

Agenda item no. 6 - Questions from members of the Council

| Question Number | Questioner | Question | Question to |
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| MQ 1 | Cllr O'Driscoll, Ross East | Council agreed in July, on an overwhelming cross-party basis, to send a formal representation to Ministers and to publish a Herefordshire Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Prospectus. We now know the letter wasn't sent until I informed officers the decision had already been made, and we'd missed out. Additionally, the prospectus still remains unfinished while neighbouring counties have secured places on the Government's new munitions and energetics programme. This inaction means Herefordshire was not even considered for this substantial investment and the vital jobs it could have brought. Can you explain why your administration failed to carry out the clear instructions of Council, and do you understand why councillors and local people feel let down again by your administration's dithering and delay? | Leader |
| <p>Response: Firstly, Herefordshire has not missed out on any opportunities, the government announced an intention to select locations for future munitions factories and identified some <u>potential</u> locations as part of that announcement. I also note that whilst there was strong support for the overall motion in the council meeting in July, a number of Cllrs expressed significant concerns over the munitions factory element. At the council meeting Cllr Simmons said that she had spoken to businesses in the lead up to the council meeting and questioned why there is a focus on munitions and would be 'astonished' if we attracted one of the factories. Cllr Harvey said its disappointing that motion misses the target and said that a munitions factory should not be where this council puts its energy, stating 'is a munitions factory the best we can come up with, I hope not'. Cllr Tully questioned 'how a munitions factory will support a safe and prosperous community. Cllr Bartlett said we have a lot of expertise in the county, but questioned the inclusion of the munitions factory and if businesses has been consulted, saying 'it's a flaw in the motion to include it'.</p> <p>At the time of the council meeting the cabinet were happy to support the overall principles of the motion, and remain fully committed to supporting the growth of the defence and security sector, building on our local strengths to boost our economy and create more better paid jobs for local people. However, specific to the munitions factory element, in hearing the concerns raised by Cllrs, and the feedback from leading local businesses as to where our strengths and opportunities are, there has been a deliberate effort to take the time to ensure the we (the Cabinet) got the prospectus and the letter to government right. In this regard – this is not a missed opportunity.</p> <p>As was summarised in email correspondence in October, from the Chief Executive, since the council meeting at the end of July, we have;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held a meeting of leading defence and security businesses in the county in early September to understand opportunities and barriers to growth. • We have drafted and now finalised the Defence and Security Prospectus, which was circulated to these businesses for comment. | | | |

- We have sent a letter to the Secretary of State for Defence, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Ministry for Business and Trade highlighting local opportunities.
- We have supported the development of the new West Midlands Regional Defence and Security Cluster (being co-ordinated by the West Midlands Combined Authority and the MoD), ensuring Herefordshire businesses were invited and attended the foundation meeting in early October.
- The Economy and Place Board have commissioned a refresh of the Economic Plan, which again will have a key focus on Defence and Security opportunities.
- We have written to both local MPs and received positive follow-up from Jesse Norman

Looking forward,

- the county's first inward investment website, with a focus on defence and security, is due to launch in January 2026.
- We are planning a major presence with partners such as NMITE and local businesses at the SDSC-UK defence trade conference in February.
- We continue to be in discussions with leading defence and security businesses across the county as to how we can support their growth, including the potential for drone and communication technology test beds (raised as a need by local businesses)
- We are in discussions with international defence and security businesses interested in locating on the Hereford Enterprise Zone.

I trust this demonstrates our resolve and commitment to progressing this important work – it is a priority and we continue to take steps to unlock the opportunities it presents before us.

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| MQ 2 | Cllr Taylor, Credenhill | Highways England say they support a bypass for Hereford if the new road will alleviate congestion on the motorway network by increasing road capacity by taking increased through traffic on the A49 with vehicle speeds in line with the national speed limit of 60mph. How will this be achieved if the Local Plan is proposing over 10,000 new homes to the west of Hereford though which the bypass is planned to be built? | Cabinet member transport and infrastructure |
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Response:

National Highways (formerly Highways England) supports our calls for a Hereford Western Bypass, and they have written a letter of support to us during the LTP consultation confirming this. National Highways have placed no constraints on the design speed of the road other than they would seek journey times to be less than the current A49 were they to adopt the road. Modelling undertaken to date shows that the new road would offer an improvement in travel times - they agreed in principle to a 40mph limit to be used for the modelling, but it is likely that sections of it may be at national speed limit.

