

# DRAFT MINUTES

Herefordshire Council

## Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Thursday 23 January 2025 at 2.30 pm

**Cabinet Members Physically Present and voting:** Councillor Jonathan Lester, Leader of the Council (Chairperson)  
Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairperson)  
  
Councillors Graham Biggs, Harry Bramer, Carole Gandy, Ivan Powell, Philip Price and Pete Stoddart

**Cabinet Members in remote attendance** None  
*Cabinet members attending the meeting remotely, e.g. through video conferencing facilities, may not vote on any decisions taken.*

Cabinet support members in attendance None

Group leaders / representatives in attendance Councillors Liz Harvey, Terry James and Diana Toynbee

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance Councillors Ben Proctor

Officers in attendance: R Cook, S Gregory (Secretary), Luenne, C Porter, Russell, R Sanders, Rosie Thomas-Easton, P Walker and D Webb (Secretary) and S Gregory (Secretary).

### 54. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies from Councillors Dan Hurcomb and Nick Mason

### 55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

### 56. DRAFT MINUTES

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

#### **Clarification regarding Public Question 3 on 13 January 2025:**

*Since the meeting on 13 January 2025 cabinet are providing further clarification on the public record regarding Councillor Price's response to Mrs Protherough's supplementary question and confirm that:*

'These schemes are not comparable as they are at very different stages of their development. The Hereford Western Bypass is at full business case *development* stage whereas a potential station at Pontrilas is only at Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) *development*, considering where a scheme is viable. Regardless, a new station between Abergavenny and Hereford would be delivered by Network Rail and requires their agreement and funding as well as other third-party approvals; whereas the bypass is being delivered by the Council and within the Council's powers as the Highway Authority'.

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57. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC** (Pages 11 - 18)  
Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 1 to the minutes.

58. **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS** (Pages 19 - 20)  
Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 2 to the minutes.

59. **REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

The chairperson of the Scrutiny Management Board presented the recommendations on the 2025/26 budget. Cabinet responded to the recommendations which had been published (Supplement 1).

(a) 2025-26 budget – recommendations from Scrutiny Management Board

The committee noted that recommendation one regarding revenue pressures within adult social care was accepted by cabinet. Regarding recommendation two the committee noted that the capital programme for 2025/26 was significant, and concerns were expressed that the capital spend budgeted was unrealistic. It was noted cabinet had not accepted this recommendation. Cabinet's response to recommendation three regarding the estimate of interest was noted. The committee noted the reprofiling of savings targets in children's services indicated an improved grip and understanding of cost pressures in the service. The committee agreed it was prudent for the medium-term financial strategy to be potentially reviewed in-year in light of the uncertainty from the government. Regarding recommendations four and five the committee advised a draft Delivery Plan would have been beneficial to see the links between the revenue and capital budgets with the Council Plan.

The cabinet thanked the committee for their work. Councillor Stoddart confirmed that the S151 officer had provided a detailed written response.

**It was unanimously agreed that the recommendations on the 2025-26 Budget, made by the Scrutiny Management at its meeting on 14 January 2025 had been addressed and responded to.**

60. **2025/26 BUDGET, MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The member for finance and corporate services introduced the report. The cabinet member highlighted that since the draft budget report presented on 13 January 2025, the budget consultation took place. However, engagement with the budget consultation was low. It was highlighted that respondents who did participate confirmed support for key areas of the proposed additions to the capital programme.

It was confirmed that the provisional settlement announced by central government on 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2024 confirmed the abolition of the Rural Services Delivery Grant, it confirmed that Herefordshire would receive zero funds under the New Recovery Grants and only £369k under the new Children's Social Care Prevention Grants. This provided a net loss of £6.766m against the previous year's income. It was noted that despite lobbying the Ministry of Housing Communities, local government had not provided any additional funding to rural counties including Herefordshire. However, final confirmation of final allocations in the final settlement was awaited later this month.

It was noted that the council expected to receive £29.2m from central government grant funding, representing a reduction of £3m from the previous year.

