

## **PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 20 July 2023**

### **Question 1**

**From: Janette Ward, Tarrington**

**To: cabinet member, community services and assets**

I am concerned whether The Shire Hall is a suitable building for The City Library. Now that Hereford is a university city, I believe the library is an opportunity for university students and the public to benefit from a comprehensive, modern service, like The Hive in Worcester, which is a student and public facility. It is a joy to visit The Hive. Will it be a joy to visit The Shire Hall in Hereford?

I understand that The Shire Hall will require investment of several million pounds in order to repair, convert and restore the building. What are the plans for this work? The library would surely need to be installed in the building over several floors.

I look forward to your response to my concerns and to a public and university library which we can all be proud of.

### **Response**

Cabinet approved the decision in June to review and consider the best possible location for the library and learning centre in Hereford to ensure that it achieves the ambitions and vision of an outstanding library in Herefordshire. The review has considered a number of options with both Maylord Orchards and The Shirehall being shortlisted for the detailed comparison. The cabinet are fully committed to developing and providing a library to match the ambitions of the world class Museum project, utilising an historic civic building to develop into a cultural hub in the city centre. The review has concluded that the space and opportunity provided by Shirehall will create scope for the comprehensive, modern service which you have outlined. The costs and the design of the project will be set out in a Full Business Case to be developed and provided back to Cabinet in October.

### **Question 2**

**From: Nina Shield, Ledbury**

**To: cabinet member, community services and assets**

Will the Cabinet commit to ensuring that the original Stronger Towns grant money will be spent on fitting out and restocking the library and not be absorbed into the expenditure required for the building refurbishment?

### **Response**

The Cabinet and officers have been engaged with the Stronger Towns Board over the proposed changes and this will continue to inform the full business case to be developed for October. It is proposed that the Shirehall will provide an outstanding and vibrant cultural hub together with a showpiece library and learning centre and the detailed funding envelope will be provided as part of the next phase.

### **Question 3**

**From: Dr N Geeson, Hereford**

**To: cabinet member, community services and assets**

The Strategic Review is very narrow in scope, and is not a complete assessment of reasons to discard The Maylords and prefer Shire Hall for a new Library. The recommendation to proceed with the Shire Hall is therefore premature. The Review does not mention the needs of the disabled, the elderly, parents with young children, jobseekers visiting the Job Centre next door, and everyone else who would like their new Library close to where they are already doing their shopping. Why not, and why are the superior building features of the more modern Maylords, such as lesser annual costs for heating, better noise control for a calm space, and lesser ongoing maintenance demands, also not considered?

### **Response**

The Shirehall can provide a varied offer of activities, education and space to enable additional services and support to compliment the modern library being proposed, which is demonstrated in the strategic review. The operational costs of running the building including business rates and service charges will be less than those proposed at Maylord Orchards, further detail on the costs will be provided as part of the full business case.

### **Question 4**

**From: Pamela Jakeman, Clehonger**

**To: cabinet member, community services and assets**

On page 12 of the Strategic Review (Appendix 1) there is reference to the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 which states that a Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons who live, work or study in the area.

Bearing this in mind, with the long delay added to the timescale for the opening of a new library by this review (potentially more than two years), will a more appropriate home be provided for the temporary library? One that's in a central location, with the capacity to display a larger proportion of the book stock from Broad Street and the space to continue with popular activities such as Storytime and school visits, as well as providing a 'Warm Space' during the winter months.

### **Response**

There will be a temporary library provision provided at the Museum Resource and Learning Centre, Friars Street. The library will also continue to offer customers free access to audio and e-books through Borrowbox. All customers will continue to have the facility to order books from any library, and to collect them at any site including Friars St and Belmont library. The library bus will also be recommissioned to support wider community services such as Talk Community, Customer services, Healthy Lifestyles and Age UK as well as promoting libraries.

The council is also in discussions with Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to brief them on the current situation and the planned way forward to ensure that our statutory duties are met.

### **Question 5**

**From: Paul Andrews, Hereford**

**To: cabinet member, community services and assets**

On 30 June 2022 Cabinet approved a decision to commit up to £8m toward the Hereford Museum and Art Gallery project, and up to £0.5m for the Maylord Orchards Library and Learning Resource Centre project from capital receipt reserves. That decision then required Full Council permission to amend the capital programme for these two projects. That permission was granted, almost unanimously and by several current Cabinet members, on the 29th July 2022. Could the Cabinet member, after liaising with the Section 151 and Monitoring Officer confirm the date Full Council will be similarly asked to adjust the capital programme in line with this Cabinet proposal. And can that reply also confirm that this decision to add funding to the capital programme was taken as a singular decision and cannot be retrospectively separated without the full approval of Full Council.

