

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

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mrs Watson, Kington	Last month, CPRE Herefordshire won an international award for its Dark Skies Herefordshire project. What actions will Herefordshire Council put in place to reduce obtrusive outdoor lighting in schools and the public buildings it owns? Herefordshire Council's website guidance and advice to reduce energy and carbon does not promote the Five Principles of Responsible Outdoor Lighting and in the Guide for Schools on Energy Savings and Carbon Reduction - the School Lighting and Heating Audit does not mention targeted lighting or installing warm tone LEDs.	Cabinet member environment
<p><b>Response:</b>                      The council's Sustainability &amp; Climate Change team is currently reviewing our carbon management plan which actively seeks to minimising energy and carbon emissions from across the Council's entire operations, schools and partners.</p> <p>As part of this officers are currently undertaking a review of best practice and are looking into a potential new policy on light pollution. We will also update our school's energy guidance to include this. It is expected that this guidance will be completed in the summer 2025.</p>			
PQ 2	Mr McGeown, Weobley	Thank you for the answer, recently received in writing, by Cabinet Member C&YP to my Supplementary question PQ1 from 17th September meeting.  So I thought I would get an overview of my PQ with relation to all other recent Public Questions and went to use your Public Question Register Six Month Record:  <a href="https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ecSDDisplayClassic.aspx?NAME=PDQR1&amp;ID=50000106&amp;RPID=26289390&amp;sch=doc&amp;cat=13518&amp;path=13518">https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ecSDDisplayClassic.aspx?NAME=PDQR1&amp;ID=50000106&amp;RPID=26289390&amp;sch=doc&amp;cat=13518&amp;path=13518</a>  So I downloaded your Register:  <a href="https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50096669/Public%20Question%20Register%20-%20Six%20Month%20Record.pdf">https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50096669/Public%20Question%20Register%20-%20Six%20Month%20Record.pdf</a>  Much to my dismay I found:  "Last updated 20 December 2021"	Chairman of the Council

		So why don't you want the public to easily overview recent public questions?	
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**Response:**  
 Previous versions of the council's constitution, prior to May 2022, made provision to reject a public question if it had been raised within the last 6 months. This provision was supported by a question log, and answers given, at committees up until December 2021. In May 2022, the Council agreed and adopted an amended constitution. The six-month rule was removed as part of those changes. As a result it was no longer necessary for the council to maintain a public question and answer log. See: [Appendix 23 - Part 5 Section 8 Public participation guide tracked.pdf](#).

It is possible to see all questions, and the answers provided, by reviewing the relevant minutes to council committees (that permit public questions); the original question and answer provided is published as a supplement prior to the meetings. Any supplementary questions (if/where received) and answers that are provided can be found within the appendix to the published minutes of the meeting.

PQ3	Ms Ward, Hereford	<p>It is good news that Herefordshire Council has been granted additional government funding of £3.257 million for bus services. However, I note that the revenue element of the grant funding, around £1.8 million, will be used to extend the services that are currently supported by grant funding, but that the spending of the balance will be made by Herefordshire Enhanced Partnership.</p> <p>Please would the cabinet member explain in detail how the £2 million government grant received in 2023 for Bus Service Improvement Plan Funds has been spent so far and provide a breakdown of plans for the remainder of these funds which remain unspent.</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Response:**  
 The Bus Service Improvement Plan plus (BSIP+) phase 3 funding that has been allocated to Herefordshire Council. This is governed by the Enhanced Partnership.

Phase 2 allocation was £952,000 for year 1 (2023/24), £952,000 for year 2 (2024/25) and £1,016,000 (25/26) for year 3. This money is being invested, in line with guidance from the Department for Transport, in extending existing routes, and re-launching new routes, as agreed by the Enhanced Partnership, under a mixture of de minimis and tendered services. A variety of different routes were submitted by bus operators, these were then graded into a priority funding order through a set of criteria, as published in the BSIP+ document on the council's website. This resulted in eight routes that are receiving support for the three years of the phase 2 funding. Namely:

- Support for E & F service
- Extend 78X to Shell Store
- Reinstate hourly 476 Hereford - Ledbury
- Reinstate hourly 492 and later PM service
- Increase 36 (66) service to 2 hourly and pm peak

Re-instate 420 Bromyard to Worcester  
 Instate later journeys on 461  
 Re-instate Sunday services on service 36 (66)

The purpose of the three years of funding is to provide consistency of bus routes over a longer period of time, with the opportunity for these routes to be routes that the public can expect to see running, thus improving the visibility of bus services and hence patronage improvements. These routes are in year 1 of funding, and the expectation is that the money for the next two years will continue to be spent on these prioritised routes. Therefore, whilst the money for years two and three is 'unspent', it is allocated. The plans are to continue with the support for these routes. These routes are being monitored regularly to capture data that can indicate the success, or otherwise of these routes. Decisions for continuation will be made by the Enhanced Partnership, based on this data.

