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Herefordshire Council

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Thursday 6 March 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 Harry Bramer, Barry Durkin, Carole Gandy, 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 Clare Davies (online), Ed O'Driscoll as representative for Cllr Terry James, Diana Toynbee (online).

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance

Councillors Ed O'Driscoll

Officers in attendance:

R Allonby, R Cook, L Featherstone, H Hall, C Porter, R Sanders, Rosie Thomas-Easton and P Walker and S Gregory (Secretary)

64. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies from Councillors Biggs, Powell, Hurcomb and Mason.

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

66. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

67. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 11 - 14)

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 1 to the minutes.

68. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

No questions from councillors were received for this meeting.

69. REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no reports from scrutiny committees for consideration at this meeting.

Councillor O'Driscoll spoke as chairperson of Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee at item 9 in the agenda.

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70. Q3 2024/25 BUDGET REPORT

The member for finance and corporate services introduced the report. The report presented the outturn position at quarter 3 2024/25, December 2024. It showed the overall position was a £7m overspend which was expected to reduce to £1.1m by year end. It was noted that despite in year challenges the council had responded proactively to mitigate timing issues in the delivery of savings.

The council's approved net revenue budget for 24/25 was £212.8m which included savings of £19.5m comprising £11.6m of directory savings and £7.9m of council wide budget savings.

The report highlighted the continuing in year cost pressures to support increases in demand across social care budgets, temporary accommodation and special educational needs transport services.

It was highlighted that the quarter 3 revenue outturn position for 24/25 showed a forecast variance from budget of £7m, an improvement of £3.2m compared with quarter 2. The successful delivery of management actions identified at quarter 2, had a positive impact on the overall outturn position and it was expected that further planned activities in quarter four (January to March 2025) would reduce the forecast overspend to £1.1m by 31 March 2025.

It was noted that a review of the delivery and stages of approved savings had been undertaken at quarter 3 to confirm deliverability of savings targets. This identified a total of £1.9m of savings across directorate targets which were assessed as at risk at quarter three.

Appendix A of the report set out the detailed explanations for variances from budget by directorate and service areas.

Community Well-Being directorate's forecast overspend of £5.7m represented in year net cost pressures of £3.3m and savings targets assessed as at risk of delivery by 31 March 2025 of £2.4m. It was noted that the in-year cost pressures were largely attributable to increase in demand and complexity of client need and increased demand for temporary accommodation. It was confirmed that the section 151 officer's section 25 report provided assurance that that the directorate budget allocation for 2025/26 reflected these cost pressures and was sufficient to meet the needs and the costs of service delivery.

It was highlighted that £3.3m of the total £5.7m target was forecast to be delivered by 31 March 2025. £2.4m of savings had been assessed as at risk and due to capacity restraints, these savings will not be delivered in-year.

The Children and Young Peoples directorate had an underspend of £2m forecast for 2024/25 with forecast delivery of the £2.3m savings target in full by 31 March 2025. It was noted that the forecast position reflected the impact of increased rigour and challenge of directory expenditure throughout 24/25 and provided assurance that the savings approved for delivery in 25/26 (year two of the revised financial plan) were already in progress. It was highlighted this was the first time in 10 years that the directorate had delivered within budget.

It was noted that forecast expenditure across service areas within Children Young People directorate continued to decrease because of review and management of residential placements and continued reduction in agency staff in social worker posts.

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It was confirmed that at quarter 3 the SEND transport budget and expenditure had been transferred from the directorate budget and was reported separately alongside home to school transport budget and expenditure.

The Economy and Environment directorate had a forecast overspend of £0.6m. This represented in year net cost pressures of £0.2m from reductions in expenditure across energy and waste services and in year savings target at risk of delivery of £0.4m. It was highlighted that the directorate was forecast to deliver £3.8m of the total savings target of £4.4m.

The Corporate Services directorate had a forecast overspend of £1.3m. This represented in year savings target at risk of delivery. It was highlighted that at quarter 3 the directorate was forecast to deliver £2m of the total savings of £3.7m. Work to deliver the outstanding savings was underway, aligned to the development of the Transformation Strategy.

At quarter 3 the net £1.2m overspend represented savings targets which had not been mitigated by recovery actions and deficiencies in year. Work was underway to review the original proposals, planned activity and time scales aligned to the development of the Transformation Strategy and target operating model.

