

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

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mr Frecknall, Hereford	Herefordshire Council is being both ambitious and generous in proposing to fund and build a Southern Link Road for National Highways to subsequently adopt as part of A49(T) Hereford Bypass. Would the cabinet member please confirm that the Southern Link Road's final design will be to DMRB 60mph standard throughout?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
Response: I can confirm that the road will be built to Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) standards and with input from National Highways to inform design so that at some point when the whole of the Hereford Western Bypass is completed it could be adopted by National Highways as the A49 allowing the current A49 through the City to be detrunked. Decisions on speed limits will be informed by the design process and no presumption has been considered on a 60mph speed limit at this time.			
PQ 2	Mr Stephenson, Ledbury	<p>Small rural market towns, such as Ledbury continue to be forcibly and exponentially overdeveloped and expanded, against local peoples' wishes. This is without first considering or uplifting local services, which are already considerably straining to meet the current populace. This overdeveloped and forced urbanisation is destroying swathes of countryside, undermining local values, ways of life and the very identity of such market towns. If residents wanted to live in a suburban sprawl, they would have moved to larger towns. This overdevelopment causes, increased traffic, pollution, crime, increased safety and security risks to locals and children. Further to this, locals are effectively living in a building site, with constant road works for years to come.</p> <p>What are Herefordshire Council doing, and when will they stand up and fight for the county against Central Government's forced and unwanted overdevelopment of the area?</p>	Cabinet member environment
Response: The Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024, introducing mandatory housing targets for all councils within England. The mandatory housing target for Herefordshire is 27,260 homes and this is considerably higher than the previous growth figure that was being planned for which would have resulted in 16,100 new homes over the same 20-year period. In response to the draft NPPF consultation that took place last summer, a detailed response was submitted to the Government on behalf of the council outlining concerns that the mandatory targets are set too high and do not reflect past build rates and market demand, similarly that rural counties such as Herefordshire would require significant investment in infrastructure in order to consider planning for this level of growth. These comments did not influence the published version of the NPPF in December which largely remained unchanged.			

In planning for growth, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) needs to consider sustainable locations that are accessible by more than one mode of transport and to focus development where existing services exist. This will involve looking at the city and the market towns as part of this process. The new Local Plan will be accompanied by an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), the purpose of this document is to make sure that any growth is aligned with the necessary infrastructure required (for instance schools, highways, open space, health provision, active travel etc) and will be delivered as part of any new development.

The new Local Plan will be subject to two public consultation stages (called Gateway 1 and Gateway 2), which provides an opportunity for people across the county to shape the future strategy. We will publicise the dates for these consultation stages as soon as finalised, which will include meetings in the market towns including Ledbury.

PQ3	Ms Martin, Hereford	It is settled and undisputed transport science that congestion in urban networks at or close to capacity cannot be reduced with peri-urban road building, nor traffic growth arising as a result of development, and there is no bypass anywhere that has achieved it. The global professional and academic communities have accepted it and the Dft acknowledges it in guidance but the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure at Herefordshire Council disagrees with them. What evidence is there that the western bypass will defy the universal laws of transport physics and economics and where can we find it	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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Response:

You only need to look over the border at the success of the A4440 Worcester Southern Link Road to show that providing new and enhanced road infrastructure around an historic city, provides demonstrable benefits to accessibility for all modes of travel, enabling housing and economic growth, environmental improvements within the city centre and enhanced resilience of the transport network.

The current situation within Hereford, is similar to that addressed within Worcester, where there is a lack of resilient infrastructure as a result of the single river crossing, meaning that any disruption along key routes, such as Victoria Street, can have a significant impact across the city and beyond, disrupting all movement, including that undertaken by bus, cycling and walking, increasing pollution and a detrimental economic impact on businesses within the county. The provision of a second river crossing to the south of Worcester unlocked significant potential for the city and a new river crossing and enhanced road network for Hereford will achieve the same.