The allocations for phase 3 are an agenda item for the next meeting of the Enhanced Partnership. New priorities will emerge over the three years, and the £1.8m of revenue spend that will be in place for 2026/27 will be used on these new priorities.

**Supplementary question:**

Since my local bus, 476, was not reinstated to hourly in Phase 2 allocation year 1 (2023/24), as planned, will the funds be carried over and added to year 2 (2025/25) + £952,000?

**Response from Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure:**

The 476 service is a two hourly service at present, but it is going to be changed to hourly service, the cost of which is going to be funded by BSIP+ allocation.

The change in the service has been delayed due to timing issues for the morning and afternoon journeys for passengers commuting to and from school and into Hereford for work, and to change the route to add in a new development, bus stop Hawkrise in Ledbury into the timetable.

However, I am pleased to report that all the issues have been resolved, and the hourly service change is being submitted for sign-off by the Traffic Commissioner. The hourly service is expected to operate from the end of January 2025. I can also confirm that the remaining budget for the hourly service will be rolled forward into next year.

PQ 4	Mrs Morawiecka, Hereford	The estimated cost of the Shrewsbury North Western Relief Road is reported to have increased from £81million to £178million, and the auditors for Shropshire Council confirm this new road project poses a significant risk to the council, especially as there is no clear plan for funding this road scheme. With the Hereford Western Relief Road estimated to cost at least double the cost of the Shrewsbury Relief Road, the Herefordshire Council leader's report makes it clear that there is no clear funding for even the first part of the scheme, the Southern Link Road.	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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		Where is the updated business case for the Southern Link Road and the Hereford Western Relief Road, to show that continuing to spend public money on these unaffordable and poor value for money road schemes is the best way to use scarce taxpayers money?	
<b>Response:</b>			
<p>The Council are aware of the reported increased cost of the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road, but it should be noted that no two road schemes are alike and therefore it cannot be presumed that the same level of increase would apply to the Hereford Western Bypass. The council is in the process of commissioning consultants to undertake an updated review of both the first phase of the Hereford Western Bypass (Southern Link Road) and the remaining route and as part of this work will be developing updated business cases for both elements of the road.</p>			
<b>Supplementary:</b>			
<p>The Cabinet member seems confident Herefordshire will not experience significant cost increases in road construction projects. However, with responsibility for Transport and Infrastructure he must know that one part of the Shrewsbury Road cost change is the 6 fold increase in mitigation of the carbon costs. This is due to the Department for Transport (DfT) changing TAG guidance on the carbon assessment process of all major transport schemes, in early 2024. This guidance is for use in business case assessments.</p> <p>The original South Wye Transport Package business case had a relatively low BCR. As the Southern Link Road is now just a road, without many of the benefits arising from the Active Travel Measures, the BCR will be even lower.</p> <p>Until the business cases have been updated in line with the DfT TAG guidance and published to show these roads provide good value for money with a high BCR, would the Cabinet member explain what different costs are currently being incurred and why?</p>			
<b>Response to supplementary question from cabinet member transport and infrastructure:</b>			
<p>Since the scheme was resurrected in March, the project has mostly incurred staff costs. The council is in the process of procuring consultancy support to develop a business case to reflect the contemporary benefits and costs. The council has also appointed property consultants to begin the negotiation process for land acquisition.</p>			
PQ 5	Mr Milln, Hereford	<p>281 people were killed or seriously injured (KSI) on Herefordshire's Roads in the latest period recorded on the Council's website.</p> <p>Speed is the common factor and on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2020 this Council voted to address it first by investigating area-wide 20mph where people live.</p> <p>Herefordshire's KSI corresponds to an annual rate of 49.8 per hundred thousand, significantly higher than the 39.7 national and 37.1 West Midlands figures.</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure

	<p>In spite of the societal and human costs of road crashes and the benefits of safer streets we learn that the Cabinet member will consider addressing speed only on an <i>advisory</i> basis round certain schools and rural roads where enough people have been killed or seriously injured.</p> <p>In the light of this would the cabinet member please explain the evidence behind his <i>volte face</i> on the decision approved by Council in 2020.</p>	
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**Response:**  
It is unclear what data the question is based on. In 2023 the data for Herefordshire shows there were 82 people unfortunately killed or seriously injured in traffic accidents, this was made up of 7 fatalities and 75 seriously injured. The total represents a reduction of 23% over the 2022 figure of 107. Of these 82, only 16 were the result of a collision where the police recorded inappropriate speed as a contributing factor to the accident. 63% of these accidents were recorded on the higher speed rural road network.