Regarding management activity and recovery actions it was confirmed that the corporate leadership team had continued to exercise robust financial management of the forecast position throughout the year, monitoring the impact of planned mitigations and recovery actions on the in-year forecast and the progress of delivering approved savings targets.

At quarter 1 the forecast overspend was £10.8m this was expected to reduce to £6.8m with delivery of management recovery actions. At quarter 3 recovery actions identified had successfully reduced the forecast overspend to £1.1m at 31 March 2025.

It was noted that council approved £19.5m delivery of savings for 2024/25 which comprised of directorate savings of £11.6m and £7.9m of council by wide savings.

It was highlighted that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) had been closely monitored as a key risk to the council's overall financial sustainability. It was confirmed that the cumulative DSG deficit was accounted for as an unusable reserve on the council's balance sheet, as permitted by statutory instrument which will remain in place until 31 March 2026. After this date it is expected that any balance on the DSG unusable reserve would transfer back to the council's total earmarked reserves. The deficit would have an impact on the council's overall financial position and this risk is being managed alongside the assessment of the adequacy of the council reserves as part of the council's medium term financial strategy. It was confirmed that as of 1 April 2024 the cumulative deficit brought forward totalled £6.1m. A focused review to quantify the impact of emerging demand in 25/26 and future years had been undertaken during quarter 3 to inform the high needs budget for 25/26 and the council's DSG deficit management plan. The revised position for 25/26 has a forecast overspend of £11.1m in 24/25, increasing the council's DSG deficit to £17.2m as of 31 March 25.

This increase in forecast expenditure is largely attributable to an increase in independent School placements. A lack of sufficiency and local authority special school places meant the council is reliant on the independent sector to meet the specialist education needs for children in the county. The increase in top off costs or element 3 funding, driven by the national increase in the number of Education Care and Health Plans represented an additional cost pressure in 24/25.

It was highlighted that Herefordshire continued to experience increased demand which was not met by corresponding increases in funding, this was a significant risk across

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local government and the number of authorities with significant DSG deficits was increasing. It was noted that the council continued to work with the Department of Education, Local Government Association and other local authorities to seek clarification on the position once the statutory instrument expires.

The capital outturn, the 24/25 capital budget approved £160m which had been revised to £96.7m. The revised capital budget included £15.3m of unspent project budgets brought forward from 23/24, approved movements of £0.3m, £3.8m of additional grants and a reduction of £82.8m which had been re-profiled into future years (appendix B, table 4).

The forecast spend position was £79.6m which represented an underspend of £17m against a budget of £96.7m. The underspend consisted of £4.5m projects that would deliver below the project budget and £12.5m in respect to project budgets to be rolled forward for delivery in 25/26 if not spent.

It was summarised that management action controls over expenditure had been effective in reducing the forecast overspend. At quarter 1, June 2024, the forecast was £10.8m with a revised forecast of £6.8m. At quarter 2, September 2024, the forecast was £10.2m with a revised forecast of £2m. Now at quarter 3, December 2024, the forecast was £7m with a revised forecast of £1.1m.

Comments from cabinet members. It was positively noted that the forecast variance in children's services was £2m below what was budgeted which was a hallmark of all the various pieces of hard work.

Regarding the variance on the Community Well Being budget it was noted that client numbers and costs had increased significantly with specific pressures in residential (increased by 23%) and domiciliary care for people with physical disabilities (increased by 21%). It was noted the average cost of a residential care placement had increased by 19%, meaning each residential placement was costing on average an additional £9,300, which based on current numbers amounted to an additional £2.1m per year.

It was highlighted that similar pressures were in housing with an overspend in temporary accommodation. The number of people who required temporary accommodation had significantly increased. Over 1,300 people had presented as homeless since the 1st of April 2024 and this was unprecedented.

In respect of the at-risk savings, it was confirmed that those savings would be delivered in 25/26 but due to capacity constraints delivery had been delayed. The impact of increased demand for adult social care had diverted capacity away from focusing on the savings.

Congratulations were extended to Councillor Stoddart and the 151 officer regarding their strong grip on the budget. Also, tribute was made to the cabinet member for Childrens and Young People in respect of their directorate's achievements. It was also noted as a positive step to separate out finance from SEND and transport from the Children and Young People directorate.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. Congratulations were extended to Councillor Stoddart, Councillor Powell and officers regarding the work in their directorates. It was raised that £8.1m of savings remained at risk and queried if the savings did not materialise what were the contingency plans for next year. Repeated delays in the capital programme were also concerning. It was queried why this was happening and how the executive planned to avoid capital programmes 'stacking up' due to the delay.

