

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

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1.	Mrs E Morawiecka, Hereford	<p>It has been reported that other councils, like neighbouring Shropshire, are facing bankruptcy as they recognise that delivery of “relief road” schemes are unaffordable and they seek to write off millions of public money invested in developing these road schemes.</p> <p>The Corporate Risk Register identifies capital projects among the number of high-level risks to 30.09.2025 where risks have increased since 30.06.2025. The Leader of Herefordshire Council has written to government highlighting that prudential borrowing will significantly impact the revenue Budget of this Council.</p> <p>As this administration spend £10.3million of capital receipts working up the Southern Link Road scheme, what actions are being taken by the Cabinet and Council Leadership Team to monitor and mitigate the identified risks of the capital road scheme, in particular those posed from borrowing over £30Million and risking the revenue budget of the Council?</p>	Cllr Stoddart

Response:

Control measures and mitigating actions to respond to Council’s Corporate Risks are identified in the Corporate Risk Register. The Corporate Risk Register is monitored and updated by the Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet on quarterly basis.

Item 9 of the Agenda presents an update on the status of corporate risks at Quarter 2 2025/26. This includes:

Corporate Risk ref. R4: Failure to deliver capital and major projects within identified resources and planned timeframes resulting in significant overspend and reduced project outcomes. The controls and actions to manage and mitigate this risk are included at Appendix A, of the report and set out below.

Each major project has an assigned Senior Responsible Officer, a dedicated Project Management Officer Project Manager and a Project Board of relevant representatives from across the council (relevant service area, legal, finance, property services etc) to lead delivery.

Additional controls are in place to monitor expenditure in respect of capital and major projects linked to cashflow requirements via monthly Directorate Budget Boards.

A review of the council's Capital Programme is currently underway to identify opportunities to maximise resources and funding to prioritise delivery of capital projects and minimise risks to delivery and budget

Corporate Risk ref. R5: Failure to deliver a sustainable financial strategy that supports delivery of the Council Plan priorities. The controls and actions to manage and mitigate this risk are included at Appendix A, of the report and set out below.

Effective budget monitoring arrangements are in place via Directorate Budget Boards to monitor delivery of services against agreed budget, achievement of savings and delivery of capital and major projects. Expenditure controls have continued in 25/26 via Directorate Control Panels to challenge and reduce, defer or stop spend above £500. High quality financial reporting is achieved through additional controls to ensure forecasting is informed by reliable, timely activity data.

Additional controls are in place to monitor expenditure in respect of capital and major projects linked to cashflow requirements via monthly Directorate Budget Boards.

Supplementary question:

The response avoids answering my question which asked what is being done to mitigate the risks from the Southern Link Road Scheme. Agenda item 9 shows the risk of capital projects has increased from 9 to 12, a 33% increase in just three months. This indicates the council leadership team which includes the cabinet is failing to protect Herefordshire public finances. This perhaps explains the Leader's begging letter to Government to try and rescue a road scheme which adds hundreds of pounds to all Herefordshire taxpayer bills for the next 40 years. If directorate control panels are being asked to challenge, reduce, defer or stop spending above £500, why wont this cabinet reduce, defer or stop the spend of over £40 million pounds needed for the Southern Link Road to avoid the financial car crash predicted by the council Leader in his letter.

Supplementary response:

Proposed response:

The revenue impact of prudential borrowing undertaken to fund capital projects is determined through the annual budget setting process and the council's Treasury Management Strategy. Interest payable linked to project funding per the approved capital programme is included in the revenue budget and reflected in the medium-term financial strategy which requires full Council approval. Risks to individual projects, including financial risks, are identified, monitored and reported as part of the council's risk management framework.

PQ 2.	Amanda Martin, Hereford	There is no mention of Active Travel England in the list of stakeholders consulted. When Active Travel England provide significant resources to Local Authorities and grant funding for delivering active travel schemes why were they not consulted on a transport plan to cover the County for the period 2025-2041, when there is increased pressure to deliver additional housing in a sustainable way, improve health outcomes for all residents and reduce carbon emissions, and given that transport is the largest carbon emitter in the county?	Cllr Price
<p>Response:</p> <p>I can confirm that Active Travel England (ATE) were consulted during the development of the Local Transport Plan (LTP). They attended the stakeholder workshops held in November 2024, where their input helped shape the plan's approach to active travel and sustainable transport. In addition, ATE was provided with links to the public consultation when it went live, ensuring they had the opportunity to review and comment on the draft plan.</p> <p>LTP Policy TN10 regarding design standard ensures the LTP reflects use of ATE's Design Tools, their priorities and national guidance, including the Healthy Street principles and the Department for Transport's Gear Change strategy. These underpin our commitments to improving health outcomes, reducing carbon emissions, and supporting sustainable housing growth. Transport remains the largest carbon emitter in the county, and active travel is central to addressing this challenge.</p> <p>We will continue to work closely with ATE during the implementation phase and future reviews of the LTP to ensure alignment with their funding and delivery priorities, and we will include ATE in the final version of the LTP before it is published for Council.</p>			
<p>Supplementary question:</p> <p>"The answer appears to contradict the recommendation of Cabinet that "The Local Transport Plan 5 2025- 2041 for Herefordshire is recommended to Council for adoption".</p> <p>This means that there is no opportunity for any corrections as this is the final draft being recommended by the meeting. Delaying the plan, including any scrutiny and corrections, is not recommended, even for a couple of months, as apparently "momentum will be lost and delivery of priority schemes".</p>			

Unusually for a Plan, there is no list of priorities in the Local Transport Plan document, so please explain where the list of schemes ranked by priority can be found, and the implementation plan showing their capital costs, funding sources and phased delivery over the period of the plan, and which are supported by ATE, a major grant funder?"

