

Appendix 1 - 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>			
<p>Supplementary Question:</p> <p>Our property is adjacent to the Wigga road in Rowlestone (running from the church to Balls Cross) - The Old Vicarage, Rowlestone. Over the last 20 years since we have lived here the road has become increasingly potholed and dangerous for driving - now even for walking on. It is frequently flooded as the drains cannot cope with the amount of water running down the road and is too often covered in debris. A response to my last complaint initiated some markings on the road for proposed filling in of some potholes - these markings have now worn off due to the recent inclement weather. Since then 2 letters have been received from Balfour Beatty indicating repairs to the main roads out of Rowlestone but completely ignoring the Wigga road, which is in a much worse state than those indicated on their maps (with perhaps the exception of the end of the road which runs to the A465.) These references are C1219-A465 to The Vroe Rowlestone & C1219-The Vineyard/Court Road Rowlestone. Surely if road repairs are to be done in the immediate vicinity, then why not complete the job in Rowlestone and finally repair the Wigga road whilst Balfour Beatty are in the area?</p>			
Response from the cabinet member:			

The Council had £4.5 million less to spend on the public realm for pothole repair and resurfacing. Roads are surveyed and assessed on a risk matrix and are ranked on a priority work programme for resurfacing. Potholes are ranked by severity and limited resources are focused on addressing the most critical repairs. Two roads in Rowlestone, the lower and upper roads, were being addressed due to the damage suffered and the increasing priority. Contact would be made with Ms Miller to discuss the latest situation.

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
------	-----------------------	--	--

Response:
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.

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.

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
------	-----------------------	--	---

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
------	--------------------------	---	---

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.

Supplementary Question:

It would appear that because of the budgetary cuts referred to, anyone is now able to establish a residential development in open countryside and sort out the details later. If I and others would like to reside in this way, on land we own within the County, what is the Council's position?

Response from the cabinet member:

Unrestricted development was not permitted in the county and enforcement would occur where necessary. There was limited resource which might delay investigation but cases would be addressed and consequences applied.

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
------	--------------------------	---	--

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
------	-------------------------	---	--

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.

Supplementary Question:

After close to a year of taxpayer funding and council ownership what, if any, fully costed renovation plans for Maylord are now being considered?

Cabinet member response (cabinet member commissioning, procurement and assets):

Only two units are currently vacant which shows the influx of small independent operators, including arts and culture which is bringing a new lease of life to the facility. A review will be undertaken of Maylords to develop a longer term strategy which should be available in May. The focus will be on independent operators, social value, town investment plan (including the use of educational and skills training) and culture.

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
------	-----------------------	---	--

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.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you for your reply. I am delighted to learn the current frequency of rubbish collection cannot be reduced for at least the next 2 years though it sounds that the service could be cut once the contract ends. My concern also focuses on fly-tipping; according to Hereford's Domestic Services Manager – the incidence of reported fly tipping – after lockdown in June last year – increased by 95% in July, 41% in August and a further 87% in September – and by 52% in the final quarter of the year – and unfortunately has increased at a faster rate still this January. This is a health threatening blight in the countryside and provides a breeding ground for rats. How does this environmentally sensitive Council propose to eliminate the causes of AND the dangers from this illegal dumping.

Cabinet member response;

The figures in the supplementary question were queried and there was doubt about who the domestic services manager was; clarification was required on both points. The incidence of fly tipping was scandalous and a focus was required on its causes. Austerity had reduced the resources in the anti-social behaviour team and the capacity to undertake enforcement. A cross-party discussion was in progress concerning fly tipping and littering to determine how the littering policy could be updated and what enforcement could be undertaken against fly tipping. There was a suggestion that fly tipping was undertaken consistently by rogue traders. Scrutiny would be engaged in future arrangements to address the problem.

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	Cabinet member
------	-------------------------	---	----------------

		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?	environment, economy and skills
<p>Response:</p> <p>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.</p>			
<p>Supplementary Question:</p> <p>Thank you for the answer detailing the development cost of the Ross Enterprise Park as an outcome of circa £46k per job or £1.35M per acre of developable land. Can you please provide the benchmark figure in the same terms of outcome value per job that is considered cost effective by the Council for the project to proceed?</p>			
<p>Cabinet member response:</p> <p>A written answer would be provided.</p> <p><u><i>Written response provided on 15 March:</i></u></p> <p>The cost per job is only one factor considered in the assessment of a business case for a project, it is not the sole determinant. The council's business case assessment is compliant with the 'The Green Book', the government's guidance for appraisal and evaluation (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938046/The_Green_Book_2020.pdf). For example, a business case for each project considers the financial return on investment, how a project contributes to the strategic priorities of the council, any other outputs or outcomes a project may deliver as well as jobs created. Therefore, given the range of factors, neither the council nor government has a specific job created benchmark figure per level of investment. It should also be noted that the cost per job identified (£46K) in the initial answer is only based on a project to establish development ready plots, it does not include the cost of developing the buildings required to create the actual jobs. Therefore, the overall cost per job would be higher than indicated.</p>			
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
<p>Response:</p> <p>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</p>			

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.