

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

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	<b>Mrs Morawiecka, Hereford</b>	<p>“The Budget 2025/26 and Medium Term Financial Strategy, including capital budgets is prioritising spending £40.3million in a new road south of Hereford. This road has no outline business case and there is no appraisal of transport options that shows borrowing over £30million:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is the quickest and lowest cost way to deliver on the purported benefits of this road;</li> <li>• offers best value for money for taxpayers;</li> <li>• that the road scheme will generate sufficient revenue to repay the borrowing, as required by Capital Project investment rules.</li> </ul> <p>Will the committee review and consider how Herefordshire Council allocates capital investment to support the Local Transport Plan priorities and other Council Plans, and that the allocation of scarce money to capital transport projects complies with Treasury Green Book guidance on option appraisal and can show best value for money for local taxpayers?”</p>	<b>Cllr Price and Cllr Stoddart</b>
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p><i>The council is committed to bringing forward the first phase of the Western Bypass. The additional borrowing to fund the proposed £30m addition to the capital programme for 25/26 has a revenue budget impact aligned to the term of borrowing and this is included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Whilst the £30m addition to the capital programme is proposed to be funded from borrowing, grants will be sought to reduce the amount of borrowing required.</i></p> <p><i>Once completed, this new bypass connection for the A49, from the south to the north of the city, will deliver the Western Growth Corridor, creating over 10,000 new homes and over 300 acres of employment land. This will result in future recurrent income for the council which is expected to be greater than the cost of borrowing.</i></p> <p><i>A Business Case will be developed as part of the ongoing development of the scheme to refine the cost of the scheme and demonstrate a cost benefit ratio before progressing to a decision to formally allocate this funding towards the scheme’s construction.</i></p>			
<p><b>Supplementary question:</b></p>			

<b>Supplementary response:</b>			
PQ 2	<b>Mr Hardy, Hereford</b>	<p><i>Active Travel England (ATE) is an executive agency of the Dept for Transport and supports Councils to develop sustainable transport networks and secure funding to deliver them and is a statutory planning consultee. ATE meets monthly with Herefordshire Council staff and yet Herefordshire Council makes no record of the meetings and advice given by these experienced and highly qualified staff. This appears to be contrary to this committee's March 2023 recommendations, particularly to "Publish in full all background materials".</i></p> <p><i>Will this committee recommend that records of ATE meetings and the advice and recommendations given by ATE be formally recorded and will they invite ATE to present to this Scrutiny Committee and other Council meetings, about how they support the Council to deliver on the Priorities for the Transport Network in the LTP report?</i></p>	<b>Cllr Price</b>
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>Thank you for your question regarding the governance around the delivery of Active Travel Fund schemes. Hopefully the following bullet points will you assurance our engagement the ATE is adding value and sufficiently recorded.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are delivering a number of schemes which have active travel measures in them. These are being delivered mostly with Levelling Up Fund monies but also include elements of ATF in the funding mix.</li> <li>• All of our highways capital schemes are carefully developed in line with current walking and cycling guidance such as LTN120 and the standards that govern highway design.</li> <li>• Each scheme has a project board and a project manager, as well as officers and consultants that are involved in the design and planning the delivery of the works. Notes are recorded for every project board meetings and decisions are recorded.</li> <li>• We also have an overall programme board which reviews progress on each scheme. Notes are also recorded.</li> <li>• We also hold regular informal meetings with both DfT and with Active Travel England to give them assurance that the schemes we are delivering are meeting the ATF and LUF objectives that were set out in the original bid and agreement with DfT. The ATE team have been very supportive of the schemes Herefordshire are</li> </ul>			

developing. Feedback from ATE is shared with the LUF project board and with individual project managers. This has all been low-key and informal and there hasn't been a need or requirement to keep formalised notes of these meetings.

- As schemes are developed they are reviewed with the Cabinet member for Transport. Furthermore, Cabinet have reviewed and agreed the full programme of works.

**Supplementary question:**

**Supplementary response:**

PQ 3	<b>Mr Milln, Hereford</b>	<i>The last road Herefordshire Council built was the City Link Road (aka Station Approach), the only component of the HCCTP to have been completed as its overrunning costs consumed nearly all the £40.9m budget intended to have funded the Transport Hub and improvements to Commercial Road and Blueschool Street which will now have to be funded largely by LUF. The Council's 2015 Business Case claimed a BCR of 1.51 for the HCCTP based on an optimistically-biased value of £63.2m of transport and public realm benefits: improved amenity, noise, emissions/air quality, walking &amp; cycling, bus use, road safety and journey times. As these benefits have not materialised what lessons would the Council draw, in terms of value for money, modal transport shift, budget-deliverability, well-being and climate crisis compatibility when considering other large capital road schemes in the Local Transport Plan?</i>	<b>Cllr Price</b>
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**Response:**

An evaluation report on the City Link Road was published in November 2020 – this can be viewed on the HC website here: [HCCTP Interim Traffic Flow evaluation report](#). The report demonstrates evidence of what objectives were achieved. The Council also responded to the lessons learned from the overspends on the scheme following a detailed audit report, adopting revised project management and governance processes which now are used on all infrastructure projects. This has been an area of scrutiny review in the past.

**Supplementary question:**

**Supplementary response:**