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Concern around MERs was raised regarding deletion of posts, pressure on remaining staff members and delays in capital programme regarding public transport in cycling and walking schemes. The DSG position was noted, and it was raised this was an issue the government should be addressing.

In response to queries regarding the savings it was confirmed that detailed plans were in place for delivery of the savings, and this will also be underwritten by the contingency reserve for next year. Regarding delivery of capital programme, it was confirmed that this remained a key priority, resources were under review to ensure there was capacity and expertise to deliver those projects. It was noted that cabinet were mindful of the impact of delays in delivery of projects. Assurance was provided that cycling and walking capital projects would be delivered in the next year and the funding for Holme Lacy Road, Alyestone Hill, Transport Hub and green school walking were slowed down to ensure they had value engineering due to the cost impact from construction over the last 2-3 years. However, these projects would be ready in the procurement pipeline for the next 12 months and expected to be delivered within the 25/26 year period. It was confirmed there was clearance for the funding should an extension be required.

Regarding the deletion of posts and MERs concern it was noted that deletion of posts would have been because the post had been empty for some time. In terms of capacity in the workforce, this had been considered to ensure there was no gap in the service.

Councillor Lester proposed the recommendations, and it was unanimously resolved that:

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- a) reviews the financial forecast for 2024/25, as set out in the appendices A-D, and identifies any additional actions to be considered to reduce forecast cost pressures;**
- b) notes the progress in delivery of savings targets and recovery actions for 2024/25; and**
- c) notes the forecast revenue outturn position at Quarter 3 2024/25 of a £7.0 million overspend, before management action, and the potential impact of this overspend on the council's reserves.**

71. Q3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The member for finance and corporate services introduced the report. It was highlighted that 140 out of 179 milestones that were due to be in progress by quarter 3 under the Delivery Plan had been completed or were on track to be completed by the end of the financial year.

It was also highlighted that other successes had been achieved outside the Delivery Plan. It was noted that the council had continued to deliver on its capital investment program, comprising of over 100 projects. These included the Barrs Court Road phase 2, Withington Primary School, improvements to schools under the schools capital maintenance programme, section 106 delivery programme, estates capital improvement programme, road resurfacing across the county, integrated wetlands and the transport hub.

In respect of the council theme of people, 31 of the 56 milestones were completed, 21 were on target and 3 were at risk of missing their deadlines and 1 was paused. It was noted that improving the lives of children and young people made significant progress during quarter 3 which included the opening of the youth employment hub. Key activities

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to drive further improvements in the care and support of children and young people had been completed. This included a participation strategy, education strategy and the development of the locality model. Regarding adult services, 13 providers had signed up for the community activities framework which included an innovation lot to allow for the development of new opportunities, which will enable the council to support people with disabilities into work. Further progress had been made in relation to the support provided to unpaid carers of all ages in Herefordshire with the newly formed carers partnership board which was in the process of agreeing the implementation plan which reflected the key priorities identified within the All Age Carers strategy 2024. Further events are also planned to explore carer views on respite provision across the county.

In respect of the council theme of place, 19 of the 58 milestones in the Delivery Plan were completed, 22 were on target, 11 were at risk of missing a deadline, 3 were paused and 3 were not on target. The quarter 3 data showed that the council were off target regarding reducing carbon emissions by 1.8%. It was confirmed that work was ongoing regarding the council's carbon management plan to reach the aim of net zero by 2030. The heat decarbonization plans for the corporate estates were expected to be carried over to the beginning of the next financial year. Six properties had been identified, and a procurement framework was now in place. Herefordshire Natural Flood Management (NFM) project now included a live update on the NFM webpages, seasonal newsletters and attending multiple events throughout quarter 3 to keep the community updated. It was noted that the new public realm services operating model was approved in quarter 3 and the completion of public realm improvement works reached practical completion in December. In addition, a library design consultant was appointed, and the interim library was relocated to the Town Hall.

Regarding the increased housing targets the council had been reviewing where these allocations will be set around Hereford as part of the review of the Local Plan. It was noted that accommodating growth that was not anticipated within the previous business case for the Hereford Transport Plan would likely impact on the alignment and design of the current route of the Western Bypass. Therefore, this would require a comprehensive review of the business case to meet the current requirements of the government's green book approach.