Modelling confirms that the bypass reduces long-distance and freight delays on the A49. The additional river crossing provides improved resilience to National Highways Strategic Road Network (SRN) which they very much support.

The bypass is designed to keep through-traffic separated, while local roads can be made safer (e.g., 20–30 mph zones, cycle lanes dependent upon local need and agreed policies). The long term vision for the bypass would see a road which works similar to the Worcester bypass, with just a few key junctions so that it provides a better alternative than traveling through the City centre. The key junctions would then contain distributor slip roads that provide the key link to new housing and employment sites.

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| MQ 3 | Cllr Fagan, Birch | The 33 bus (7.33am) service from Ross on Wye to Hereford has left students stranded since the beginning of November. According to parents this bus arrives in Ross on Wye from Gloucester already full. The second bus that eased the situation at the beginning of the academic year in September was axed after half term leaving fee paying students watching as a full bus drives past them - causing untold stress, disruption to studies - and adding to city congestion. How many bus passes were sold to students using this route, at what fee? How was consultation undertaken with students and parents before axing the second bus and how was the failure to provide transport communicated to paid-up users? When will the situation be rectified and is the Transport team aware of our commitment to Child Friendly Herefordshire? | Cabinet member transport and infrastructure |
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Response:

Please be assured that, I as Cabinet Member am working closely with the Public Transport Team and we are actively engaged in addressing this issue. We are actively looking for solutions around the specific issues you have identified and we will continue to work with partners to find this. Please also be assured that we remain committed and recognise the imperative to support all young people's access to education.

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| MQ 4 | Cllr Hitchiner, Stoney Street | The WSP Strategic Environmental Assessment contains at 5.1.1 some next steps including a requirement that the Report will be presented for public consultation alongside the Draft LTP5 and for the representations received to be documented and considered in reviewing the proposals for the LTP5. What steps were taken to consult with the public? How have the representations been documented? | Cabinet member transport and infrastructure |
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Response: The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) prepared by WSP was published for consultation alongside the Draft Local Transport Plan (LTP5) during the formal consultation period, which ran from 1st May to the end of June 2025. This ensured that the public could review both documents and provide feedback on the environmental implications of the proposed transport strategy as detailed in 5.1.1.

The consultation process included:

- Online publication of the Draft LTP5 and SEA on the Council's website with dedicated response forms.
- Public engagement events
- Promotion through press releases, social media, and stakeholder networks to encourage participation.

All representations received were documented in a Consultation Summary Report, which sets out the number of responses, key themes, and how these informed revisions to LTP5. Any feedback relating to the SEA was considered alongside transport policy responses to ensure environmental objectives were integrated into the final draft.

The Consultation Summary Report is available as part of the supporting documents for the LTP and will be published alongside the adopted plan for transparency.

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| MQ 5 | Cllr Heathfield, Hope End | When is the last time that licensed taxi drivers were spot checked on the street that they were the licence holder, and how often are these checks carried out? If taxi drivers are not who they say they are, what is the point in any of the checks our hardworking taxi licensing team carries out? | Cabinet member roads and regulatory services |
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Response:

Licensing officers confirm the identity of taxi drivers through an intelligence-led approach that focuses on information received from the public, the trade and the police. Whenever concerns are raised, officers verify that the person driving a licensed vehicle is the authorised licence holder, that the correct badge and plate are being used, and that the vehicle meets all licensing conditions. The most recent driver-identity enquiries were undertaken in response to intelligence received in recent weeks.

As part of the Winter of Action 2025/26, through Hotspot Policing under Operation Radiate, the Council is working with West Mercia Police to plan joint patrols and targeted licensing checks that will include on-street driver-identity verification. These operations are designed to provide increased visibility and reassurance during peak periods.

Incidents of individuals attempting to drive a Herefordshire-licensed taxi without holding the appropriate licence are extremely rare. The taxi community in Herefordshire is small and closely connected, and concerns about improper use of badges or vehicles are reported to the Council quickly. Identity checks are therefore an essential safeguard that ensures the extensive vetting carried out before a licence is granted is meaningfully linked to the person who is actually carrying passengers.

This approach helps maintain high standards across the trade, reinforces driver accountability, and provides assurance to the public, particularly vulnerable passengers, that licensed taxis in Herefordshire remain a safe and well-regulated form of transport.

