

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 27 OCTOBER 2022**Question 1****From: Mr P McKay, Leominster****To: Cabinet Member, Infrastructure & Transport**

Referencing 21 July question, would you add a paragraph to the Parish Submission part of the Research Guidance, https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1861/research_guidance, to incorporate the CRF issue, CRF being a non-statutory term introduced by Government Guidelines (Ministry of Town and Country Planning Circular No. 81, 1950), being greenways that Parish Meetings advised that public were entitled to use with vehicles, but mainly (not only) used as a footpath, without explaining how to record CRF and that are shown on Herefordshire Definitive Map as Footpath, to ensure that this matter of fact is acknowledged and addressed in the review of how the Parish Submissions are held and practicalities of making them more widely available, the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (draft) that acknowledges that shown byways and bridleways are fragmented, the 2021-41 Place Shaping Local Plan, and the Local Transport Plan?

Response

Thank you very much for your question. I believe the council already provides a Public Rights of Way Glossary of Terms which is available on the website, the CRF reference is covered and detailed as:

'CRF - Carriage road footpath - A non-statutory term used during the compilation of the first definitive maps for some routes that were intended to be recorded as RUPPs - to describe a route that was considered to carry vehicles but in actual fact used mainly by the public as a footpath.'

For completeness RUPPS are also described.

'RUPPs – Roads Used as Public Paths. A type of highway recorded on the original definitive map.

The right of the public over RUPPs was unclear and remaining RUPPs were reclassified as restricted byways in 2006.'

There are no plans to add anything further to the Research Guidance at this time. If I have misunderstood the question please come back to me.

Supplementary question

I do not find any Public Rights of Way Glossary of Terms that includes CRF, that you believe is available on your website, and I ask if you could clarify how/where it may be viewed with a link to it, and if not presently on website if you would add it, in same way and time as you intend adding the List of Anomalies?

Response

The cabinet member confirmed that the Public Rights of Way Glossary can be downloaded at <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/4279/prow-glossary>, and that a link will be added in due course to the PROW website to increase the documents' visibility and availability.

Question 2

From: Name and address supplied

To: Cabinet Member, Children and Families

It was alleged in July at Full Council that the FII figures in Herefordshire are alarmingly high. In Full Council on Friday, a Member asked whether an audit of the FII figures had been done.

The Deputy Leader replied:

“I believe we have been looking into how many cases are linked to this I believe officers have already given a commitment to look into that. My understanding is that we as an authority are not in a position where the number of cases we have is unusual when considered against other authorities. I believe that is the position.”

Can the audit data on which these reassurances are based be published in the written answer to this question, so that Members and the public can see the grounds on which public reassurances on this critical safeguarding issue have been given?

Response

There is no evidence that we have seen that FII figures in Herefordshire are ‘alarmingly high’. The Deputy Leader correctly stated at the meeting of the Full Council that the service is engaged in an ongoing and current review of cases to clarify how many are linked to FII, recognising that statements in the public domain about the rates are a matter of public interest and concern.

The early indications are of a low incidence but the work is not concluded. The activity will be concluded by Friday 18 November and we are content to publish the data after that date.

Supplementary question

My question was about the concerning FII figures. Last week at the full [cabinet] the deputy leader reassured members about FII cases with these words ‘we as an authority are not in a position where the number of cases we have is unusual when considered against other authorities’. It now turns out that this reassurance was premature as the urgently needed audit of FII cases has not been completed. The written answer to my question from the cabinet member for children had confirmed that the audit is at an early stage only and will not be complete until mid-November, over four months after concerns were first raised by members in July. I am concerned that once again a reassurance has been provided to the public without, it appears, there being evidence to back it up.

At the ‘a common bond’ meeting last week, we were in a room of traumatised parents, many of whom say that they have been falsely accused of FII and are living with the devastating ramifications of such accusations. The council is now the subject of very serious allegations, in essence that the authority has been weaponising FII against families. It’s striking that when undertaking the much delayed audit the authority has not sought independent scrutiny of its actions, laying itself open to accusations that it has opted to mark its own homework.

The cabinet member in her written answer to me commits only to publishing the FII audit evidence sometime after the 18th of November. Will she commit today to publishing the evidence on the 18th of November, so that we can all understand on what basis officers are challenging the lived experience of the numerous families who are claiming to be victims of false FII allegations?

Response

The cabinet member explained that a systems search had been carried out and the result was as set out in the written answer. The audit that had been commissioned was in addition to this. If the data was ready then it would be published on the 18 November.