In respect of the council theme of growth, it was highlighted that 11 of the 40 milestones had been completed, 16 were on target, 12 were at risk of missing a deadline and 1 was not on target. It was noted that a review of employment land, needs and opportunities was complete with further commissioning work to consider feasibility of business units in Bromyard being considered and business hubs in each market town. It was noted that plot sales in the enterprise zone were currently on track and current businesses continued to be supported. It was highlighted that 15 properties were being purchased through the single homelessness accommodation programme specifically for young people identified at risk of homelessness. It was confirmed that homeless prevention activity and engagement was continuing to enable rough sleepers to access accommodation and appropriate support. It was noted that the business case for the proposed Golden Valley Parkway railway station was awaiting sign off for additional professional services to carry out this work. Once agreed the procurement of these services could commence.

In respect of the council theme of transformation, 8 out of the 25 milestones were completed, 12 were on target and 5 were at risk of missing a deadline. It was highlighted that work was continuing at pace to develop strategic and directorate transformation programmes to support the delivery of the Transformation Strategy. It was confirmed that the needs of residents and businesses vary and there would not be 'one size fits all'. It was noted that the focus of the target operating model was to ensure that customers received the best possible customer experience, regardless of how they contacted the council whilst maximising use of technology to create an efficient customer

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journey. The council had engaged a new telephony system and wide area network provider, and the implementation of new systems will result in operational customer facing benefits.

It was confirmed that some of the data published by the Office for Local Government (Oflog) was historic and should be interpreted with caution. The council selected 10 indicators to indicate its latest performance. One, the percentage of service users aged 65 plus discharged from hospital into home first or still at home 91 days after discharge was 78.75% (projection was 80%). Two, the percentage of children and young people social work assessments completed within timescale of 45 days was 63.5% (projected 82%). Third, the percentage of children in care who had an up-to-date review was 99.5% (projected 95%). Fourth, the percentage of planning applications dealt with within 13 weeks was 88.89% (projected 70%). Fifth, presentation of non-major planning applications dealt with within 8 weeks was 77.63% (projected 80%) Sixth, the number of kilogrammes of waste not sent to reuse or composting was 325.08 kg (projection 320kg). Seventh, the number of affordable homes delivered was 209 (projected 199). Eighth, local count of Herefordshire homelessness was 5 (projected 5). Ninth, the value of grants awarded to business to support viability and enable growth was £2.9m (projected £1.6m). Tenth, the average days of sickness per FTE was 8.04% (target was 9).

Regarding the percentage of children and young people's social work assessments completed within timescale (63.5%), it was noted this was impacted by staffing pressures, managing vacancies and agency turnover. It was confirmed that the service manager worked effectively with team managers and assessment teams in other parts of the service to keep on top of this work, which is reflected in the year-to-date improvement trend. It was confirmed there was permanency in all four assessment team manager posts and the new locality model provided more management capacity to support smaller teams.

Comments from cabinet members. Regarding the Golden Valley Parkway, it was confirmed it had been difficult to engage with the Network Rail systems to purchase the land and sort the legalities. However, this was now being done. The cabinet member for transport and infrastructure had expressed their concerns on this and over the railway crossing for the Western Bypass phase one. It was confirmed that Network Rail were completing their own study regarding the line from Abergavenny to Hereford and Newport to Manchester as to time slot availability on that line. The cabinet member stated they had requested this was actioned so the council's task force would move forward with building the business case for the Parkway.

It was commented that the wetlands were performing well, and planning permission had been granted for 797 houses, and 360 had been offered credits. Regarding the carbon reduction target it was confirmed that the target will fluctuate and matters already in progress will return to target and likely move beyond the target in the immediate future. It was highlighted that since 2008/9 the council had delivered 63.2% reduction which equated to 16,317 tonnes of CO₂. Regarding the home upgrade grant 167 have been upgraded, 63 were with contractors and 14 were being approved and 264 had received assessments.

Regarding percentage of children and young people having social work assessments completed within 45 days, it was confirmed that the council was moving to a locality model, meaning there will be smaller teams, increased managerial oversight and quicker timescales for assessments.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. The report was welcomed and noted to be helpful. Concerns were raised regarding the delay in children and social work assessments being completed within 45 days. It was queried what was specifically causing the delays and how will smaller teams help.

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Disappointment was noted regarding the CO2 reduction target not being met, it was queried if the executive was prioritising easy wins and what were the specific barriers causing the council to miss this target.

