

**Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from members of the public**

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Ms Banks, Hereford	<p>A comment from central government, published by the Guardian Newspaper on January 30 stated that:</p> <p>“Ministers plan to push cash-strapped English councils to sell assets.”</p> <p>What is the position of Herefordshire Council regarding this proposal?</p>	Cabinet member finance and corporate services
<p><b>Response:</b> A balanced revenue budget is proposed for 2024/25. The proposal does not include plans to sell council assets to support the revenue budget in 2024/25.</p>			
PQ 2	Mr Banks, Hereford	<p>While there are significant reductions proposed for vacant posts across directorates, the plans are silent on executive pay. With the Chief Finance Officer highlighting 'unprecedented economic conditions' putting pressure on finances, what is being done to control senior management costs at the top? Is this being considered alongside frontline cuts?</p>	Cabinet member finance and corporate services
<p><b>Response:</b> The 2024/25 budget recognises that the council will need to transform as an organisation to ensure the future sustainability of the council and the services it delivers and this will require a review of the size and shape of the workforce to create a lean and resilient council for the future. The proposed savings, at Appendix B, reflect these transformation plans. In addition to removal of vacant posts across Directorates, the council-wide savings include additional measures: S1 Mutual Early Resignation Scheme 2024 and S3: Transformation (Target Operating Model). These proposals include a review of the council’s management structure, corporate services and business support functions across the council.</p>			
PQ 3	Ms Russell, Hereford	<p>Residents raised the importance of protecting community facilities and spaces, especially for vulnerable groups like the elderly. If any sale or change of use of current Council properties, such as community centres, is under consideration to raise capital, how would you ensure equivalent spaces and accessibility remains for those residents reliant on these services?</p>	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing

**Response:**

Thank you for your question. I can confirm that the council does not directly own or operate any community centres.

Developing and protecting community facilities and spaces is very important. The council's Talk Community service works closely with local communities to ensure that local needs are met through a wide variety of assets and settings, including using existing facilities to provide warm spaces. The community capital grants scheme which will be launched in 2024-2025 will be a further means through which the council will support investment in community facilities, as well as the direct investment it is making in the new library and learning centre in Hereford.

Herefordshire Council continues to keep under review the properties it owns or uses to ensure that they remain aligned with the needs of the council and its communities.

PQ 4	Mr McGeown, Weobley	<p>The Hereford Times has recently reported that the "Revised Draft City Master Plan" is to be submitted for public consultation early this year.</p> <p>I can not find a dedicated entry for it in the public reports pack.</p> <p>So where is it and more importantly what amount has been budgeted to resource this most important consultation?</p> <p>Will the consultation methods be of sufficient breadth and adequately financed so they will satisfy the council constitution?</p> <p>Article 3 – Citizens and the council</p> <p>2.3.2 Citizens have the right:</p> <p>(d) to be consulted or in some other way participate in council decision making in accordance with the arrangements the council has for such consultation and participation;</p> <p>5.8.67 Consultations</p> <p>5.8.68 The council encourages as many people as possible to give their views on decisions which affect them.</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Response:**

The development of the Hereford City Masterplan has been paused, to allow for the Local Plan, the New Hereford Road Strategy and the Local Transport Plan to be progressed. Once this work is complete, the council will be in a position to review the City Masterplan, ensuring Hereford is well placed to play its critical role in realising the ambitions of the county wider strategies. Further information will be available in due course on the process and timescales for stakeholder consultation and public engagement for the Hereford City Centre Masterplan.

PQ 5

Mr Pugh,  
Leominster

Is it not a breach of council duty and ethics (Section 149 Equalities ACT 2010 general duties Section A) to discriminate against second property or private property owners by implementation of any fiscal penalty that actively discriminates against them as a group, solely because they are deemed by council, or any others, to be "vacant" property owners.

Cabinet  
member  
finance and  
corporate  
services**Response:**

The Equality Act 2010 provides protection against discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics. Property owners (as a group) are not protected by the Equality Act 2010.

The discretion given to councils to charge a premium is intended to be used as part of a wider strategy to encourage homeowners to bring their properties back into use for the benefit of the local community and economy.

PQ 6

Mrs Pugh,  
Leominster

It is noted in the council budget breakdown the expenditure allotted to repair and refurbish both roads and pavements in Herefordshire.  
Bearing in mind the number of Herefordshire inhabitants that have been injured on uneven dangerous pavements or suffered physical injury or damage on private or commercial transports of all types because of the appalling surfaces of our largely neglected pavements and highways is the budget sufficient to achieve better results and avoid accelerating the present neglect?

Cabinet  
member  
roads and  
regulatory  
services**Response:**

Herefordshire's highway network is over 2,100 miles in length, which is long enough to stretch from Land's End to John O'Groats some two and a half times. We also have over 410 miles of footways, mainly centred in the city and market towns but also providing essential links in our villages. Our Officers and contractors work proactively to maintain and improve our highway network. Our Cabinet recognises that more is required for the council to match the aspirations of its residents and so to help address this we are committing £10 million pounds of additional investment into highway resurfacing between 2024-2026; thus investing for the future. In addition, Government has also recently announced that this council will receive an additional £106,918,000 for investment in the network, over the next 10 years as a part of its Network North initiative. This funding will help to address the maintenance and also improve Herefordshire's roads and pavement network to a good and safe condition.

PQ 7	Mr Evered	To reduce the CO2 level of Herefordshire's atmosphere by 0.16 PPM (parts per million) or 0.000016%, how much is the council tax payer contributing to the council in order to achieve its Net Zero goal? If not known, what is the council's projected figures for this?	Cabinet member environment
<p><b>Response:</b> In the financial year 2022/23 the Council invested £4,773,000 in capital projects to support our net zero carbon and nature rich goals. Of this amount £4,431,000 was external grant funding secured by the Council, the remaining £342,000 capital coming from the Council's own budgets. Much of Council's spend is in 'invest to save' projects such as installing solar photovoltaic panels on schools.</p>			