

## **PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 24 NOVEMBER 2022**

### **Question 1**

**From: Mr C Wood, Hereford**

**To: Cabinet Member, Infrastructure & Transport**

Please can the cabinet member confirm if the countywide pavement review has been completed and what work has been undertaken as a result of this.

### **Response**

Our service provider, BBLP, have undertaken a review of the highway network and have identified an additional 10 sites on the network where work is required to improve local access arrangements for residents using wheelchairs, mobility scooters or pushchairs. The two sites originally identified, Harrow Road and Plough Lane are both now accessible to all. We are planning to deliver 5 of the remaining sites in this financial year and, subject to budget availability, will programme the rest for early 23/24

We are conscious that this will not solve all issues across the network, our focus is to ensure that our city, town and village centres are fully accessible so that a wider portion of the population can benefit from our work. We welcome approaches from individuals or groups should they have routes that fall outside of the centres highlighted above.

### **Supplementary question**

To ensure that the disabled community are aware of what changes have been made to the pavement network in Herefordshire, can Herefordshire council release details of what work has been completed on their website and social media platforms so it can be accessed by everyone who may require it.

### **Response**

The cabinet member confirmed that works would be appropriately signposted once completed.

### **Question 2**

**From: Mr A Thomas, Lugwardine**

**To: Cabinet Member, Commissioning, Procurement and Assets**

Is the inspection and maintenance of the counties historic buildings the responsibility of the council, if not who is responsible for their upkeep?

### **Response**

Thank you for your question. The Council is not responsible for the inspection or maintenance of Listed Buildings except where there may be a breach of the regulations. Owners are able to carry out repairs to historic buildings that are statutory listed on a like for like basis without requiring Listed Building Consent. It is a criminal offence to carryout unauthorised works to a Listed Building and where the Council are informed of such works it will investigate and take the appropriate action. The following pages on the council's website will enable you to view the heritage buildings and its owners: [Listed and historic buildings – Herefordshire Council](#)

### **Question 3**

**From: HH Judge Daniel Pearce-Higgins**

**To: Cabinet Member, Commissioning, Procurement and Assets**

From 2004 to December 2019, I was a Circuit Judge on the Midland Circuit sitting frequently in Hereford Shirehall, Court 1. Since 2016 I have been the Honorary Recorder for the City of Hereford.

In 2017 we celebrated the bicentenary of the opening of the Shirehall. The building (and Court 1 in particular) is a significant connection with Hereford's history and could make an important part in its future if repaired. I support the argument put forward in paragraphs 28 and 29 of the report.

If the Council wishes Hereford, and the County, to be seen as a viable and independent authority how can that be done without the benefit of the facilities, (in particular a historic Crown Court) that a restored Shirehall would provide and the dignity and status that would accompany it?

**Response**

Thank you for the comment and your continued commitment to maintaining a full crown court presence in Herefordshire. I agree entirely that in the interests of residents of the county that this is essential. The Council fully supports working with partners to promote good quality and effective services for our local residents and businesses. Recent events at Shirehall were unforeseen and unexpected and we appreciate the understanding of His Majesty's Courts & Tribunal Service (HMC&TS) in this matter. We are working hard with HMC&TS to offer a temporary solution so that a courts service will continue until a long-term plan for Shirehall is determined.

**Supplementary question**

Why delay?

It is been two and half years since the damage was done.

There is no alternative long-term solution to the provision of a Crown Court, other than restoration of the Shirehall.

The greater the delay the greater the cost.

**Response**

The cabinet member referred to the report on the agenda for the meeting, which set out the reasons why a delay was being considered. The support for retention of a Crown Court was welcomed.

**Question 4**

**From: Ms Reid, Hereford**

**To: Cabinet Member, Children and Families**

There is high rate\* of Children Looked After in Herefordshire; forecast overspend of £5.2 million. The average cost of each CLA is about £40,000 each year. The rate\* of care proceedings is high and expensive. Support is relatively inexpensive and inadequate. For example, Ofsted criticised the "response to pre-birth children and babies" in effect the inadequate support of perinatal women. About 50% more babies are put into care than expected\*.

In my opinion, the transformation funding report does not at pace address these matters (eg Paragraph 11). Therefore, would the Cabinet recommend at pace:

- Using Family Group Conferences by teams than ECHo
- Increased investment in family support
- Implementation of a policy to reduce the CLA (eg by reunification)
- Reducing care proceedings?

\* compared to statistical neighbours

## **Response**

As you correctly identify, there has for a number of years been a relatively high rate of children looked after in Herefordshire and safely reducing the rate is a matter that the Director and his team have been focused on throughout the year.

It should be noted that Herefordshire has a proud history of supporting asylum seekers and refugees and the cohort of children looked after in Herefordshire includes 19 (5%) who came to us as unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

The rate at which children become looked after has been reducing throughout this year (following a rise last year) attributed to improved practice and increased management oversight and there is now increased focus on supporting those children for whom there is a plan to return to their families to be reunited within an appropriate and reasonable timescale, and without un-necessary delay.

Whilst the transformation funding report does not include this level of detail, I can confirm that the Director and his team are already developing plans to develop and extend the use of Family Group Conferencing in the New Year and are engaged with the community and voluntary sectors to explore options to increase the availability of early help and family support. A strategy for reducing the numbers of children looked after, including an extended Edge of Care resource (to both reduce the number of children coming into our care and increase the numbers of children reunited with their families where it is safe and appropriate to do so) is also already in development, and as the Cabinet Member I support this important work.

## **Supplementary question**

Advise the Quarter 1 "Working Budget" and "Outturn" for 2022-23 for the directorate for:

- Children Looked After\*
- Support for families\*
- Care proceedings\*

Itemised if possible

## **Response**

The cabinet member confirmed that a written response would be provided following the meeting.