Supplementary response:

The recommendation to Full Council is to adopt the Local Transport Plan (LTP) as the strategic framework for transport in Herefordshire for the period 2025–2041. This does not mean that the plan cannot evolve over time. The LTP is a high-level policy document, and its adoption provides the basis for developing detailed implementation plans and schemes. These will be subject to ongoing review, stakeholder engagement, and funding opportunities, including those offered by Active Travel England (ATE).

To clarify, the LTP does not include a fixed list of priority schemes or detailed costings because it is designed to set strategic objectives rather than prescribe specific projects. This approach allows flexibility to respond to emerging needs, funding streams, and community priorities over the life of the plan. The prioritisation of schemes, capital costs, funding sources, and delivery phasing will be set out in the supplementary delivery plans such as the LCWWIP, BSIP etc. The LTP will be a dynamic document, updated regularly to reflect progress and new opportunities.

An annual report on the LTP including project delivery, KPI updates and amendments required to the document to reflect local and national guidance or legislation changes will be scheduled once the document has been adopted by Full Council. This will ensure that the LTP remains up to date and what is needed to best support Herefordshire's transport network.

Active Travel England will continue to be a key partner in shaping and funding active travel schemes. Their input will be sought during the development of the Implementation Plan to ensure alignment with their priorities and design standards.

In summary, adoption of the LTP now ensures we maintain momentum on strategic objectives, while the detailed programme of schemes will be developed transparently and collaboratively in the next stage.

PQ 3.	Will Frecknall, Hereford	I understand the Local Transport Plan for the period 2025 to 2041 has reached final draft and will shortly be put before full Council for approval. Can Cabinet confirm that that document has been reviewed by the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee? And if it has, why have that committee's comments not been published?	Cllr Price
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Response:

The draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) for 2025-2041 was considered by the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee on 3 June 2025. In addition the committee considered a report that outlined the council's approach to producing the plan on 8 November 2023.

Following its scrutiny on 3 June 2025, the committee made the following recommendations:

- That the draft Local Transport Plan is reviewed to ensure alignment with existing council plans and strategies.
- That the Local Transport Plan gives particular consideration to the needs of children and young people
- The duration of the Local Transport Plan is kept in alignment with the Local Plan and Transport Strategy to which it applies - namely 2016-2031.
- Herefordshire Council work to increase the number of residents taking part in the Local Transport Plan consultation as a matter of urgency, extending the consultation deadline to 30 June to all members of the public.
- The policy wording of the Local Transport Plan is tightened to ensure that it is meaningful and capable of being applied.
- The Local Transport Plan recognises the full extent of existing new developments, for example Ledbury, and the infrastructure improvements necessary to accommodate this.
- The Local Transport Plan should include targets for the implementation of active travel measures.
- The Local Transport Plan recognises the inability of the power grid network to meet the needs of fast EV charging point.

The cabinet member responded to these recommendations on 6 June 2025, in doing so, agreed to:

- review the alignment of the transport plan to other key policies
- review engagement with young people in drafting the plan
- extend the consultation period of the plan and
- include targets for implementing active travel measures.

In addition to the engagement with Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee, all members can comment in full at council on 5th December. An all-member briefing took place on 18th November and additional feedback was received which is being shared with the Cabinet member.

Supplementary question:

Whilst you say councillors can comment at the Full Council meeting on the final draft of the Local Transport Plan, they will not be able to amend the plan at that point, even for corrections or issues raised today, unless Cabinet decides not to recommend adoption of the final LTP to go to full council at the meeting on 5th December.

Page 7 of the LTP says “LTP5 is a living document that will be reviewed and updated as part of a continuous process.” To enable councillors and scrutiny comments to be incorporated into this living document, when is the first review scheduled to take place to update the Local Transport Plan?

Supplementary response:

The first formal review is scheduled to take place within 12 months of adoption.

