

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

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mr Osborne-Brookes, Hereford	<p>"I'm glad that the Cabinet Member is, albeit reluctantly, continuing some of Hereford's active transport schemes which were started by the previous administration. These and public transport are not only more affordable, but far more effective at minimising traffic congestion, vehicle pollution, obesity, and environmental degradation than motor road schemes which worsen them.</p> <p>However, in the Budget report in today's agenda, he is clearly continuing on with the unnecessary bypass.</p> <p>How can the cabinet member justify raising council tax to fund the interest of the enormous borrowing for the bypass to those in Herefordshire who are already faced by the cost of living crisis and government cuts, and who will not benefit from this bypass, and why isn't he investing more in public and active transport as an alternative?"</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure

Response:

This administration very much recognises the importance of active travel - this is demonstrated in the upcoming adoption of critical policy documents such as the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the Local Cycling Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan (LCWWIP) as well as in the current delivery of schemes like the Transport Hub and Holme Lacy Road improvements and many others. In total the council is investing over £20m of grant funding into active travel. The council's strategic approach is to improve Herefordshire's transport network in every choice we make, offering residents integrated transport options suitable for their individual journeys.

Whilst active travel has huge benefits for health it is unlikely on its own to ever resolve the congestion issues that Hereford experiences on a daily basis having a major trunk road (A49) running right through the city centre. Active travel represents less than 4% of journeys and even with a robust cycling and walking network in place it is unlikely to ever replace car journeys in a rural authority like Herefordshire. Active travel is one part of the solution, but the bypass is the only way to really significantly reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality in the city especially given the predicted growth and housing numbers the government is now requiring. The severance that the A49 creates in the city centre is also a barrier to improving active travel and a bypass is the right solution to removing traffic and to providing resilience to Hereford's future. The two must go hand and hand.

The council continues to seek funding opportunities from government to support the development of the bypass. The council's commitment to capital borrowing to support phase one will help make the case for investment to government and the impact of this on the council's revenue budget position is minimal and will not directly result in the need for increased council tax. This is about investing in the future for Herefordshire's residents so that we are stimulating the housing and employment growth needed to meet our future needs and drive economic prosperity for the County.

PQ 2	Ms Martin, Hereford	"Through a combination of capital allocation and borrowing, funding of around £40m is to be made available for the construction of the Southern Link Road, now phase 1 of the proposed western bypass. It's clear that this sum will not cover the cost. How is the shortfall to be met?"	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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Response:

The total budget available for phase one is £40.3m. This is made up of £10.3m of funding towards the development, design, land purchases and contingency for the project and £30m of funding towards the construction. The Council is about to start the tender process for the scheme which will better define the construction costs and budget requirements for the scheme.