

Appendix 2 - Questions from members of the Council

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
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
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'.			
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.			
As was summarised in email correspondence in October, from the Chief Executive, since the council meeting at the end of July, we have;			
<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.

Supplementary question:

I was quite frankly flabbergasted by the response if I'm honest. Firstly, saying we didn't miss out is an obvious misdirection. If we didn't miss out, why did other counties secure consideration while Hereford didn't? Secondly, since when do minority statements in debate nullify the will of the majority, including just about every member of his own party? And thirdly, saying the letter was sent is deliberately misleading. It wasn't sent until I notified officers the announcement had been made and we'd missed the boat. There was then a mad scramble to get the letter out and it was sent within a couple of hours. I've got the email chain. If the letter was ready to go and it was deemed acceptable to send it when I raised the alarm, why wasn't it sent sooner?

Response to supplementary question:

In relation to the motion itself, it was really great that you raised the fact that there was we need to raise the profile of our defence priorities and focus especially in the enterprise zone. So, it's great that we're talking about this. Absolutely. The government has identified potential locations for consideration. So nothing has been agreed, nothing has been allocated, nothing has been confirmed. So I don't think it's right to say that missed the boat there. But on the issue of raising a motion to full Council, it is asking respectfully, it's asking the council to consider it. And when we consider that motion, we have to consider a strategic response to that motion. And over the passage of time since the motion was raised, we've had lots of

opportunity as the answer sets out, we've had lots of opportunity to reflect on what was said at the meeting to engage with those businesses in the local enterprise zone and to reflect on the proper strategic strengths of that area and really have a lot of thought about what is good for the development in that area. The letter was sent out. It should have been sent out sooner. That's true, but it wasn't so much of a delay. It was the fact that they were trying to get a strategic approach, get the prospectus ready, get the fact that they'd consulted with businesses there. And so it was an approach that was I would suggest is strategic. But in terms of the fundamental issue about what is right for the enterprise zone, we have excellent businesses there that are already doing defence related industries and we need to strengthen those and it is right to get government help to make sure that we do that so that we can really develop those high paid jobs that we need.

MQ 2	Clr Taylor, Credenhill	<p>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.</p> <p>How will this be achieved if the Local Plan is proposing over 10,000 new homes to the west of Hereford through which the bypass is planned to be built?</p>	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.

Supplementary question:

The LTP report under risk management six racket 16.2 claims that without adopting the LTP5, including the Hereford bypass, congestion will continue to worsen and air quality remain a concern, negatively affecting the daily lives of all 190,000 plus residents who rely on the local transport network. If the emerging local plan is proposing 10,000 new homes to the west of Hereford, then to achieve the claimed improved air quality and reduce noise pollution for new and existing residents, surely the Hereford bypass should be located well away from any major housing developments to remove the noise and pollution and enable traffic speeds to achieve 60 miles per hour and the de-trunking of the current A49 through Hereford.

Response to supplementary question:

I believe that the Hereford bypass is necessary and it becomes more necessary as and when the local plan says that we've got to deal with this mandated extra 27,000 houses of which there could be up to 14,000 in and around north and west of Hereford. The LTP is a strategic document that makes it possible to have the discussion going forward as these plans mature and we don't know for sure what is going to happen with the housing where it's going to be and as such we can only ensure that we make the right decision when we have the right expectation of the way to move forward. It's a question that you could sit down and have a discussion for hours. So I hope I can have a conversation with you at some point to address the innuendos of your

suggestions. At this moment in time the LTP is the strategic document that gives us the opportunity to further develop schemes on the local knowledge that we acquire especially as the local plan is developed as well. So, it's not really an answer, but it's trying to follow on your train of thought.

MQ 3	Cllr Fagan, Birch	<p>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.</p> <p>How many bus passes were sold to students using this route, at what fee?</p> <p>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?</p> <p>When will the situation be rectified and is the Transport team aware of our commitment to Child Friendly Herefordshire?</p>	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.

Supplementary question:

So are we waiting (it's been five weeks now) for our students to give up and make alternative arrangements. So we lose another generation in terms of behaviour change with absolutely no communication, apology or action for students and their hardworking families for the stress and disruption to their education and reputational damage to Hereford Council. I will repeat the question and ask please for a written response. How many bus passes were sold to students using the 33 bus route and 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 how is the transport team planning to acknowledge our commitment to a child-friendly Hereford?

Response to supplementary question:

A written response would be provided.