### **Response**

The cabinet will follow all appropriate and constitutional requirements to be brought forward in October following the full business case review.

### **Question 6**

**From: Gemma Davies, Kings Caple**

**To: cabinet member, community services and assets**

Within the risk and opportunities section it states 'we are confident that the library refurbishment will be delivered within the financial envelope' and in the mitigation it stated that a detailed cost report will be identified within the full business case. Please could you confirm what this financial envelope is?

### **Response**

We are confident that the library and learning centre can be delivered within the existing Stronger Towns grant.

### **Question 7**

**From: Jason Davies, Kings Caple**

**To: cabinet member, community services and assets**

At paragraph 32 and 33 of the report it states that assessments have been undertaken to assess equality implications. At para 33 it states specifically that equality impact assessments have been undertaken on both the Shirehall and Maylord Orchards. Within the report and the appendices there does not appear to be any evidence of this. Please could you provide evidence of the equality review and, specifically, provide the full equality impact assessments for the Shirehall and the Maylord Orchard sites as required under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## **Response**

Following the Political Group Consultation, all relevant EIA's will be published ahead of cabinet.

## **Question 8**

**From: Suzanne Johns, Hereford**

**To: cabinet member community services and assets**

Within the report it states that there is a list of stakeholders who have been consulted during the review and that their comments are contained within the appendices. They are not. Please provide the full responses from stakeholders.

## **Response**

**Hereford BID** – considered that Maylord as a cultural hub represented better plans for the location of the library. Their members were concerned that Maylord Orchards would not receive investment without the library. They also commented that Shirehall was an important venue for concerts.

**Herefordshire Cultural Partnership** – shared the request for comments with their members. Comments received included from:

- **Chair of 3 Choirs Committee** – impact to 3 choirs festival is minimal.
- **Encore Enterprise** – the library would be a standalone project in Maylord Orchards as Encore, Rural Media and Powerhouse are all planning to locate elsewhere. The cultural centre has not been nor can be realised with only one cultural organisation. This is no longer a suitable location. Shirehall assembly hall is used for meetings and musical rehearsals and is the largest concert hall in the county. Putting the library in the only concert hall would likely be met with stiff opposition from the community.

**Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport** - welcomed the fact the council had been engaging with them and had kept them up to date with the process. They were keen that there was ongoing engagement and consultation with partners, stakeholders and service users throughout the process and a clear direction of travel and programme for getting to the delivery of the permanent library. The council will ensure that they are appraised as things develop and a further meeting has been arranged for August to brief them on the outcome of the Cabinet decision.

**Joint Action for Herefordshire Libraries** – a meeting with JAHL representatives was held and both were pleased with the opportunity for the review as they were not convinced that Maylord Orchards was a sufficient location for the new library. They wish to work with the council to support and promote an improved library facility.

## **Question 9**

**From: John Harrington, Middleton-on-the-Hill**

**To: cabinet member, community services and assets**

Could the Cabinet Member give clarity on the following sentence included in the Risk Management Section (paragraph 45) of this Cabinet report, in relation to the Library and

Resource Centre item;

'The Stronger Towns Board have informally signalled that they would accept the amendment if Cabinet decided to proceed with this location'. I find this an extraordinary statement. To whom, and by whom, precisely, was that indication given?

The Cabinet cannot be informed in their decision making, regards understanding risk, by simple hearsay. This would leave the Council unacceptably exposed to threat of Judicial Review or compensation claims from contactors who are already engaged and mobilised to carry out the work at Maylords. It may leave individual Cllrs exposed to risk of liability too now that this unacceptable and inappropriate comment regards risk has been highlighted by myself.

### **Response**

The Stronger Towns Board (STB) have been engaged during the strategic review and have been informed of the proposed changes and recommendations. The board have considered the Stronger Towns outcomes that were agreed in the original business case and how these will either be achieved or exceeded within the Shirehall. The STB are a key partner and the cabinet and officers will work closely with them during the next phase.