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It was highlighted that despite challenges the council had achieved a balanced budget for financial year 2025/26. The revenue budget for 25/26 totalled £231.5m. It was noted that the draft budget totalled £232m and the movement was due to the additional homelessness and rough sleeping grant being presented within the community well-being budget, where the corresponding expenditure was included.

It was confirmed that there will be an increase to 4.99% in council tax for 2025/26 due to the impact of central governments reduction in funding.

Regarding each directorate it was highlighted that Community Well-Being base budget increased to £90.677m. Children and Young People's base budget reduced to £59.063m due to the continuous savings in that directorate. Economy and Environment base budget increased to £42.415m. Corporate services base budget increased to £22.852m and Central Services base budget reduced to £16.5m.

The proposed revenue budget of £231.508m would be funded by council tax at £146.451m, business rates at £47.567m, social care support grant at £20.336m, extended producer responsibility grant at £3.538m and the other smaller grants would make up the remaining £13.9m.

It was confirmed that each directorate faced several unfunded pressures totalling £27.6m which had been factored into their base budgets for 2025/26. Notably, the pay award, National Insurance, inflation and demand pressures for services. It was highlighted that the final settlement from government was awaited and the budget assumed changes to employers' national insurance of £1.5m would be funded by central government.

It was confirmed that if the final settlement included funding above the revenue budget it would firstly be used to make additional provision to support development of the Local Plan and secondly, and secondly to make a transfer to the financial resilience reserve to mitigate the potential unfavourable outcome of the fair funding review which is planned in 2025. It was confirmed that this will be added as a further recommendation to the report.

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) showed a funding gap of £4.198m over the medium term financial planning period, with the figure of £5.08m in the financial year 28/29. It was confirmed that the gap was manageable and would be resolved in future years through continued transformation.

It was confirmed that the treasury management structure (Appendix D) complied with the central government statute requirement on local government investments, governance on minimum revenue provision and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy code (CIPFA) for capital financing in local governments. It was highlighted that the borrowing strategy was the council borrows to fund the capital expenditure with borrowing driven by the requirements of the approved capital investment budget.

The current loan debt was noted at £118.116m (Annex A). On 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 the council had £64.1m of investments spread across banks, other local authorities and money market funds (Annex A).

It was highlighted that interest receivable had varied from 2020/21 to 2023/24. It had been reported at the end of each quarter. It was noted that in 2024/25 interest receivable income was £1.6m against a planned budget of £0.5m.

It was confirmed that the reserves (Appendix E) showed the forecast reserves on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 will be £75.1m.

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Cabinet members discussed the report and commented that the final settlement will be received late January, early February 2025.

Consideration was welcomed regarding any additional funding being used towards the production of the Local Plan. It was raised that the government's statement that rural places would receive a 5% increase in core spending did not correlate with what Herefordshire received. It was highlighted that Herefordshire suffered a significant reduction of £3m in its funding. It was also noted that rural communities generally paid more than 20% higher council tax than urban counties. However urban communities received 41% more government spending.

It was confirmed that if extra funding was received from the government, the council would ensure that the £1.5m of National Insurance costs were covered. Then use any additional funding to support the Local Plan being completed and secondly any funding above that would be added to the financial resilience reserve. It was confirmed this will be added as a recommendation to the 8 recommendations already in the report. Cabinet members confirmed agreement to the additional recommendation.

It was highlighted last year that the council received £953k in Rural Services Grant, £250k was spent on the Lengthsman scheme, £250k on PROW and £453k on rural drainage scheme. It was confirmed that the £953k had already been built into this revenue budget and Economy and Environment will have that additional funding.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. Frustration was expressed that no final settlement from the government had been confirmed. It was queried if the extended producer responsibility was considered in the total funding. It was also expressed that as the funding was a product of the Environment Act, its spending should reflect protecting the environment. It was queried where the previous year's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) referred to an increase of council tax of 3.99%. It was commented on that clarification should be provided in the future around the term 'maximising the use of assets' to confirm this did not mean selling commonly owned assets.