PQ 4	Mr Milln, Hereford	Of the unattractive modern five storey steel tower at Jacob's Court consented by Herefordshire Council within the Central Conservation area without reference to design coding but soon found to be unsafe and scaffolded in 2010, questions were asked in June 2021 and November 2023. By 2021 the scaffolding, costing the Council £400 per month, already totalled over £60,000. The Cabinet Members' response to the 2023 supplementary assured us the timescale for resolving the issues and recovering the Council's rising costs were being finalised.	Cabinet member environment
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		<p>Yet it is clear, another two years on, this is not the case and the building remains as much of an eyesore as ever it was. A scheme of repair, approved in 2022, is imminently due to expire for non-commencement.</p> <p>Given the failure to address the problem over many years, what action should Herefordshire Council now take?</p>	
<p>Response:</p> <p>We recognise the need to bring this issue to a speedy conclusion and are working with the Owner's Management Committee for Jacobs Court.</p>			
PQ 5	Mr Morfett, Hereford	With the limited headroom on the local sewerage systems, the current Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2014 required £24Million to expand sewerage capacity improvements in Hereford, Leominster and Rural Areas to alleviate sewer system overflows during times of flood. How much funding has been paid to date to protect public health and ensure that developments do not result in sewage pollution to people, property and rivers?	Cabinet member environment
<p>Response:</p> <p>Welsh Water and Severn Trent are the statutory water and sewerage undertakers within Herefordshire. Therefore, they are legally obligated to provide water and sewerage services, this includes a continuous high quality water supply, ensuring that wastewater is properly disposed of, and managing their networks efficiently. Statutory Undertakers set out their investment programme in an Asset Management Plan (AMP) and these have been overseen by Ofwat, the economic regulator of the water and sewerage industry. In terms of the details of investment to date and over a given period, this is information that would need to be provided by the statutory undertakers concerned.</p> <p>Statutory undertakers will be consulted upon sites as part of the detailed site assessments that will be undertaken to inform the development of the local plan. Similarly statutory undertakers are consulted on planning applications that come forward to Development Management for consideration. Furthermore, the Corporate Director for Economy and Environment will meet with both Welsh Water and Severn Trent to ensure that they remain accountable and committed to the improvements scheduled within their AMP Plans. The Statutory Undertakers will be invited to appear before Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee to ensure that they are considering the impact of their decisions including their investment programmes.</p>			
PQ 6	Mrs Protherough, Hereford	In noting that the anticipated cost of the SLR will require an allocation of £30 million, funded by a loan, what action will be taken in 2026 to meet additional cost if tenders from contractors are significantly higher than anticipated?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure

Response: The Capital Programme, approved by full Council in February 2025, includes an allocation of £30m to deliver the first phase of the Hereford Western Bypass. The Outline Strategic Business Case identifies estimated costs and confirms that a review will be undertaken to confirm construction costs and a full business case will be prepared prior to committing to expenditure. Options for future funding will be identified following completion of the full business case and confirmation of costs.

PQ 7	Ms Albright, Leominster	Does the council feel that 811 homes levied and ‘released’ under the phosphate credit scheme since 2019 is an acceptable level of delivery?	Cabinet member environment
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Response: The Council is proud of the progress and delivery of our pioneering and award-winning nature-based phosphate mitigation strategy which has to date created 247 kg of phosphate credits which will enable approximately 1,500 new homes. Following the release of these credits we have been working proactively with developers to progress planning applications using these and the 811 homes referenced is the number that have progressed to date.

This is however only one element of our overall approach which also includes working to support developers with private mitigation schemes and addressing the huge issue of restoring the overall health of the river.

To support developers to bring forward private mitigation schemes we have developed additional guidance, case studies, FAQ’s and templates in order that this can minimise or mitigate the need to access the Council’s credit scheme. We are also committed to continually reviewing and updating these to consider the best available technology to meet this challenge.

PQ 8	Mr Hill, Hereford	<p>Would the Cabinet Member please consider introducing an Article 4 Direction (as has been done in Hereford City) to Herefordshire’s other Market Towns requiring planning permission for change of use even within the same permitted development use class?</p> <p>Such moves would help to restore public and business confidence in maintaining a vibrant, diverse, and functional high street, particularly for independent traders and for reducing crime/disorder. This could also reasonably extend to restrictions on Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO). I would be keen to see a mapped out timetable to bring this into action within the remainder of this current administration.</p>	Cabinet member environment
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Response: An Article 4 Direction is part of planning legislation that allows the council to remove permitted development rights including changes of use from an area or property in certain limited situations where it is necessary to protect local amenity or the wellbeing of an area. An Article 4 itself does not prevent the development to which it applies but instead requires that planning permission is first obtained from the council for that development. Before

