

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

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mr Banks, Hereford	<p>Under the Council's Planning Code, Rule 5.6.28 requires late representations received after the noon deadline to be either published in the Schedule of Updates or discounted, while Rule 5.6.60 permits deferral of an item if new material evidence changes circumstances immediately prior to a meeting.</p> <p>Can the Chair clarify whether the Council interprets these rules as permitting material received after the noon deadline to be presented to Committee without prior publication in the Schedule of Updates, provided it is referenced verbally in the officer's presentation?</p> <p>Does the Council accept that if late material is not published in advance, objectors are denied the opportunity to respond, thereby undermining natural justice and procedural fairness?</p> <p>Will the Council commit to publishing all late material or deferring items in accordance with these rules going forward?</p>	Cabinet member environment

Response:

The Council always suggests that, in line with the Council's Planning Code (referenced) late representations are received before 12pm on the day before the committee meeting. This allows the officers time to add representations to the Updates sheet for publication. Planning code rule 5.6.28 provides that "papers received after that time will normally be discounted, since time will not be available to check their accuracy or to give consideration to their implications".

There are times where representations are sent directly to the Members of the Planning Committee after this time. This is not uncommon and members are asked to send this to the officers (if they have not already been copied in) so that officers can review this and make a decision as to whether the information raises matters that would require the deferral of the application for further consideration. Officers will refer to this correspondence in their verbal updates.

It should also be noted that verbal representations received on the day by members can also be taken into account. These do, on occasion also raise matters not previously received in writing.

If members, having reviewed the late representation, require further information or clarity from officers, then they can resolve to defer the item.

Officers will, where possible, continue to review late submissions and provide a verbal update. They will also consult with the Chair of the Committee, in accordance with rule 5.6.60, if it is considered that new, material evidence changes circumstances and it is appropriate to defer the item to avoid procedural unfairness.

PQ 2	Ms Mathias, Hereford	<p>Herefordshire Council's taxi licensing policy emphasises public safety, including safeguarding against child sexual abuse and exploitation. But the safety of women and children cannot be secured without enforcement of the policy. Taxi driver identification is paramount for passenger safety, accountability and maintaining public trust. The fact that individuals may be operating licensed taxis without matching identification is concerning and may suggest potential misuse of taxi licences.</p> <p>What precautions does Herefordshire Council take to make sure their strict licensing regulations are adhered to?</p>	Cabinet member roads and regulatory services
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Response:

As part of the Winter of Action 2025/26, and through Operation Radiate, we are planning joint patrols and targeted licensing activity to strengthen visibility and assurance. Passenger safety is reinforced through the conditions attached to every licence, including the requirement for CCTV in licensed vehicles. This work is supported by close partnership arrangements with West Mercia Police, Children's Services, the Community Safety Partnership and safeguarding boards to identify and address risks quickly.

Public safety is central to Herefordshire Council's taxi licensing responsibilities, and we take robust steps to ensure that only safe vehicles and fit and proper drivers operate within the county. Before a licence is granted, applicants undergo enhanced DBS checks with barred-list information, right-to-work verification, medical and driving-standards assessments, and mandatory safeguarding and child-exploitation training. A licence is only issued once all requirements have been fully met.

All licensed drivers must wear their council-issued photo identification badge, and every licensed vehicle must display the correct licence plate. These identifiers are tightly controlled and traceable, and any report that a driver or vehicle may be using incorrect or mismatched identification is treated as a safeguarding concern and investigated immediately. In practice, such incidents are extremely rare, and the close-knit nature of Herefordshire's taxi community means potential issues are brought to our attention very quickly.

Through this combination of stringent licensing checks, intelligence-led enforcement and strong partnership working, the Council ensures that taxi licensing regulations are adhered to and that the public can have confidence in the safety of licensed taxis in Herefordshire.