Concerns were raised that no additional targeted support has been made available given the maximum uplift in Council Tax. Also, that no provision for funding officer time to work on new investment projects was made. It was raised that the expectation of income earned from interest could have been increased rather than the forecast of £600k based on previous years over delivery of interest recoverable.

Support was raised for the budget preparation and consultation process with parties. It was also considered that the budget was more realistic than in previous years.

In response to the points and queries raised cabinet members confirmed that the Medium-Term Financial Strategy did refer to 3.99% last year and this was a matter of public record. However, due to the financial situation 3.99% could not be achieved for this year.

Regarding the point on maximising the council's assets, it was clarified that this wasn't framed to mean selling council assets but intended to mean acquiring assets to reduce the spend and revenue pressures. It was highlighted that the council were looking to generate projects that were cost neutral or generate a positive impact in the revenue budget.

It was confirmed that the extended producer responsibility grant was received outside of core funding. When the grant was received Cabinet made the hard decision to bring it in due to the underspend (from the loss of the Rural Services Grant). This was to ensure the council could continue to deliver the services to the people of Herefordshire. It was

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highlighted the council's aim to improve the environment was already being delivered through its environmental program and waste contracts.

In response to the query on increased council tax 4.99%% and the impact on households, it was confirmed that 11,000 households benefited from the council tax reduction scheme last year. The discretionary hardship fund was highlighted, as a further fund to assist with individual cases.

In respect of interest, it was confirmed that the council adopted a prudent approach. It was highlighted that the previous 4-5 years showed a variability in the levels of income from interest received. In 2021, under the previous administration, £200k was budgeted and only £165k was received. In the current financial year £500k was budgeted for and £1.6m will be received.

**Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations, and it was unanimously resolved that the following be recommended to Council including the additional recommendation (i).**

**That Cabinet recommends to Council for approval:**

- a) the council tax base of 72,816.74 Band D equivalents in 2025/26;
- b) an increase in core council tax for 2025/26 of 2.99%;
- c) an additional precept in respect of adult social care costs of 2% applied to council tax in 2025/26 resulting in a total council tax increase of 4.99%, increasing the band D charge from £1,875.76 to £1,969.36 for Herefordshire Council in 2025/26;
- d) the balanced 2025/26 revenue budget proposal totalling £231.5 million, subject to any amendments approved at the meeting, specifically the net spending limits for each directorate as at appendix C;
- e) delegates to the section 151 officer the power to make necessary changes to the budget arising from any variations in central government funding allocations via general reserves;
- f) the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2025/26 to 2028/29 at appendix A be approved;
- g) the Treasury Management Strategy at appendix D be approved; and
- h) the responses to scrutiny committee recommendations to follow in a supplementary paper to be approved.

The additional recommendation was included:

- i) *the allocation of additional funding, above that assumed in this revenue budget and as confirmed in the Final Local Government Finance Settlement, firstly to make provision to support the development of the Local Plan and secondly, to be transferred to the Financial Resilience Reserve to mitigate the potential unfavourable outcome of the Fair Funding Review planned in 2025.*

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The member for finance and corporate services introduced the report. It was highlighted there had been two changes to the report since the draft was presented on 13 January 2025. The first was at paragraph 15 which now stated that the council aims to start construction of the scheme to the south of the city within the period 2026/27. The second was in appendix E and each outline business case now included a link to the four aspects of the Council Plan. It was raised that inclusion in the capital programme was not approval to proceed and that each project would be subject to its own governance. A full business case would be presented for approval where required and in full compliance with the council's contract procedures and rules as applicable.

It was highlighted that the public consultation showed strong support across the key areas of the proposed additions to the capital programme. The additions were included in Appendix A alongside the outline strategic business cases in Appendix E. The additions would; mitigate key revenue budget pressures; improve the use of technology to deliver efficiencies and innovation in services to residents; deliver new infrastructure to support growth opportunities for housing and businesses; encourage active lifestyles for children and young people; investment in play areas to develop cultural and creative spaces for residents and visitors; reduce the impact of flooding; improve road safety across the county and continued investment in the county's road network.

