024, likely outputs and outcomes, and return on investment. In February 2019 the council took a decision to develop phase 1 of the proposed Ross Enterprise Park development on the Model Farm site in Ross on Wye. In approving the £7.07 million capital

allocation the business case identified that the project would develop 8.5 net developable acres of employment land, forecast to create circa 250 jobs and a future land receipt of £1.7m (through the sale of the serviced plots). Following finalisation of the detailed design and the full tendering of the project, the development costs rose to £11.5m (49% increase) delivering the same levels of outputs/outcomes and return. This equates to a cost of circa £46,000 per job or £1.35m per acre of net developable land. Given the very significant increase in costs against the original business case for the same outcomes, the project is no longer considered value for money.

PQ 9	Ms Miller, Bromyard	When will the cabinet member responsible do something about the lack of planning enforcement seen in this county as is evidenced by the wide-scale disregard of the planning process locally here in Tedstone Delamere, with challenging behaviour by a handful of people to the detriment of our natural environment putting frustration and confusion in the minds of law-abiding neighbours.	Cabinet member infrastructure and transport
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Response:
Thank you Ms Miller, I have answered similar questions around this site in my earlier responses here which I hope you will find useful and I am very aware of the level of public interest in this case and will now follow it closely. I understand that the planning enforcement officers are aware of this complaint, presuming this is the case reported to the council about caravans on land adjacent to the woodland near the Sapey Valley. Planning laws apply to all and I will ensure that that is understood by all residents.