

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.

No supplementary question received

Question 2

From: Nina Shields, 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.

Supplementary Question

To: cabinet member, community services and assets

If the Cabinet are not prepared to ensure that the Stronger Towns money is 'ring fenced' for the fitting out and restocking of the Library, how will they find an equivalent amount of money to ensure the same standard of fitting out and restocking?

Response

Subject to a Stronger Towns Board meeting, if it is found that the monies are not devoted to this project, then it will be funded from cabinets other budgets for projects.

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.

No supplementary question received

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.

No supplementary question received

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.

Supplementary Question

To: cabinet member, community services and assets

Sorry, I am a bit confused by the non-answer. I asked a specific question. Can someone please confirm that to adjust or remove projects from the capital programme, any such decision must go to Full Council?

So whilst Cabinet can vote on their preference, recommendation (B - 'The decision to relocate the Library and Learning Centre to the Maylord Orchards site is cancelled, all related contracts and agreements relating to the project be terminated and the capital project is removed from the capital programme', must go to Full Council before any such action is carried out? I ask this particularly in relation to Recommendation (D) delegated authority to Delegated authority is given to the Corporate Director for Community Wellbeing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community Services and Assets to take all operational decisions (within a to c above) and as is necessary to develop the Full Business Case, and to submit the Project

Adjustment Request to the Hereford Towns Board and the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC), if required.

Response

The Council will follow all appropriate and constitutional requirements it needs to in order to ensure that the correct procedure is in place.

It was clarified that any changes or additions to the capital programme would be directed to Full Council for a decision, but highlighted whether or not to cancel the Maylord Orchards project was a decision for Cabinet.

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.

Supplementary Question

Your answer still does not make this clear. You state that you are confident that the financial envelope for Maylord orchards will be met. How are you judging this confidence? You have no business plan, no idea of cost of labour, materials, surveys and building consent; no idea of what adjustments will be required to make the building accessible. Furthermore the current building will need significant monies spent on it just to make it safe for people to use - it's the reason why the decision was made to mothball the building until we came out of the uncertain financial crisis.

The money for Maylords was to be taken from the stronger towns money as the lion's share of the council's investment was based on the purchase of the leasehold. What if stronger towns don't allow it? What if it costs more?

This decision is absolutely absurd and I beg of you to not do this when we have a project literally days away from starting and with a huge risk of losing it all.

Response

Thank you for your response, your comments have been noted.

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.

No supplementary question received

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 JAHF 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.

Supplementary Question

To: cabinet member, community services and assets

This is unbelievable. You have not engaged with the very people that the Maylord Orchards was all about, young people and vulnerable groups. The whole purpose of moving to Maylord Orchards was to take advantage of the fact that the footfall of those shopping or socialising in town could bring. The pull of Primark, Wilko, Poundland, the Children's Bookshelf and other stores was the main reason for using Maylords as a site. Young people wanted this project and you are once again ignoring the voice of the child.

I find it absolutely unfathomable that you have not sought to engage with the youth council at Hereford city council or indeed the City Council itself to ask their opinions of what they believe is right for the city. Not one of the Cabinet is based within Hereford, meaning that you cannot have the links into the communities that those two organisations have.

You have also not engaged with anyone from an equalities perspective, those of whom are the key users that the original plan sought to bring in. You are expecting disabled people to use a basement entrance to a building, treating them as second class citizens. As a disabled woman, I am disgusted.

Why haven't you consulted with the groups that the library project was all about?

Response

The Shirehall would be fully compatible with disability regulations and Cabinet would continue consulting with all groups including those that represent the views of children as the project moves along. The Cabinet are committed to Hereford and ensuring the residents are getting the best services.

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.

Supplementary Question

To: cabinet member, community services and assets

My question has not been answered so I ask that you show your Cabinet colleagues - and the Board of the Hereford Stronger Towns and public the respect they deserve - and the sentence I refer to is removed from this report, so that your Cabinet colleagues can make decisions based on solid facts only, now or at a later date, and not, at best, unsubstantiated heresay.

As my request above is asking for my original question to be dealt with, in accordance with the Nolan Principles, I will ask my secondary question too.

As the Cabinet Member who was in charge of the portfolio for many years can Cllr Bramer tell me why the Shirehall did not have a regular schedule of maintenance whilst he was in post and why no surveys were carried out to mitigate that potential damage that the lack of regular maintenance regime might be inflicting on the historic Grade II listed building.

Response

The Stronger Towns Board have said that should Cabinet choose to take forward the Shirehall, they are willing to consider a revised full business case.

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.

No supplementary question received

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, 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>

Supplementary Question

To: cabinet member, roads and regulatory services

Thank you for your reply. I would like to ask a supplementary question and note that the response from yourselves does not address my original question. The address is [supplied]. I understand this address does not fall within the scheme. My question is, why not, what is the reason? With properties within close proximity being allowed permits and all paying the same council tax it seems a very unfair system. Could you please consider including those addresses excluded, or please explain why they are not.

Response

A written response will be provided.

Thank you for your supplementary question provided at the recent cabinet meeting and my apologies for a tardy response.

If I might explain further. Resident permit schemes are introduced by way of a legal Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). When introduced consideration is given to which properties should be eligible to apply for a permit(s). As part this determination process there would have been a consultation process involving local residents and ward member(s) etc. This is partly to ensure there is enough parking availability for the residents of the scheme. The Council's

resident parking schemes are managed in line with the existing policy in order to maintain balance and consistency across the County. One of the criteria for resident permit eligibility is that schemes are not considered in locations where the majority of properties that front the street are commercial premises. The area of [address supplied] that you live is a commercial area, and the limited parking in these locations is prioritised for businesses to allow customers to park for short periods. By allowing a resident permit to be issued to you, and other residents, would likely reduce the amount of spaces available to customers of the local businesses. The list of properties that are eligible to apply for a resident permit for the different schemes is detailed on the council's website, this list has been previously provided to you.

We receive numerous requests for permits from residents who are unfortunately not eligible to apply for a permit as their address is not included within the resident's scheme(s). If we allowed applicants whose addresses are not eligible to be included within the permit scheme(s), it would put pressure on the limited number of resident parking spaces and make it difficult for existing residents to be able to park near to where they live.

As I informed recently, there are a couple of other options available to you. These I consider are worth repeating for you. One, out of hours permits 5pm to 9am and second, discounted season tickets for the car parks. The details of this and other discounts are available here: [Council car parks – Herefordshire Council](#)

I trust this explanation enables your further understanding as to why there is no residents parking available for your address.

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.

Supplementary Question

To: cabinet member, transport and infrastructure

The minister for Roads and Local Transport, Richard Holden MP asked you to provide an explanation as to why it took 4 years for Herefordshire Council to act on concerns that I first

raised in 2018, I think that it would benefit the disabled community living here in Herefordshire if that explanation could be given in public as it affects us all.

Response

I have read the letter that you refer to and I look forward to meeting with you and the Leader, next week where we will be able to go through this and all the inquiries you have mentioned.

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.

No supplementary question received