It was noted that it was unclear how the Council Plan, Local Plan, Reg 18, Reg 19, NPPF housing targets and Local Transport Plan interacted and if the website could be updated.

It was noted that biodiversity net gain was to be integrated into the planning process, but concern was raised regarding weakening of the biodiversity regulation. It was raised that pressure should be kept on developers regarding offsetting taking place onsite.

Disappointment was expressed that buses were not mentioned and an update regarding the enhanced partnership meetings would be welcomed.

A map showing where the upgrade of housing had taken place would be welcomed.

In response to queries regarding the target not being met for children and young people social work assessment, it was confirmed that one issue was management of vacant posts in recruiting suitable agency or permanent staff in the earlier part of the year. However there had been cross service support to prevent a backlog and it was noted that when recruitment issues occur there will be an impact on service delivery. It was also noted that the locality model will be a more focused approach, and optimism was expressed that this would address the issue.

Regarding how the plans were connected it was confirmed that the Council Plan sets these out in a diagram and shows how they interconnect. This was also on the website and was interactive.

Regarding buses, it was noted that the draft Delivery Plan for 2025/26 included a milestone on buses. It was also noted a bus summit will be taking place in May or June and an invitation will be extended to all members to take part.

Regarding environment targets, these should be considered in context and noted that these reflected the council's journey not the county's as the obstacles for each were different, the council can only lead by example. It was confirmed there were things in motion to deliver on target. In respect of biodiversity net gain, certain parts are prescribed by the Environment Act including the desirability to see the offset onsite, not offsite. The council are working with trusty partners to ensure it is meaningful and not green washing.

Regarding the geographical location for homes eligible for the home upgrade grant, it was confirmed this was not geographical, it has different criteria and was something residents can apply for.

Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendation, and it was unanimously resolved that:

Cabinet

a) review performance for Q3 2024/25

72. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

The member for roads and regulatory services introduced the report. It was highlighted that the county was facing a housing crisis particularly the availability of affordable and social housing. It was noted that over 2,100 people were on the housing waiting list, with 156 households living in temporary accommodation such as B&B's and chain hotels and

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200 vulnerable people with physical and or mental health requiring suitable accommodation.

It was noted there was a negative impact on the quality of life for residents living in temporary accommodation, the number of older residents was increasing and the county does not have accommodation required to meet their needs, the lack of affordable housing forces the younger generations to move away and the county cannot attract the workforce it needs to enable economic growth.

To address this the council approved a motion in December 2023 which agreed several actions including a commissioning of best practise study regarding how other counties have addressed these issues and to form a cross-party political working group to establish a long-term solution to meet the needs of residents. The report stated registered providers, and the private sector would continue to play a critical role in bringing forward the housing needed. It also stated to address the remaining gaps the county needed a means of controlling some of the future housing provision. The report outlined two or more options to take this forward. One, working through joint ventures with the public sector and two, creating a council owned housing development company. It was noted that a recommendation to cabinet from the Connected Community Scrutiny Committee was to identify and begin the process of setting up a development company using the lessons learned from other local authorities identified in the report. It was confirmed that the cross-party working group supported this recommendation.

Comments from cabinet members. It was highlighted that this was a good example of the added value of scrutiny and the cross-party working group. It was noted that this was a serious consideration and housing delivery was an issue that everyone could support for the future of Herefordshire. It was commented that this was a good initiative and will generate an income stream other than council tax and business rates, it was a good long-term strategy.

The Chair of the Connected Community Scrutiny Committee spoke to the item and noted it had been positive to work together, to understand the root of the issue and come up with potential solutions. It was clear that the level of demand was outstripping housing with the current waiting list at 2,100 and it was important that there were long term building blocks in place to make a real difference to residents. It was highlighted that other councils were running similar housing companies successfully, confirming that they could provide an income stream whilst addressing the problem and reducing revenue costs.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. It was noted this was a successful motion put forward and scrutiny worked well in moving it forward. There was support for this item progressing. Concern was raised if there would be more ambitious financial investment in the next financial year. Further concerns were raised should developers withdraw due to planning delays and where the initial outlay would be funded from.

In response to queries regarding financial investment it was confirmed that when setting the capital budget, it was important not to commit sums of money until knowing if the council would have a development company. It was clarified that once the council know how the housing development company can be exercised then the capital requirement will become known. Regarding delivery of houses, it was noted the council won't ever be in control of private sectors delivering houses. However, in this case some of the housing allocation would be in the council's hand to deliver. It was also confirmed that £5m was in the budget to address short term needs and several sites will be brought forward in due course.