pursuing an Article 4, the Council would give consideration to more effective and proportionate policy tools, for instance Local Plan Policies and Area Specific Design Codes. In order to introduce an Article 4 the Council would require justification and evidence to demonstrate that permitted development rights pose a real and specific threat to local amenity or the wellbeing of an area, the impact must be localised and blanket Article 4 Directions over large areas (i.e whole Market Towns) are discouraged. Article 4 Directions must be proportionate to the harm that it is seeking to address and the removal of permitted development rights should not go beyond what is necessary to protect the identified interest. Therefore, there are no current plans to introduce an Article 4.

PQ 9	Ms Laan, Hereford	2,250 parks and green spaces across the UK have reached the high standards required to receive a coveted Green Flag Award in 2025, but none were awarded in Herefordshire. Investing in parks and green spaces not only improves the health and quality of life for its residents but it boosts tourism, reduces crime, strengthens community and makes the County an attractive destination for new employers. Why is this Council not able to fund the proper care and maintenance of its public open spaces, which so many other Councils can achieve?	Cabinet member roads and regulatory services
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Response:

Herefordshire is blessed with several parks, open spaces and outstanding natural beauty, which we are proud of. Herefordshire Council manages 141 parks and green spaces, 64 of which include children's play areas. We are committed to investing in green spaces as they are critical recreational facilities for our residents. £1 million has been made available in our capital budget for this financial year and 2026/27 to enhance as many of these play areas as possible.

All parks and green spaces receive regular grounds maintenance in order to ensure that the sites remain safe and amenable for users. The contract that delivers this maintenance is coming to an end in 2026 and council officers are currently working on implementing a new contract in June 2026.

Once the new contract is in place, the aspiration is to review parks and green spaces in order to identify sites that could be suitable for a Green Flag application.

PQ 10	Mr McGeown, Weobley	<p>It is my understanding that Herefordshire Council has a statutory duty as set out on page 98, Working together to safeguard children 2023, There exists no statutory "cut off" for the time of receipt but Herefordshire's published best practice is:</p> <p>To provide copies of the reports submitted by all agencies for Review Child Protection Conference to parents and older children ... a minimum of 5 working days before review conferences to enable any factual errors to be corrected and the family to comment on the content."</p> <p>These reports will be submitted on standard template forms such as: https://www.herefordshiresafeguardingboards.org.uk/documents/cpc-multi-agency-reporting-template-updated-march-2020</p>	Cabinet member children and young people
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		Am I correct in my understanding of this statutory duty and are different templates used by Health and Police etc?	
Response: Most of our partner agencies do use the template provided as best practice to guide reports that they submit to conferences although some agencies will use their own formatting and we allow this flexibility.			
PQ 11	Ms Reid, Hereford	<p>The Chief Executive's report mentions Ofsted's (17/7/2025) letter about their monitoring visit regarding children in care. It states:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">'The consistent moderation of practice audits, to ensure reliable evaluation of practice, and ... remain areas for improvement.'</p> <p>Overall, the letter is positive. However, there is contradictory evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent negative media coverage including an online <i>Observer</i> article entitled: 'Outcry as council seeks to make man who faced child abuse trial a family guardian'. The article written in July 2025 states: 'A decision will be made about whether to give him [currently a foster carer] permanent guardianship at a family court hearing next month.' The website (www.families4change.org.uk) of the Families' Alliance for Change (Herefordshire) has a 'Media Coverage' section. The inquest into 21-year-old care leaver Natasha 'Tash' Ashby's death is due in March 2026. <p>What is your current appraisal of Herefordshire Children's Services?</p>	Cabinet member children and young people
Response: Ofsted monitoring visits are focused on work undertaken by the department within the six month period prior to the monitoring visit taking place, therefore current practice. In addition, through its Quality Assurance Programme, the service also seeks feedback from current and recent service users, draws on current Key Performance indicators and undertakes audit of practice within the three months of the case audit. These four process seen collectively are providing a positive picture of improvement and outcomes for children. In the Ofsted Monitoring Visit of Oct 24 and Feb 25 we also see positive progress and practice in those areas being made. As such our appraisal of the Children Services is, as reflected in the Ofsted letter of June 25, that positive progress at pace is being made.			