

Agenda item no. 6 - Questions from members of the Council

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ1	Cllr Aubrey Oliver, Saxon Gate	In the years ended 31 March 2021, 2022 and 2023 how many of the children in the care of the council in the age group 16 to 18 were classified as being in neither education or employment and what percentage of the total number of children in our care in each year was this? Is this an issue which is particularly pronounced in boys or girls? Please provide a gender break down of how many children in our care were classified as NEET.	Cabinet member children and young people

Response:

The figures below are taken from the published DfE “At Risk” table which are published on a quarterly basis and form part of CCIS reporting by each local authority in England.

	Cohort	CLA NEET (no.)	CLA NEET (%)	Male (No.s)	Female (No.s)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Mar-23	33	5	15.2%	3	2	60%	40%
Mar-22	36	2	5.6%	2	0	100%	0%
Mar-21	35	3	8.6%	3	0	100%	0%

It is important to note that the cohort of children in care for comparator purposes is the 16 and 17 yr olds only (or 16-18yrs as it is often expressed).

Supplementary question:

The information already provided on this issue is somewhat reassuring. There has been a National Statistic issue that with 16-18 year olds, 1/6 of them are neither in employment or education. Our March '23 cohort roughly coincides with these figures. Are we continuing to support these young people, to ensure that they do not become homeless?

Response to supplementary question from Cabinet Member for Children and Young People:

A written response would be provided.

Written response provided on 11 January 2014:

For those up to the age of 18 all young people in care have a Virtual School Education Officer (VSEO) who will be working with the social worker and carer to assist them in finding suitable courses and apprenticeships. They continue to have termly Personal Education Plans (PEPs), even if they are NEET. I would say that the 16-18 cohort of CLA is well supported.

MQ 2	Cllr David Hitchiner, Stoney Street	Community transport provides a valuable service to many communities in Herefordshire enabling able and less able people to get to and from Hereford in particular. The service is hampered by the limited places in the centre of Hereford that service users can be dropped off without breaking the Law, in particular at the back entrance to Maylords Orchard. Could the Cabinet Member explain what steps are being taken to resolve this issue?	Cabinet members Transport and Infrastructure and Roads and Regulatory Services
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Response:

I am very aware of the importance of community transport schemes' ability to drop off passengers as close to their desired destinations, which is why the council provide a parking permit scheme to Dore Community Transport to allow the use of the council's car parks. I am pleased that the issue about dropping off opposite the Green Dragon, in Broad Street Hereford, has recently been resolved by explaining the rules about street parking, whereby a user may use a loading bay in the street to allow passengers to board or alight the vehicle given that the driver will be present.

I understand that the circumstances at the Maylords' access road is a little different in that this is a Bus Stop which does not permit stopping in the location, except for buses – this is so that buses have full access as they arrive to the kerbside to allow users to safely get on and off. There is, however, a public car park directly next to this location with a lift into the shopping centre and therefore Community Transport users can arrange pick-ups and collections from this point. If the driver is with the vehicle, then there would be no requirement to pay in the car park, as per our enforcement protocols, should the parking permit not be available.

Supplementary question:

Would the cabinet member agree that a solution needs to be found regarding the parking tickets allocated to community transport vehicles parked in order to collect elderly and disabled passengers?

Response to supplementary question from Cabinet Member transport and infrastructure:

A written response would be provided.

Written response provided on 11 January 2024:

A meeting was held between the Parking Services Manager and the Organiser of the Community Transport operator, the following was agreed:

- i) Their current permit scheme is to be amended such that the vehicles will be allowed to park in any council operated car park and in on street pay and display bays*
- ii) The Parking Service is to provide the operator with a map of the city that highlights all available locations*
- iii) That a dispensation be given for liveried vehicles to use the taxi rank located adjacent to the Maylords centre*

The Organiser is happy with the agreement.

MQ 3	Cllr Elizabeth Foxton, Eign Hill	Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 What impact has this Act, and ministerial announcements and comment associated with it and the matter of Nutrient Neutrality, had on the council's plans to generate phosphate credits, through the creation of wetlands, to enable development to continue in areas where river pollution is high?	Cabinet member environment
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Response:

Cllr Foxton, thank you for your question, there has been no immediate impact on our credit scheme because of the proposed amendments in the levelling up bill. The Council followed DLUHC advice and continues to trade credits. Prudently, longer term investment decisions on further mitigation were paused for a few weeks whilst the likely impact of the government's proposals was assessed. I am pleased to say that I intend to bring a report to January Cabinet, setting out how we intend to provide mitigation that will not only clear the current backlog from the 2019 housing moratorium but also bring forward further mitigation to meet the requirement for 4400 homes identified in the local plan.

MQ 4	Cllr Liz Harvey, Ledbury North	The 800m City Link Road element of the Hereford City Centre Transport Package has, so far, cost over £6m more than was originally budgeted by previous Conservative administrations. The Southern Link Road was estimated to cost £27m (2015) and previous Conservative administrations failed to unlock Department of Transport funding because the business case could not be made to demonstrate its Value for Money. The Cabinet Member is on record stating that road infrastructure delivery costs have doubled in the last 18 months.	Cabinet member finance and corporate services
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		<p>What is the figure the Cabinet Member has in mind now for the projected delivery cost of the resurrected Southern Link Road project, and what is the current assessed probability that a Value for Money business case can be successfully made for this increased cost if one was unable to be made previously for the lower figure?</p>	
<p>Response:</p> <p>The pressures on the City Link Road costings have previously been reported to Cabinet</p> <p>Funding for the Southern Link Road was allocated via the Department of Transport, following the submission and approval of a business case by the Department of Transport. The subsequent decision to no longer proceed with the scheme led to the DfT reallocating the funding</p> <p>Certain elements of road construction costs have seen significant rises in the past couple of years. We are in the process of reviewing the details of the Southern Link Road scheme in light of the time elapsed since work on it was stopped in 2019. Part of this review includes a revised business case that will take into account changes in local traffic levels and will include a draft cost estimate of £35m to complete the scheme. This cost estimate includes allowances for inflation and contingencies for unforeseen events.</p> <p>The business case will then allow us to identify and secure the necessary funding. I remain as convinced as ever of the importance of the Southern Link Road to helping to tackle the problems of highway network resilience and traffic congestion in and around Hereford, and to promote sustainable travel in the city.</p> <p>As previously stated, the Business Case for the Southern Link Road will demonstrate Value for Money.</p>			
<p>Supplementary question:</p> <p>If the risk has not been assessed, despite the proposed decision for £10.3m spend on the project, please confirm. Please confirm how much it is reasonable for the council to spend before a risk assessment is made. Please provide detail to group leaders that the link road will only cost £35m.</p>			
<p>Response to supplementary question from Cabinet Member transport and infrastructure:</p> <p>£35m is the current figure for building of the SLR, utilising the same criteria for western bypass and eastern link road.</p>			