It was confirmed that Appendix A set out the proposed additions to the existing capital programme and the impact of approving those. It was confirmed that 18 capital investment budget proposals had been identified totalling £58.15m. It was highlighted that the capital strategy in Appendix D had been developed in accordance with the CIFA guidelines and was an accessible single source for the reader.

It was noted that the capital investment proposals supported the County Plan and the Delivery Plan. The overall aim of capital expenditure is to benefit the community to improve facilities and promote economic growth.

It was confirmed that a specific community impact assessment, which would include any health and safety implications, or corporate parenting responsibilities would be included in the decision report for any new capital scheme commencing an incurring spend. Whilst the budget setting document would not detail specific environmental impact considerations, these would be considered in line with the council's environmental policy.

Comments from cabinet members. It was positively noted by the cabinet member for transport and infrastructure that the capital funding for the Road Safety scheme of £3m was included. The issue of visibility on the roads was also raised and it was commented whether this was due to too much traffic, brighter car lights or poor roads and this should be considered for future funding.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. There was support for the capital programme and the additions to the capital programme.

Mixed comments were provided regarding the Southern Link Road, stating it was welcomed, and it was what members of the public. Whilst the alternative stated its inclusion in the capital programme was premature. Concern was also raised whether the programme would be deliverable. It was noted that consistency in messages around the bypass was important as well as ensuring the cabinet followed the council's policies and procedures diligently.

It was commented that from an environmental perspective, it wasn't solely about minimising waste and resources but also about thorough environmental impact assessments taking place.

There were no responses to the points and comments made.

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Councillor James left the meeting.

**Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations, and it was unanimously resolved that the following be recommended to Council**

**That: Cabinet recommends the following to Council**

- a) **To approve the revised capital programme for 2024/25 attached at appendix C;**
- b) **Approve the capital strategy at appendix D; and**
- c) **Approve the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts of up to £0.6million in 2024/25 and £0.6million in 2025/26, to support transformation to generate ongoing revenue savings and reduce service delivery costs in future years**

## **62. ANNUAL REVIEW OF EARMARKED RESERVES – 2024/25**

The member for finance and corporate services introduced the report. It was confirmed that Appendix 1 contained the rationale for each earmarked reserve alongside the context regarding why it was maintained at a particular level.

It was confirmed that a review of the reserves was undertaken annually by the S151 officer as part of the budget setting process. The review confirmed that the reserve balances were commensurate with risk, that they were adequate and robust.

It was highlighted that the council's usable revenue reserves were split between the general reserve 'the general fund' and earmarked reserves that are held for specific purposes. The general fund reserves are maintained at a minimum level of between 3 and 5% of the net revenue budget. As of 31 March 2024, the general reserve balance totalled £9.6m which was 4.5% of the council's 2023/24 net revenue budget. Appendix 1 also set out the categorisation of the council's earmarked reserves for 2025/26.

The reserve balance on 31 March 2024 totalled £73.2m. This included £17.3m of grant funding carried forward to 2024/25 and represented grant funding that was received with no outstanding grant conditions attached but hadn't been applied to relevant expenditure. It was confirmed these amounts are treated as earmarked reserves which will be carried forward for application in future accounting periods.

Annex A, Appendix 1 showed the forecast earmarked reserve balances for 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years. At 31 March 2025 the forecast earmarked reserve balance will be £65.5m and £55.6m at 31 March 2026. It was noted that the Quarter 2 2024/25 budget report presented at cabinet in November 2024 reported a forecast overspend of £10.2m before management action, estimated at £8.2m, reducing the forecast overspend to £2m. It was confirmed that any overspend in 2024/25 would be funded using the council's available reserves and a review of the reserve balances will be undertaken when finalising the out turn position for the year.

The risk assessment for 2025/26 determined that a general fund balance of £9.6m (which was unchanged from 2024/25) should be maintained. This is equivalent to 4.1% of the proposed operating budget of £231.5m for 2025/26.