PQ 4.	Nigel Shaw, Bromyard	On 07/07/25 you published a decision to expend up to £1.5m of capital to develop and build workspace units on the former Council Depot Site in Bromyard. The published risk considerations make no reference to the content of the memorandum sent to the Economic Development Manager by Planning Services on 31/07/18 (Ref 182239). vis:- “A redevelopment of the site for employment purposes would very likely increase the density of development and radically alter the appearance of the site, at this stage it is unknown what impact this would have on neighbouring uses, access arrangements, or use restrictions on the site. Consequently it is not certain at this stage whether the site would be an appropriate location for future employment use.” What has now changed that enables these industrial units to be built cheek by jowl with existing dwellings?	Cllr Biggs
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Response:

The Bromyard Town Investment Plan and the Employment Land Study (completed in 2022) in support of the development of the new Local Plan indicates that there is a need for 4ha of employment land within Bromyard. The Cabinet Member decision taken on the 7th July 2025 (Decision - Bromyard Employment Land and Leominster Business Hub Development - Herefordshire Council) initially provides access to the funding required to appoint a design team to fully explore the potential business case for development of the site to meet this need. We are currently undertaking further work to clarify demand for the proposed business units, and gathering further evidence to support the assessment of the financial viability, prior to taking forward the design stage which will include further engagement with the planning service.

Supplementary question:

Thank you for your reply which suggests that to the Bromyard Employment Land Study, completed in support of the development of the New Local Plan, is the change that has occurred. But this document also specifically discounted the development of the Depot site for employment purposes

as outlined in table E2 of that study. The report did not consider the site to be suitable. I am sure that the Cabinet member would not instruct officers to disregard evidence produced in support of the new local plan in order to deliver his own objectives?

Will the Cabinet member now reconsider their actions which go against both local wishes and the comprehensive evidence in the report provided by his own Authority?"

Supplementary response:

There are a number of 'changes' that have occurred in taking forward the feasibility to potentially develop employment units on the former depot site, not least the lack of other suitable sites that the council can bring forward to meet the identified local need, the site has an existing designation for employment use, and the very significant mandatory growth targets the government has imposed through the changes in National Planning Policy Framework. The increase in 30,000 new homes across the county will require the development of associated employment land, this significant change has required that we further review all sites for future development. As a result of the change to the NPPF, the Employment Land Study is about to be updated, and will further consider the depot site in light of these changing requirements.

PQ 5.	Jeremy Milln, Hereford	<p>The Herefordshire Local Transport Plan 5 (2025-41) at agenda item 10 contains scant reference to 20mph speed limits, believing them only narrowly applicable, e.g. around certain schools. In this respect the LTP as drafted fails to meet the ambition set by Herefordshire when it agreed to progress area-wide 20mph at Full Council on 6th March 2020. Yet 20mph is now universally accepted as a defining feature of safer, more liveable streets across the UK adopted by more and more local authorities.</p> <p>What does the Cabinet member propose to do, so as not to be left behind with his stance on the matter where denial of the facts will not do?</p>	Cllr Price
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Response:

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) does reference 20mph speed limits and focuses on their application in locations where they deliver the greatest safety and environmental benefits, such as around schools and residential areas. This reflects current Department for Transport guidance and the evidence base for effective speed management.

The Council's resolution in March 2020 to progress area-wide 20mph limits remains an important commitment, and the LTP does not preclude wider implementation. Rather, it sets the strategic framework within which detailed policies and schemes will be developed. The next stage will involve reviewing how 20mph limits can be expanded in a way that is consistent with national standards, local priorities, and available funding.

It is important to emphasise that our approach to road safety is not limited to speed limits alone. We are focused on a comprehensive package of measures including improved crossings, traffic calming, enforcement and active travel infrastructure to create safer, more liveable streets. This ensures that we address road safety holistically rather than relying on a single intervention.

We will continue to monitor best practice and evidence from across the UK to ensure Herefordshire delivers safer streets while balancing enforcement, community support, and integration with wider transport objectives

Supplementary question:

It is not the case, as the response to my question about the scant reference to 20mph on page 28 of the LTP implies, that 20mph is conditional on a 'package of measures including improved crossings, traffic calming, enforcement and active travel infrastructure'. Many years ago, the whole of the St James and Bartonsham area of my ward was successfully made 20mph without any of these measures.

Referring also to page 28, where the Local Transport Plan says it will explore a possible car club scheme in Hereford, giving people a cheaper alternative to car ownership, the Cabinet member is clearly ignorant that there is already such a car club in Hereford, also based in the St James and Bartonsham area of my ward, and another based in South Hereford, both well used. How will he amend the Local Transport Plan to acknowledge this fact and encourage support?

Supplementary response:

On the matter of 20mph speed limits, the Local Transport Plan (LTP) does not state that 20mph is conditional on additional measures; rather, it recognises that in many locations, complementary interventions such as crossings, traffic calming, and active travel infrastructure can enhance the benefits of lower speed limits.

It is important to note that national guidance and enforcement requirements have changed significantly since the earlier 20mph schemes were introduced in areas such as St James and Bartonsham. Current Department for Transport guidance and police support now require that 20mph limits are implemented in a way that ensures compliance and safety, which often means considering supporting measures or design changes. This is to avoid creating limits that are widely ignored, which can undermine road safety objectives.

Regarding car clubs, we appreciate your clarification that Hereford already has active car club schemes operating in St James, Bartonsham, and South Hereford. The reference in the LTP to “exploring a possible car club scheme” reflects the intention to expand and promote these initiatives more widely across the county.