

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
<p>Response:</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>			
<p>Supplementary question:</p> <p>“I am pleased to learn that £50,000 has been allocated to further the case for the Golden Valley Parkway, and that the planned study will seek to build on the previous feasibility study etc. Given that the 2020 Outline Business Case identified a station design that represents high value for money according to the DfT’s own guidance (BCR 2), AND secured the support of Herefordshire and Monmouthshire MPs, Monmouthshire County Council, the Welsh Government Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales, Midlands Connect and the Hay Festival etc, what will the new SOBC task force seek to achieve, without duplicating previous work, that will progress this case further?”</p>			
<p>Supplementary response:</p> <p>It is essential that the business case for the station addresses several issues raised by the Department for Transport in 2022 in response to the unsuccessful bid to the “Restoring Your Railway” fund. The new SOBC will therefore need to reflect updated analysis including changes to travel patterns because of the Covid pandemic, passenger demand forecasts and estimated construction costs. The inclusion of rail industry partners in the task force should ensure that the case made by the SOBC is as robust as possible.</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
<p>Response:</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> <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.</p> <p>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.</p>			
<p>Supplementary question:</p> <p>Whilst I appreciate that the council is looking to support young people in rural areas with apprenticeships etc without a reliable, regular transport service how does the council propose to make this viable for young people who do not drive and are reliant on parents/ friends etc? The opportunities are only effective and successful if people can access them.</p>			
<p>Supplementary response:</p>			

Thank you for your supplementary question. The council is supporting bus operators to expand their services in rural areas, and between market towns and Hereford using the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP+) grant from the DfT. We work with Bus operators under an enhanced partnership process to identify and support services that are necessary, and that bus operators can deliver. The council itself does not run any bus services. For the first tranche of BSIP+ funding, operators have requested support on the following schemes:

City Centre Services E & F (Sargeants)

E – Hereford City Bus Station (Tesco) to the Whitecross area and Moor Farm

F – Hereford City Bus Station (Tesco) to the Redhill/Saxton Gate Area

476 (DRM)

Introduction of an hourly timetable between 9am and 3pm, 6 days a week. This will include two new stops.

DRM are creating a new timetable for submission to the Traffic Commissioner

78X (Yeomans)

Hereford City Bus Station (Tesco) to Rotherwas.

This route will be extended to the Shell Store and timings changed to benefit the local workforce.

492 Service (Yeomans)

Reinstate hourly 492 and later PM service. Hereford Railway Station to Leominster.

36 Service

Reinstate to 2 hourly and reinstate Sunday Services. Hereford Railway Station to Monmouth.

420 Service

Reinstate Bromyard to Worcester service.

469 Service

Simplified timetable from Bromyard to Hereford.

461 Service

Later journeys between Hereford and Kington.

Sunday Services

Continued support for Sunday services – 420 & 469 amongst others.

We hope to be able to make further service improvements as more funding becomes available.