It was noted that cabinet approved the transfer of £11m from the business rates risk reserve to establish a budget resilient reserve or contingency reserve to mitigate against in year cost pressures and volatility in demand across social care budgets in 2024/25. The remaining balance will be carried forward on 31 March 2025 in the budget resilience

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reserve to manage future emerging risks and in year budgetary pressures over the medium term.

It was confirmed that allocation of reserve funding in each financial year will require applications to the council's S151 officer and cabinet approval. This will ensure the appropriate measures have been taken within each directorate. Any unused balance will be considered as part of the annual review of earmarked reserves.

It was noted, that excluding schools' balances, earmarked reserves were forecast to be £55.6m on 31 March 2025 and £45.7m on 31 March 2026. It was confirmed that this did not consider the cumulative dedicated schools grant (DSG) deficit. This was accounted for as an unusable reserve as permitted by statutory instrument.

The general fund balances was forecast to be maintained at £9.6m to 31 March 2026. A description of each reserve, an explanation of risk to be managed and mitigated was detailed in Appendix A.

There were no comments from cabinet members.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. The report was welcomed and noted it was a clear report. Further information was requested regarding unused grants carried forward at £17.3m and the other reserves individually under £1m. Particularly regarding what the restraints or the plans were regarding its spending.

In response to queries it was confirmed that a detailed breakdown would be provided regarding unused grants and other reserves.

**Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations, and it was unanimously resolved that the following be recommended to Council**

**That:**

**a) The earmarked reserves and balances held by the council at 31 March 2024 are reviewed and confirmed as prudent to meet future financial commitments and risks; and**

**b) The Earmarked Reserves and General Balances Policy Statement 2025/26 is approved and forecast balances to 31 March 2026 are noted.**

### **63. 2025/26 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME**

The member for finance and corporate services introduced the report. It was confirmed that eligible households would receive the maximum level of discount for a further year. This would be available to working age and pensioner claimants, the pensioner Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme is set nationally however the working age CTR is set locally by Herefordshire council.

It was confirmed that a 100% discount is awarded under CTR unless their income reaches the threshold irrespective of the council tax band that the property falls into. The consultation confirmed continuing support for this discount for those most in need.

It was highlighted that in addition to the CTR scheme the council also provides other discounts and these are listed on the council's website.

It was commented that maintaining the maximum discount in 2025/26 will have a positive impact on the community by minimising the debt burden on residents who struggle to pay their council tax charge.



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Comments from cabinet members. It was confirmed there was a discretionary hardship fund as well as the CTR and other grants that can be applied for.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. There was support for the continuation of the 100% Council Tax Reduction and it was raised that increased publication around the funds that are available would be beneficial. It was raised there was no additional scheme that allowed greater discretion for officers to exercise their judgement, outside the set criteria for the CTR, to respond to individual cases.

In response to queries it was confirmed there was the discretionary hardship fund as well as the Council Tax Reduction fund. The Talk Community Hub team also highlight the other grants that are available to parish councils and other groups. It was also noted that the council had raised the issue of rural deprivation to central government.

**Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations, and it was unanimously resolved that the following be recommended to Council**

**That:**

- a) The Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025/26, with the same parameters as the existing scheme, be recommended to Council for approval**

The meeting ended at 16:10

**Chairperson**



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

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mike Willmont, Hereford	Having spent in the order of £200,000 on anti-terror bollards in Hereford city centre does the Cabinet Member consider that the daily placing of “Road Closed” signs and plastic bollards in St Peters Street and Commercial Street instead of raising the underground bollards achieves the level of protection that was sought in the original decision?	Cllr Price
<b>Response:</b>			
The bollards have been lowered to allow a utility company to have access for their works on Commercial Street. The signs have been put by the utility company as a temporary measure whilst they undertake their work to facilitate ease of access. The bollards will be fully operated once the works are completed.			
<b>Supplementary question:</b>			
No supplementary question			
<b>Supplementary response:</b>			
PQ 2.	Mrs E Morawiecka, Hereford	The Capital Strategy report says that “As part of a project’s business case, an option appraisal is carried out and a whole-life costing review is undertaken before a capital scheme is included in the capital programme”.  Where is the option appraisal and updated transport model that shows that the Western Bypass Phase 1 offers best value for money over other capital transport projects, and can give a clear pay back through revenue budget savings, as required by the Capital Strategy?	Cllr Stoddart
<b>Response:</b>			
The council is committed to bringing forward the first phase of the Western Bypass. Once both phases are completed, the new bypass connection for the A49, from the south to the north, of the city, will deliver the Western Growth Corridor, creating the potential for over 10,000 new homes and			

