

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

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1.	Mr Padraig Kelly, HR1 1HX	<i>What assurances can Cabinet offer that major financial commitments — including land acquisition and procurement initiation — are being made with proper democratic oversight?</i>	Leader of the Council
Response: All major financial decisions are agreed at full Council meetings. Cabinet acts only within approved plans and the constitution. Procurement follows strict rules to ensure transparency, value for money, and integrity. Scrutiny and Audit committees provide further oversight and accountability. For further information please see the Council's Constitution: Browse - Constitution - Herefordshire Council			
PQ 2.	Mr Jeffrey Hancorn, Hereford	<p><i>As Cabinet prepares to commit to substantial capital spending on bypass procurement, land acquisition, and the redesign of public realm services, can Cabinet explain how these priorities align with the urgent and still unresolved needs of local SEND families.</i></p> <p><i>Herefordshire's SEND provision has been highlighted by MPs as being under serious strain, and it has now been more than 18 months since the Department for Education reviewed funding requests for specialist school rebuilding — with no meaningful progress or update for families.</i></p> <p><i>Why major capital investment is being advanced for transport and public realm schemes while families awaiting SEND support continue to experience delays, uncertainty, and an absence of any published plan or timetable for improvement?</i></p> <p><i>I would be grateful for Cabinet's explanation of how its financial and strategic priorities reflect the needs of local children and families at this time</i></p>	Cabinet Member: Children and Young People
Response: Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) remains a top priority. We have increased local capacity, strengthened support for Education, Health and Care Plans and improved school facilities. It is deeply disappointing the government withdrew funding to build a new school and we will continue to press the Department for Education to fulfil their obligations to fund SEND provision adequately, taking into account our growing and more complex needs and our rural setting. And, like all councils, we are waiting for the government to publish their SEND strategy.			

At the same time, the council must invest in infrastructure that underpins growth and prosperity for all residents - including those with SEND. The Hereford Bypass and other infrastructure projects and acquisitions are strategic investments that will unlock growth, housing, attract inward investment, create jobs and improve transport for all users. This growth strengthens the council's ability to deliver better public services and reduces long-term costs by ensuring Herefordshire remains economically resilient. Cabinet must balance priorities across a fixed budget, but the principle is clear: strong infrastructure enables strong services. We remain committed to improving SEND provision and will continue to work with partners and government to secure the funding our families deserve.

PQ 3.	Rhys Griffiths, Hereford	<i>What is happening to the white house community hub now the council have taken the building back, is it going to be repaired and turned back into a community hub or do the residents that live opposite it have to stare at a part derelict building for the foreseeable future until more damage occurs in the storms we are having a more regular basis?</i>	Cabinet Member: Economy and Growth
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Response: We fully recognise how important centres like the Whitehouse Community Hub are for local residents. Supporting community hubs across the county is a priority for the council, and we are committed to ensuring that communities can continue to deliver the valued activities, services and support that take place in spaces like this. Our aim is to see the building brought back into safe, active community use as soon as is practicable.

PQ 4.	Hayden Osborne-Brooks, Leominster	<i>"The Statement of Reasons at para 5.5 says that of the problems in the South Wye area "Significant daily variation in journey times arising from impacts upon the current A49 and lack of alternative routes available" and also "Reliance on car journeys for short trips by some residents". From the 2025 traffic modelling referred to in the Statement for Reasons how many car trips on the A49 would be reduced daily at peak times if there were increased bus services between Ross-on-Wye & Hereford, particularly those bus services for students and school children who need to travel independently to access education?"</i>	Cabinet Member: Transport and Infrastructure
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Response: Whilst it is accepted in the Statement of Reasons that an increase in bus services could proportionately reduce some congestion, it would not be enough to have a meaningful impact in the volume of car travel/freight or significantly diminish the case for the bypass.

PQ 5.	Tracy Bowes, Hereford	<i>The original business case for the Southern Link Road was that it would help bring forward housing in the Bullingham urban extension and open</i>	Cabinet Member: Transport and Infrastructure
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		<p><i>up the expansion of the HEZ, as per the adopted Local Plan, with developers contributing up to £5Million towards the cost of the new road.</i></p> <p><i>In his recent letter to the Dept for Transport, the council leader highlighted that the Southern Link road scheme will require local service cuts and increase Council tax bills across Herefordshire for the next 40 years. To reduce the impact on local taxpayers of the cost of the prudential borrowings for the Southern Link Road, what contribution is anticipated to be forthcoming from developers?</i></p>	
<p>Response: At present no specific developer funding has been identified for phase one. The decision of the previous administration to cancel the bypass at a cost of circa £20m has meant that any developer contributions that were allocated at the time are no longer available.</p>			
PQ 6.	Gian Carlo Paganozzi, Bosbury Ledbury	<p><i>Currently there are activities/ services in the public realm like grounds maintenance (for instance but there are others) that BBLP are undertaking for the council. However, likewise Hoople manage and or undertake similar activities and services on assets that Property Services are responsible to maintain and for instance ground maintenance to mention one activity.</i></p> <p><i>So have any of those activities/ services on Property services assets have been included or will be transferred into the new Public Realm Contract so as to reduce Hoople's costs to Property Services in no longer having to manage those services/ activities but at the same time the council will no doubt get better value and reduced costs on those activities/ services form whoever manages the new public realm contract due to economy of scale.</i></p>	Cabinet Member: Local Engagement and Community Resilience
<p>Response: Thank you for your question Mr Paganozzi. Appendix 1 of Agenda Item 7, the New Public Realm Service, provides a list of “core services” that the successful bidder will deliver. The contract documentation itself sets out where the services listed may be provided, including on but not limited to corporate property amongst others. However, no services are proposed to transfer from Hoople to the successful bidder as part of this contract award.</p>			