PQ3	Mr Morfett, Hereford	<p>The Herefordshire Biodiversity Action Plan is not a credible plan to tackle climate change while protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment.</p> <p>In the Local Transport Plan the Biodiversity Net Gain Policy TN13 states: "We will support local groups and volunteers to keep the Herefordshire Biodiversity Action Plan updated."</p>	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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	<p>This statement by Herefordshire Council lacks any commitment to actually protect and enhance the environment through its transport policies by environmental impact analysis, net biodiversity loss assessment, mitigation and full offset of the inevitable environmental impacts. It only commits to update the plan.</p> <p>How could policy TN13 possibly deliver on the Council's strategic objective of "Tackling climate change and protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment" ?</p>	
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Response:

Policy TN14 in the Local Transport Plan is regarding biodiversity and TN13 is regarding carbon; as your question refers to biodiversity I have answered the question based on biodiversity which is why there will be difference between the policy numbers in the question and this answer. TN14 reflects our commitment to ensuring transport planning supports biodiversity and environmental objectives. We recognise that tackling climate change and protecting the natural and built environment requires a joined-up approach. The transport planning team will work closely with the Council's Natural Environment Team and other partners to integrate biodiversity considerations into the design and delivery of transport schemes.

TN14 is not just about keeping the Biodiversity Action Plan updated—it is about using that plan as a key reference point when developing transport projects. This means assessing environmental impacts, identifying opportunities for biodiversity net gain, and incorporating mitigation measures wherever possible. By aligning transport policies with sustainability priorities, we can ensure that infrastructure improvements contribute positively to Herefordshire's unique environment.

As detailed in the LTP the council have invested £250,000 in supporting highways biodiversity net gain plus we detail a case study where through FCC Environment grant we awarded up to £35,000 for community projects to improve biodiversity.

Alongside TN14, the LTP includes wider commitments such as reducing carbon emissions, promoting active travel, and embedding environmental appraisal into scheme development. Together, these measures help deliver the Council's strategic objective of tackling the climate and ecological emergency and protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment.

PQ 4	Mrs Morawiecka, Hereford	Investing in safe, active travel measures and 20mph in urban and residential areas is shown to reduce car use for short journeys and cut car insurance costs, in Wales by £50 per household. Reducing car use and lower traffic speeds, creates higher disposable incomes for residents and thus strengthens the local economy whilst also improving the health, access and productivity of residents. This view is supported by both Active Travel England and the Dept for Transport. Why then does the Herefordshire LTP Transport Network Strategy "Supporting a Thriving & Prosperous Economy" omit any mention of improving active travel networks?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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Response:

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) fully recognises the importance of active travel and speed management in delivering economic, health, and environmental benefits. While the Transport Network Strategy focuses on the overall connectivity needed to support economic growth, active travel is a core element of the LTP and is addressed in detail within the plan and supporting Council policies.

The detailed active travel measures you mention are covered in the dedicated Active Travel Strategy; the Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Plan (LCWWIP). The LCWWIP will provide the detailed list of schemes and investment priorities for walking and cycling improvements across Herefordshire. This ensures that active travel receives the focus and resources it deserves, complementing the wider transport network strategy.

Together, these strategies work to deliver the Council's objectives of tackling climate change, improving health, and supporting a thriving and prosperous economy

PQ 5	Mr Milln, Hereford	Cabinet on 20th November agreed to make amendments consequential of the errors and omissions pointed out in the draft LTP before bringing it to Council today. This was confirmed in the response to Ms Martin's question regarding Active Travel England. Mine regarding the City Car Club based at Bartonsham & St James, about which the Cabinet member confessed ignorance, is another example. Yet these amendments have not been made in the so-called final version brought to Council today. How will the Cabinet Member ensure he delivers on his promise to make good the errors and omissions in the Local Transport Plan which have been pointed out to him so that members are not in a position where they must either refuse or defer its approval?	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure
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Response:

Thank you for raising this concern. Cabinet agreed on 20th November that any factual errors or omissions identified would be addressed where they materially affect the content of the Local Transport Plan (LTP). The reference to car clubs in the LTP states that the Council will explore opportunities to expand car club provision, which remains valid even though some schemes already exist. Therefore, no change to the LTP is required on this point.

The LTP is a strategic framework, not an exhaustive record of all current initiatives. Its purpose is to set direction and priorities, and the Implementation Plan that follows adoption will provide more detail on how existing schemes, such as car clubs, can be supported and expanded.

Adopting the LTP today ensures we maintain momentum on delivering transport improvements while allowing flexibility to reflect operational details in future implementation stages.