over 300 acres of employment land to help meet the government's housing targets. This will result in future recurrent income for the council which is expected to be greater than the cost of borrowing.

An updated Business Case will be developed as part of the ongoing development of the scheme to refine the cost of the proposals and demonstrate a positive cost benefit ratio before progressing to a decision to formally allocate this funding towards the scheme's construction.

**Supplementary question:**

**The cabinet member has not answered the question asked and has now contradicted an answer he gave at cabinet just 10 days ago where he said in an answer to another public question that the Hereford Western Bypass is at full business case stage. Just because the cabinet is committed to the Southern Link Road does not mean that this scheme offers best value for money for taxpayers and will deliver on the objectives. For this reason, the council's own capital strategy says that an option appraisal is carried out before a scheme is included in the capital program. If the cabinet member is now saying there is no option appraisal, no updated transport model for the Southern Link Road. What are the reasons for cabinet to ignore their own rules in the capital strategy report and include the Southern Link Road and the related borrowing in their capital program, and why did he say there was a full business case for the Western Bypass last week?**

**It was Councillor Price who assured the members of the public you had a full business case for the Western Bypass and you've approved the minutes recording that.**

**Supplementary response:**

Councillor Stoddart

Thank you Mrs Morawiecka for your supplementary. I don't recall responding to you previously on this, but we've got the response there. I go by the response the officers have sent you, that at the minute it's an outline business case and as we go to full business case and the strategic business case, that will include the appraisal there. So, at the minute the project is sitting in outline business case position.

Councillor Price

Thank you for your supplementary question, I was not aware that I had said that and if it says that in the minutes, I haven't picked that up, but the full business has been worked on and that has been my response for most of this administration. That we are working on a full business case and that will be available from May, June, July time.

**\*\*Clarification\*\*:**

*Since the meeting on 13 January 2025 cabinet are providing further clarification on the public record regarding Councillor Price's response to Mrs Protherough supplementary question and confirm that:*

'These schemes are not comparable as they are at very different stages of their development. The Hereford Western Bypass is at full business case *development* stage whereas a potential station at Pontrilas is only at Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) *development*, considering where a scheme is viable. Regardless, a new station between Abergavenny and Hereford would be delivered by Network Rail and requires their agreement and funding as well as other third-party approvals; whereas the bypass is being delivered by the Council and within the Council's powers as the Highway Authority'.

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 3	Keith Maslin, Hereford	<p><b>It appears that Herefordshire Council doesn't include policies that actively switch off or control lighting at certain times (especially at night), or the use of passive infrared sensors, whereas Worcestershire does?</b></p> <p><b>Surely there are both significant energy saving advantages in doing this as well as the greater impact in reducing light pollution, which has shown to have a massive negative effects with animals (including humans), plants and biodiversity</b></p> <p><b>Can this be assessed and responded to please</b></p>	Cllr Swinglehurst

**Response:**

As a key project within our carbon management plan Herefordshire Council was the first local authority to switch 100% of its street lighting, traffic signals and bollards to energy efficient LED lighting. This switch enabled the Council to reduce its annual energy consumption by 2,160MWh, reduce annual carbon emissions by 1,527t CO2e and also achieves annual financial savings of £530k.

To date this project has achieved cumulative carbon savings of over 6,000 tCO2e and cost savings of over £3.3m.

Included within this, approximately 66% of streetlights also include a dimming regime where they dim by 20% between 10pm and midnight before they dim further to 50% between midnight and 5:30am.