### **Question 10**

**From: Mr P McKay, Leominster**

**To: cabinet member, transport and infrastructure**

When Morrisons in Leominster was built footpath ZC22 across the site was not diverted to follow pedestrian routes, and Morrisons Agent have consulted Leominster Town Council about a proposed diversion through car park. Leominster Town Council have suggested that the footpath be diverted clear of car park to connect to the service road pavement, only to be advised by Morrisons Agent that this was their initial proposal but that you consider that this route is not acceptable, the footpath portion being significantly shorter. Present proposal put forward uses on site pedestrian routes, but part remains across car park between where enters car park and where proposed diversion commences without a marked pedestrian route. Hence I ask if your response could be reviewed with Morrisons Agent initial and Leominster Town Council proposal being accepted or marked pedestrian route being included?

### **Response**

The Council will ensure that discussions with the Agent acting on behalf of Morrisons are reopened to deliver the most appropriate solution for the residents of Leominster.

### **Question 11**

**From: Carl Hume, Hereford**

**To: cabinet member, roads and regulatory services**

Why is it not possible to apply for a residents parking permit if your address is on St Owens Street, whilst it is possible on neighbouring streets? My son, who is not a high earner, needs a vehicle to travel for work at varied locations at different times of day and struggles to pay the parking charges. It seems unfair that he and others with addresses on St Owens Street cannot

apply for a parking permit, whilst their close neighbours, East Street for example, can do so. Could someone please explain the logic behind this?

### **Response**

Unfortunately it is not clear from the question where the resident lives, whether in the part of St. Owen Street which has a residents parking permit scheme. Or the part closest to town, i.e. Bath Street junction lights to St. Peters Square, which does not have such a scheme. We receive numerous requests for permits from residents who are not eligible to apply for a permit as their address is not included within the resident parking scheme. The link, [https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/16025/residents\\_parking\\_permit\\_application\\_-\\_explanatory\\_information.pdf](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/16025/residents_parking_permit_application_-_explanatory_information.pdf), contains details of all our resident parking areas, with parts of St Owens Street being contained within the Bartonsham Area.

If the property does not fall within the Bartonsham Area then two options are available: Purchase of an out of hours permit 5pm to 7am; and discounted season tickets for the car parks.

The details of these and other discounts are available here: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/parking-1/council-car-parks/2>

### **Question 12**

**From: Cam Wood, Hereford**

**To: cabinet member, transport and infrastructure**

Please can the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure confirm that he has seen the letter from the Minister for Roads and Local Transport, Richard Holden MP (Dated, 20th of March 2023) in relation to my recent pavement campaign and acknowledges the reminder of the council's responsibilities in regards to the upkeep of our pavement network.

### **Response**

The letter referred to was received by the previous Cabinet Member under the old administration. A copy of the letter has been passed to me and I have been made aware by officers of the council's responsibilities in relation to the maintenance and improvement of the footway network where required.

### **Question 13**

**From: Paul Symonds, Ross-on-Wye**

**To: cabinet member, roads and regulatory services**

Zone 1 and 2 parking charges have increased to a point where I believe people endeavour to keep their stay to a minimum. This means visitors will do the bare minimum necessary in order not to have to buy an additional hour's parking. Applying charges in 30 minute rather than hourly increments would therefore mean motorists are more likely to pay for an additional half hour to give time for a more leisurely visit. Reducing the minimum period in this way would lead to additional revenue for local businesses if people aren't rushing to get back to a tight deadline.

Will the Cabinet member please amend current policy to impose charges in 30 minute rather than hourly increments for zone 1 and 2 car parks in Hereford, Ledbury, Leominster and Ross-On-Wye?

### **Response**

When we set our car parking charges we consider the turnover of spaces the length of stay, and spare capacity. These being the most important elements to balance when charging for the further hour.

The current charging regime was decided upon after close consideration of the need to have an easily understood regime that encourages visitors to spend time at their destination. Additionally, the Council recognises the need to have charges which work for our city and market towns individually.

What is important is the need for drivers to top up their parking if required, as they are in town so they can stay longer if they need to, although it is acknowledged that this is increments of one hour by using our RingGo payment service by phone or App, whilst ensuring we retain provision for cash and card payments at our machines for all.

It should be noted that 30 mins, short stay parking, is available on street.

Notwithstanding, it is my intention to carry out an update of our parking strategy when resources permit and at this time officers will be instructed to consider increments of 30 minutes.