Written response provided on 19 December:

We understand there are ongoing challenges with the Service 33 bus between Ross-on-Wye and Hereford. We fully understand the disruption this has caused for students and families and would like to provide some clarity on the current position and next steps.

Stagecoach's 33 Service is a commercially registered public service route, and the council have no authority to dictate that they increase capacity. Our Public Transport Team has been in close contact with Stagecoach to explore all possible solutions. Unfortunately, Stagecoach has confirmed that they are currently unable to provide an additional bus or driver to increase capacity on this route as they have reached their maximum number of weeks to provide duplicate journeys, as set out in their policy. Any duplication of route would not commence until January 2026.

The council has funded a duplicate bus over many years to ensure there's enough capacity on the service, despite college transport being a non-statutory obligation. This still relies on the operator accepting the request of utilising larger buses or even a duplicate journey.

In context, 55 students have purchased passes on a bus that has a capacity of 88 passengers. It is important to note that purchasing a pass does not guarantee a seat, as these passes apply to public services rather than dedicated school transport. Standing is allowed up to a maximum of 15 people on this bus.

For those affected at Kingsthorne, we have worked with Newport coaches to allow those students to use the 66 service with their current bus pass. The team have requested patronage data from Newport Transport, to determine whether we can move these students on to this bus. There are six paying customers that could be moved within this area. Due to the commercial nature, we cannot guarantee how many members of the public will use the service, nor any other students who pay Stagecoach direct.

Additional revenue funds for buses in the form of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) are allocated to improve or support our own subsidised services or assist commercial services that are at risk of cancellation. The duplicate bus that operated at the beginning of term was funded from our core public transport budget

Please be assured that the Public Transport Team are actively engaged in addressing this issue and remain committed to supporting young people's access to education.

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.

Supplementary question:

The very last sentence of the reply says the consultation summary report is available as part of the supporting documentation of the LTP and will be published alongside the adopted plan. So what does the word availability mean? Does it mean it was published or not? Are there two steps? One it's available but no one can find it and then the second is when it's actually published. And I do note at the end of the statement it refers for transparency. So transparency would be appreciated in this question.

Response to supplementary question:

A written response would be provided.

Written response provided on 19 December:

The last section of the LTP which can be found as the first appendix had the entire unedited consultation summary attached. If there is difficulty finding this please contact officers.

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.

Supplementary question:

I understand that intelligence led enquiries are made but from what I understand of intelligence-led response is that means that a woman or a young person or another vulnerable person will have been put at risk by getting into a taxi where the taxi driver is not who is pictured on the license. Please will you consider spot checks on street spot checks of our taxi drivers.

Response to supplementary question:

A written response would be provided.

Written response provided on 19 December:

In relation to identity spot checks, joint patrols with West Mercia Police were undertaken on 13 December 2025 between 9pm and 1am, and previously during late-night hours on 30 August 2025. These patrols included direct engagement with drivers and verification of licensing compliance. No concerns were identified during these checks, including in respect of driver identity or safeguarding. These were targeted operations rather than blanket checks, consistent with our intelligence-led enforcement model.

Identity verification is not limited to scheduled patrols. Licensing officers routinely confirm driver identity in response to intelligence received from the public, the trade and partner agencies, and through proactive out-of-hours activity. Where concerns are raised, officers verify that the person driving is the licensed holder, that the correct badge and vehicle plate are in use, and that licence conditions are being complied with. Incidents involving individuals attempting to drive a Herefordshire-licensed vehicle without holding the appropriate licence are extremely rare, but any such report is treated as a safeguarding concern and followed up promptly.

Further targeted activity is planned under the Winter of Action 2025/26 and Operation Radiate, including joint patrols with West Mercia Police and on-street identity checks during peak periods. These operations are intended to increase visibility and reassurance and to complement, rather than replace, ongoing intelligence-led enforcement.

In relation to education and responsibility, the Council is clear that responsibility for compliance rests with the licensing authority and licensed drivers. We do not expect vulnerable passengers to act as enforcers, and public challenge is not a substitute for regulatory oversight. However, visible identification is a key safeguarding control, and drivers should be accustomed to being asked to confirm their identity in a calm and professional manner.

The Council is currently updating its mandatory safeguarding training for licensed drivers, which is being developed jointly with Herefordshire Council's safeguarding team. This refresh will reinforce expectations around professional conduct, appropriate responses when challenged, the importance of clearly displayed identification, and respectful engagement with passengers seeking reassurance. This sits alongside existing safeguarding, disability awareness and customer-care training and is intended to strengthen protections for vulnerable users rather than shift responsibility onto them.