As LED lighting is much more directional than the previous sodium lanterns this also reduced light pollution by ~50% contributing to Herefordshire dark skies and protecting biodiversity.

The Council did also consider the introduction of part night lighting, however by moving to 100% LED with dimming this enabled the Council to balance the continued service provision supporting road safety and delivering significant environmental and financial improvements.

**Supplementary question:**

No supplementary question.

**Supplementary response:**

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 4	Peter McKay, Leominster	Having acknowledged in your Public Rights of Way Glossary that CRF's and CRB's were intended to be recorded as 'Roads Used as Public Paths', but in fact are shown as footpaths and bridleways, will you add a section to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (referred to as (draft) on PROW Webpage) covering these, that considers taking the next step forward raising self registered DmMOA's to record them as 'Restricted Byways', they being a network of stile free Greenways across the county?	Cllr Price

**Response:**

Thank you for your question. The Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan covers the period 2018 to 2028. We will consider your suggestion when work is undertaken to produce the next Plan.

With regards to 'restricted byways' status, I would advise that paths are recorded as per the public use that they had at the time. However, if there is evidence of a prior "higher status", an application can be made through the DMMO process to upgrade the path in the normal way.

**Supplementary question:**

Thank you for agreeing to consider my suggestion when work is undertaken to produce the next Right of Way Improvement Plan, which could be expected to reference an evidence base. Do you not accept that the submission of a way as a CRF by Parish Meeting when map was raised is good evidence of a prior higher status than footpath, and that with this coming about due to incorrect Government Guidance that used the non-statutory terms CRF and CRB, rather than the statutory RUPP, will you seek additional funding to cover the cost of addressing the resulting issues?

**Supplementary response:**

Thank you for your supplementary question. Public Rights of Way were recorded on the definitive map with their status at the time of recording. As the map is a legal document, it can only be changed by a legal process. Any claim for a higher status therefore needs to follow the Definitive Map Modification Order. Any evidence of a higher status should be provided to support any application for such a Modification Order.

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 5	Barbara Oliver, Bromyard	As you are aware, in 2007, Linton park, Bromyard was evacuated due to major flooding, after which flood defence channels were dug out further downstream. This seemed fine until December 2024, when another major flood occurred, flooding 3 homes, and the defences did not kick in soon enough. As most of the residents are over 80, this could so easily cause fatalities as Emergency vehicles could not attend. Can the Council look into this and can further action be taken such as having more channels dug, or dredge river perhaps before something very serious happens?	Cllr Price
<b>Response:</b>			
I can confirm that officers within Herefordshire Council, including at Gold Command level, are aware of issues at Bromyard. The Environment Agency has flood risk management responsibility for main rivers in England. As the River Frome has been designated a main river, the council in its role as a Lead Local Flood Authority will raise these issues with the Environment Agency and other stakeholders for action as a priority given the effect on residents.			
<b>Supplementary question:</b>			
No supplementary question			
<b>Supplementary response:</b>			
Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 6	Jeremy Milln, Hereford	Herefordshire Council undertook last year to carry out a Design Review and updated Impact Assessment for the Southern Link Road (aka W Bypass Phase 1). This is necessary to ensure the scheme fully meets current design standards and legislative	Cllr Price

requirements to inform any decisions which may now be made regarding whether to progress the scheme and its financial implications.

Where will we find the Design Review and updated Impact Assessment Reports and how are their findings being translated into revisions on design and cost?

**Response:**

The design review and updated impact assessment has not yet been completed. Part of the impact assessment includes a full annual cycle of environmental surveys to assess the contemporary impact of the scheme on the local environment and therefore this is a lengthy piece of work. Once completed, the Impact Assessment will inform the Design Review to ensure that any impacts are fully mitigated which will in turn inform a cost review.