The Council will be introducing some advisory 20mph zones around specific schools in Hereford in the coming year as part of our Safer School Streets programme. The Council does not currently have any plans for the introduction of area-wide 20mph zones and does not support this as a policy going forward. Looking at accident statistics across Herefordshire our highest concern remains on high-speed rural roads where we have the highest incidents of killed and seriously injured accidents. As the highway authority we continue to carefully prioritise the funding we have available for road safety improvements using a prioritisation system that takes into account accident statistics, and this will include a number of traffic calming and speed reduction schemes across the Council each year.

**Supplementary Question:** The Cabinet Member's response makes clear his U-turn on the decision members of this Council made in March 2020 to address speeding where people live fails to take an evidence-based approach to the problem. The KSI figures cited in the response do not represent an improving trend over those in the Council's *Understanding Herefordshire* website cited in the question.

Advisory limits are unenforceable and to consider only some schools is discriminatory. Children are vulnerable wherever there is speeding in their communities. The response fails to appreciate the wider benefits of safer streets such as accessibility for active travel, well-being and livability.

With the news this week that Birmingham is considering the adoption of area-wide 20mph following Wales, Cornwall, London, Lancashire and numerous other places, will the Cabinet member follow suit and embrace a more progressive, holistic, people-first approach for Herefordshire?

**Response from Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure:**

The Council's approach to reducing KSI is based on hard evidence and good practice to keep both motorists and pedestrians safe.

I have already replied to the original question in full and there is nothing more to add.

We totally refute the suggestion that the Council does not put the safety and well-being of Herefordshire's communities first in everything it does.

PQ 6	Mr Willmont, Hereford	One of the aims of the Hereford City Link Road was to remove through traffic from Newmarket/Blueschool Streets and Commercial Road. These roads continue to be plagued by through traffic, particularly heavy goods vehicles/vans/tractors. Irrespective of what works might be proposed for environmental improvements to Blueschool/Newmarket Streets why is there not a legal prohibition on through traffic (north to south) along these roads?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Response:**

The City Link Road was constructed to allow traffic to go around the city centre and not through it. Heavy good vehicles will still need access the city centre to allow for deliveries. Officers are working closely with the DfT on the designs for improvements to both Blue School Street and Commercial Road. These improvements need to take into consideration the future emerging developments in the city, the connectivity to the Transport Hub and a future parking strategy, and emerging pressures, in accordance with the council's Transport Strategy. The council's Transport Strategy covers matters such as LTP, network planning, traffic management, transport planning, parking, mobility hubs, public and school transport. The council is also committed to the development of a Western Relief Road which will offer the opportunity to detrunk the A49 and further reduce traffic through the city centre.

PQ 7	Mrs Protherough Hereford	Active Travel England is an executive agency of the Government and one of its roles is to help councils to access state of the art data and analysis to use in active travel planning and design and integrate active travel into the planning and development system. ATE meets monthly with Herefordshire Council and yet the public have been informed that no minutes or records of these meetings are made. How can Council staff, councillors, MPs and the public learn from such experts about how a small City such as Hereford could be made more accessible and sustainable by Active Travel means, if meetings with Government agencies are not recorded and how does this comply with the Nolan principles of public life and the Council's THRIVE values of conduct in particular the two value of Trust and Honesty	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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**Response:**

We recognise there will be public interest in the discussions between the council and Active Travel England. The council does not formally minute these meetings on the basis that they are largely informal 'keep in touch' opportunities.

Importantly, meetings between the council and Active Travel England have no formal decision-making powers. Decisions that have been, or may be taken in the future, by the council around active travel measures are subject to the council's access to information rules and our legal obligations. This is to ensure that decisions taken by the council are open, transparent and accountable.

PQ 8	Ms Martin Hereford	<p>In FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST FOI2024/01673 copies of minutes of meetings were requested between Herefordshire Council and Active Travel England from January 2024 to date. The following response was provided:</p> <p>"A: The Service Area have advised they do not have any minutes to share, as none are taken due to the informal nature of the meetings."</p> <p>Given that taxpayers fund members of staff to attend these meetings, please explain why they are not minuted, what other meetings with Government bodies are not minuted and how this complies with the Nolan Principles."</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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