Councillor Durkin proposed the recommendation, and it was unanimously resolved that:

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a) To explore the development of a Herefordshire Council owned housing development company, to meet some of the county's critical housing need

Councillor Durkin left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.

73. SEND INSPECTION UPDATE - DEFERRED TO 27 MARCH

Deferred to 27 March 2025.

74. EDUCATION STRATEGY - DEFERRED TO 27 MARCH

Deferred to 27 March 2025.

The meeting ended at 16:00

Chairperson

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

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Peter McKay, Leominster	Will all our unsurfaced roads have had their annual inspections completed in conformance with the April 2024 Highway Maintenance Plan and had any obstructions logged on the Road Defect Progress Webpage Map, by May of this year?	Cllr Durkin
<p>Response:</p> <p>The Council's partner contractors, Balfour Beatty, are responsible for the annual inspection of unsurfaced routes as set out in the Highway Maintenance Plan.</p> <p>All annual inspections across the network started in February and are continuing this month. Any obstructions will be raised and dealt with accordingly.</p>			
<p>Supplementary question:</p>			
<p>Supplementary response:</p>			
PQ 2.	Chris Marsden, Kington	<p>When so many unsealed council maintained PUBLIC HIGHWAYS are neglected or obstructed, why is the Council's response to impose Traffic Regulation Orders?</p> <p>These were proposed on for example: Quebb Road CP32 Westhope, BKR14 Peartree Green,</p>	Cllr Price

	<p>Macadams Lane Spoon Lane and others.</p> <p>All of which have surface defects through NEGLECT and WILFUL OBSTRUCTION.</p> <p>The main reason given is safety, but no accidents have been recorded. Without use they also get severely overgrown example Dead Woman's Lane Lingen.</p> <p>This consultation not disclosed by Callum Bush at the LAF even though he was aware of it. Head of Highways (Ed Bradford) stated he was not aware of the proposal!</p> <p>This POWER is being put ahead of the DUTY to Assert & Protect for ALL users to save money, but will cost a vast amount.</p>	
<p>Response:</p> <p>The Council's Traffic Management Team have started a consultation process to seek views on whether access by motor vehicles should be prohibited at seven locations on the network. The Council does not intend to close or stop up these routes, which would remain accessible for walkers, cyclists, and equestrians and with the Council remaining responsible for the ongoing management of the route and ensuring it is kept open for lawful use.</p> <p>These measures are primarily proposed for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sections of highway are too narrow for motorised vehicles to use safely and are only suitable for pedestrians and horse riders. The restrictions aim to increase safety for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders using these sections of highway. <p>The measures are also proposed for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For avoiding danger to persons or other traffic using the highway or any other highway or for preventing the likelihood of any such danger arising. • For preserving or improving the amenity of the area through which the highway runs. • For preserving the character of the highway where it is especially suitable for use by persons on horseback or on foot. • To prevent accelerated damage to vegetation, surrounding biodiversity, and the highway. <p>We are currently at the very first step of the process, which involves statutory consultation with emergency services, highway authorities, and other relevant bodies.</p>		

If the proposals are deemed suitable to proceed then they will enter the formal public consultation stage. At this stage public notices will be placed in the local press and on-site at affected locations. Over a 21 day period, the public will then be asked to submit representations, all of which will be duly considered before any final decision is made. Any other interested parties, including the LAF, will have a full opportunity to raise their views during this stage of the process.	
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Supplementary question:

I will be 80 next year, I have chronic severe lumbago, whilst I was for many years an avid walker, and have cycled, ridden horses and enjoyed carriage driving with my late sister, alas I can no longer do any of those, plodding along in my historic Landrover is my only means of accessing the Countryside, Government have considered the matter in depth, they say TROs should only be used when other methods have failed, be minimal and in response to an evidenced problem.

So have any accidents been recorded between any of the user-types proposed to be banned and any walker or rider, on any of these highways?

Supplementary response:

Whilst we are not aware of any recorded personal injury collisions as described, the measures have been proposed for the reasons set out earlier.

I would reiterate that we are currently at the very first step of our process. Once the proposals do enter the formal public consultation phase then I would encourage representations to be made, all of which will be duly considered before any final decision is made.

