

**Agenda item no. 4 - Questions from members of the public**

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Gill Jinman	Can the Cabinet provide an update on the plans for the Parkway station at Pontrilas and what progress is being made?	Cllr Phillip Price/Ross Cook
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>At its meeting on March 28, 2024, Cabinet approved a budget of £50,000 for developing a new Strategic Outline Business Case for the new station. This work will be driven by a task force headed up by the council that includes key partners from the rail industry. The study will seek to build upon previous feasibility work and address comments from the Department for Transport.</p> <p>We are currently developing a project brief for this work and, once the individual members of the task force are confirmed, we expect consultants to be appointed and the study to start. In recognition of the wider benefits to the community of a new station, the scheme will be known as the Golden Valley Parkway</p>			
PQ 2	Charlotte Eynon	<p>In the newly adopted Council Plan 2024 to 2025, it commits the council to <i>providing more homes, reduce congestion and increase employment opportunities. We will work with others to create the transport network that the county needs. This will include active travel, rail connectivity and improved road infrastructure.</i></p> <p>Can the Cabinet confirm that it is committed to fully opening Pontrilas Station and what timescale is envisaged for this to happen? And can Cabinet explain, as part of its plans, how it is seeking to create future career opportunities for the rural communities and also help traffic congestion?</p>	Cllr Phillip Price/Ross Cook
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>We are committed to developing proposals for a new Golden Valley Parkway station and have allocated £50,000 towards the development of the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). The plans are at a very early stage and new stations typically take several years to reach the operational stage. Until the SOBC is complete and there is the support of partners in the rail industry to take the scheme forward, it is not possible to commit to a timescale for station opening.</p>			

The council is currently developing a new Local Transport Plan (LTP) that will be subject to public consultation later in the year. The LTP will comprise a wide range of measures, from the Herford Western Bypass to local projects to encourage more walking and cycling, to improve traffic congestion.

In relation to how the Council is seeking to create future career opportunities for the rural communities, this is an ongoing part of the role of the Economy and Regeneration service, which has the objective of more, better paid jobs. Through our Herefordshire Growth Hub, the Council supports any local business to grow and become sustainable, and clearly a key part of this is through increasing and improving the range of job opportunities they offer. Specific examples of how the Council are supporting job creation in rural areas, include through the allocation of UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity funding to support business growth and job creation; working with the Herefordshire Skills Board to encourage businesses to create and take on more apprenticeships; organising the annual Herefordshire Skills Show, which showcases career opportunities to over 1,200 year 10 school pupils, and working with local businesses which are looking to expand.