**Supplementary question:**

**With delicious hubris and without adequate evidence, Cllr Price assures us, in his response to Mrs Morawiecka that the Sothern Link Road will 'demonstrate a positive cost benefit ratio' and to mine that 'any impacts will be fully mitigated' and on that basis commits to borrow £30m**

**But we learn that in fact this administration is not at full business case stage. It lacks the options appraisal, updated transport model and impact assessment needed before the design can be reviewed and the Business Case developed. And with that review and assessment evidence gathered we may find that sustainable transport options are a better fit than building motor-only roads. That is the proper order of things: gather the evidence first, study it carefully, then make a decision, and make it a rational one that best delivers on cost and objectives for society and the environment.**

**How then will the Cabinet member adopt this necessary approach to his decision-making?**

**Supplementary response:**

Thank you Mr Milln. As I've just said the full business case review, Environmental Studies is in place for later on this year. This is not my decision, this is a cabinet decision taken collectively. We are in favour of doing this work, we've allotted funding to be able to get to a stage where we can get to a full business case and review, and we will mitigate what we find at that point. We have been at this stage before and we have to redo a lot of that work, so we're not taking anything from previously, we're reviewing it all and we will see where that takes us.







Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from Councillors

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Cllr David Hitchiner	<p>It is likely that many residents who support the proposed Southern Bypass do so in the belief that it will reduce traffic in Hereford. The Outline Strategic Business case with the Cabinet papers relies heavily on this.</p> <p>A report prepared for the last conservative administration by wsp, which I have only seen in draft form, states that the effect of the SLR on journey times on the A49 is that they will remain “at existing levels” as will the level of delays at the A49/A465 junction. This is counter to what is required to support a business case. Notwithstanding this evidence the previous conservative administration continued their plans and their spending for this road.</p> <p>Will this administration be straight with Herefordshire residents about the lack evidence to substantiate their claims that the SLR will reduce traffic in Hereford?</p>	Cllr Price
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>An updated business case for the first phase of the Hereford Western Bypass is being developed. This will include an updated traffic model to reflect the contemporary situation. This Business Case will form part of a future report to Cabinet to release the £30m the council have made available within the capital programme, and therefore this information will be publicly available for scrutiny prior to the meeting.</p>			
<p><b>Supplementary question:</b></p> <p>I am not surprised that Cllr Price has sidestepped my question. As the Cabinet Member responsible for the Road projects when this report was completed in 2018 it must have been embarrassing to receive it, as it provides no support whatsoever for the proposition that the building of the Southern Link Road would reduce traffic on the New Bridge.</p> <p>Maybe he is hoping that a new report will provide a different answer, but I doubt that it will, but I’m not sure that this matters to Cllr Price.</p> <p>Can Cllr Price please let the people of Herefordshire know whether it is this administration’s intention to go ahead with the building of the SLR regardless of the lack of positive impact on traffic over the New Bridge? Can you be straight with Herefordshire’s</p>			

residents and say that they will have to wait until the whole of the Bypass is built for traffic to possibly improve? And I deliberately say possibly because I dread to think of the impact on Hereford's traffic of an additional 10,000 homes, 15,000 vehicles and 30,000 people. I urge Cllr Price and the Cabinet look again at the Eastern Bridge Option which will deliver traffic time savings much more quickly and at a much lower cost.

**Supplementary response:**

I think I have probably answered this question a dozen of times over the past few years. We have decided that we would look at the Western bypass option against the Eastern River Crossing a year or so back because we feel that the funding opportunities that will be afforded to us because it is doing a road infrastructure project that matches highways in England, is now National Highways, for the A49 trunk road. The Eastern River crossing does not do that.

I have on a daily basis people telling me, will you get on and build the Western bypass. I have people saying to me is East better or is West better? The evidence we are accruing together for the middle of this summer by July will give us at least the basis for the full business case and how we then approach government for the funding to build it.

Yes, we do have a problem in that we are mandated to build another 10,000 houses over and above what the Local Plan for last year was suggesting for this council, we don't know where that's going to take us either at this moment in time because the local plan had had to reverse back from where it was and be re-established. So, all in there will be fresh evidence coming forward this summer as to whether this is the right way to go forward or not and that will give us the evidence to support funding from government.