PQ 7.	Jeremy Milln, Hereford	<p><i>Back in January I asked of Cabinet about the Council's updated environmental assessments for its proposed Southern Link Road (aka 'bypass phase 1') and how their findings are being translated into revisions of the scheme's design, essential for cost benefit calculation without which a full business case cannot be developed. The Cabinet Member said the Environmental studies had not been completed but would be in place later this year with the full business case review</i></p> <p><i>We have now reached the end of this year. As this is the last meeting of the Cabinet or any meeting of the Council for 2025 please would you advise where the Full Business Case review and Environmental Studies report on the SLR can be found?</i></p>	Cabinet Member: Transport and Infrastructure
<p>Response: We have always been clear that the full business case and the environmental studies will be provided next year ahead of the construction contract award. These will be published on our public website.</p>			
PQ 8.	Jackie Morris, Hereford	<p><i>As the Statement of Reason makes clear that the Compulsory Purchase Orders are for the Hereford Wester Bypass- Phase 1, would the cabinet member please confirm the cost of the scheme and that Herefordshire Council has all the funding in place necessary for completion of the new road.</i></p>	Cabinet Member: Transport and Infrastructure
<p>Response: The outline business case informed the allocation of £30m with the budget to be revised following a market engagement process. The Council is currently out to tender and in Q1 of 2026 we hope to bring on board a contractor to commence early preparation works to complete the design work. These returns will determine the required budget envelope. The council has the ability to meet the funding requirement.</p>			
PQ 9.	Mrs Morawiecka, Hereford	<p><i>The written answer to my previous question to Cabinet leaves residents to assume that the administration are taking no action to mitigate the 33% increase in risk on capital projects from level 9 to a level 12, particularly in relation to the Southern Link Road.</i></p> <p><i>With UK road scheme costs increasing by at least 10%, undoubtedly reflected in the developing business case, would the Cabinet member confirm that Phase 1 of the Western Relief Road, can still be delivered</i></p>	Cabinet Member: Transport and Infrastructure

		<i>inside the budget of £40million and that the Council has allocated a budget for any residents claiming blight on their properties that lie within the route of the Western Relief Road scheme?</i>	
Response: The Council recognises the impact of construction inflation on major projects and has a robust risk management process in place. A fully quantified risk assessment is reviewed monthly with technical advisors, ensuring contingency allowances reflect current conditions. The project team is developing risk-adjusted cost estimates rather than fixed budgets, and mitigation strategies are being prepared to manage potential challenges. We can confirm that provision has also been made for any legal obligations relating to property blight within the Hereford Bypass.			
PQ 10.	Emil Morfett, Hereford	<i>With the loss of ancient woodland, venerable trees, and high-grade agricultural land with the construction of the Hereford Southern Link Road, how much has been budgeted for the scheme to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain and how will this be delivered?</i>	Cabinet Member: Transport and Infrastructure
Response: The council has set aside budget within estimated costs to accommodate the required level of BNG needed to meet any statutory requirements.			
PQ 11.	Susie Laan, Hereford	<i>With all the talk about road infrastructure, there is no mention as to what is happening about the redevelopment of the Hereford Museum and the reopening of a permanent library in the Hereford Shirehall.</i> <i>Can the cabinet member confirm that both projects are proceeding at pace and in line with the various funding agreements and that there is no risk in completing these projects within budget and on time?</i>	Cabinet Member: Economy and Growth
Response: Thank you for your question. In line with original project proposals, contractors have been engaged under Pre-Construction Services Agreements (PCSAs) to develop designs and refine budgets to address any challenges that arise. This work is proceeding at pace and we will be in a position to provide further updates in the new year.			
PQ 12.	Jim Hardy, Hereford	<i>The Statement of Reasons for the Southern Link Road CPO (5.26) states that "Further modelling was undertaken in 2025 applied to an updated 2023 base model to assure that the benefits identified at the planning application stage remain valid."</i>	Cabinet Member: Transport and Infrastructure

		<i>As no modelling reports were published to support the new Local Transport Plan 2025-2041 where can the 2025 modelling be found that is referred to in the Statement of Reasons?</i>	
Response: The further modelling that is referred to has not yet been published. It is the intention to publish this in due course.			