

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Thursday 18 December 2025 at 2.30 pm

Cabinet Members Physically Present and voting: Councillor Jonathan Lester, Leader of the Council (Chairperson)
Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairperson)

Councillors Graham Biggs, Carole Gandy, Dan Hurcomb and Philip Price

Cabinet Members in remote attendance **None**

Cabinet members attending the meeting remotely, e.g. through video conferencing facilities, may not vote on any decisions taken.

Group leaders / representatives in attendance Councillors Simmons (in person), Stark (representative for Councillor James online) and Hitchiner (representative for Councillor Harvey (in person))

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance Councillors Pauline Crockett, Toni Fagan and Louis Stark

Officers in attendance: Ed Bradford, John Coleman, John Hobbs, Claire Porter, Donna Thornton, and Scott Tompkins

43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Apologies from councillors Bramer, Durkin and Stoddart
- There were also apologies from Councillors James, Davies and Harvey

44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Cllr Hitchiner, substituting for Cllr Harvey, declared an interest in item 8 for which [a dispensation has been granted](#) by the council's Monitoring Officer

45. MINUTES

Resolved: **That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.**

46. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Questions received and responses given are attached as appendix 1 to the minutes.

47. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

There were no questions from councillors.

48. REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no reports from scrutiny committees for consideration at this meeting.

49. THE NEW PUBLIC REALM SERVICE

The Cabinet report marks the conclusion of a process to find and appoint a new contractor for the council's largest single contract. Council officers were thanked for managing the procurement process, which has been completed on time and under budget. Special acknowledgment is also given to a former councillor John Harrington

who initiated the review of the previous contractor, Balfour Beatty, which set the direction for the current changes.

This decision seeks to avoid repeating past approaches, to providing Public Realm Services. The council has explored five different contractual models and selected a hybrid option. This new model will transfer several key services—such as asset management, network management, locality stewards, highways inspections, design and project management, customer services, communications, fleet management, and health and safety directly into the council.

As a result, 60 roles will move in-house, giving the council greater control and the ability to align activities with its own priorities and strategies. This approach provides the best outcome for Herefordshire. The successful bidder will be announced in the new year.

The Cabinet discussed questions about:

The environmental standards required of the new contractor.

- It was explained that government-mandated standards apply to works contracts. The procurement process included specific environmental questions, such as whether the bidder holds a valid ISO 14001 certification (an internationally recognised standard for environmental management systems (EMS)), or an equivalent from a mutually recognised UK organisation. The Cabinet had also looked for additional requirements such as access to competent environmental advice, their legal obligations to report carbon emissions under the Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting regulations, and industry recognised sustainability standards.
- Bidders were also required to submit a draft carbon reduction and management action plan, outlining how they would deliver carbon reduction initiatives by 2030, in line with the council's commitments.

How the public will see a difference in the new arrangements

- Under the new public realm contract, locality stewards who previously worked for Balfour Beatty will now work directly for the council. Their role will be to inspect roads and identify necessary jobs for the new contractor. Potholes remain a high priority for the council, as well as our communities, this arrangement means the council can ensure that work is completed within agreed timescales and in accordance with the council's highways maintenance plan. Identified works will be reviewed by council staff before being ordered, to make sure the right work is requested and to avoid inefficiencies, such as repeatedly chasing defects along the same road.
- The new contract introduces a clear specification for repairs, for example how pothole repairs should be carried out. Payment will be made on a 'per-pothole' basis to illuminate increased costs for the council. The final repair work will be inspected by council staff, specifically highways inspectors, to ensure quality.

What opportunities will there be for the apprenticeships for young people

The council has built a strong social value and skills commitment into the new public realm contract. Specifically, the contract requires:

- Six contracts per year to be awarded to local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to help deliver the contract.
- 450 apprentice weeks per year for local people.
- Practical work experience and volunteering opportunities for up to eight young people in Herefordshire (aged 14–24), including those from underrepresented groups.
- A commitment to support up to five recognized care leavers per year in accessing full-time, sustainable employment in Herefordshire.

- Creation of up to five new full-time, sustainable local jobs in heritage and leadership roles.
- An annual social value commitment to support supply chain development for up to four SMEs per year through dedicated supply chain training, ensuring the supply chain maximizes social value opportunities each contract year.

These measures are designed to boost local employment, skills, and social value as part of the contract's delivery.

A litmus test for how well the Public Realm contractors are performing is the feedback we receive from Parish Councils – how will community commissioning improve outcomes

- The new public realm contract will allow parish councils to commission extra services directly from the council if they wish. Previously, the process was slow and costly, parish councils would request a service, receive a high quote, sometimes wait up to two years for delivery, and often regret the decision due to delays and costs.
- Now, with the service brought back in-house and a new contract in place, the contractor will be paid at pre-agreed rates for each item of work. A schedule of these rates will be made available to parish councils, making it easier for them to understand the costs and financial commitments involved when ordering extra services.

Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:

The Liberal Democrat Group outlined their views and noted that:

- Given this decision to award the council's largest contract, potentially involving up to £200m of public funds it's one of the most significant decisions the administration will make. Although the Cabinet is legally entitled to make this decision, it should have been referred to the full council to allow all members the opportunity to fully examine or comment on the proposals.
- Advocacy for stronger requirements for annual reviews and the establishment of a resident focus group to provide direct feedback on contract performance is something that was missing.

The Green Group outlined their views and noted that:

- The new approach will be more responsive, provide greater control, and deliver better value for money, however
- Questions remain regarding policies like "verging on wild" and ensuring that requirements such as ISO 14001 certification are included in the contract
- Existing Herefordshire Council policies are fully captured and implemented within the new maintenance contract.
- The new contract will allow members to see detailed programmes of works in a level of transparency and detail that can enable accountable challenge and scrutiny.

The Independents for Herefordshire outlined their views and noted that:

- General support for the approach taken, noting that the decision to award the contract is appropriately being made by officers, not politicians, following a thorough evaluation process supported by external lawyers.
- Concerns remain, such as how locality stewards will fit into the new scheme, the effectiveness of enforcement (especially regarding riparian rights), and the need for improvements in the transfer process of services.
- The importance of learning from past experiences and ensuring that future transfers work more effectively.

- Overall, they commend the council's approach and look forward to positive changes, particularly in parish council meetings where the impact of the new arrangements will be most visible.

In responding to the comments raised, the Cabinet Member noted that:

- The process has followed constitutional and democratic procedures, with proposals reviewed by Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee before Cabinet approval.
- The cabinet remain open to collaboration and invites councillors from all parties to share their views and concerns, especially regarding policies like "verging on wild," which will be implemented as part of the new contract.
- Performance reviews will occur regularly, with contractual remedies available if standards are not met.
- Enforcement responsibilities are coming in-house, and the council will work to strengthen these processes.
- New multi-year settlement for highways funding, which will improve planning and visibility of works, will strengthen transparency, collaboration, and a commitment to continuous improvement in service delivery.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussions by inviting a proposer and seconder for the decision before them which is that:

- a) Cabinet approves the award of a contract (the Contract) for the provision of the new Public Realm Services to the successful bidder in accordance with the Cabinet report approved on 28 November 2024 and the updated Public Realm Services model as set out in Appendix 1 for an initial period of 6 years and 10 months (so as to align with Council financial years) and with the option for the Council to extend for a further 3-year period subject to and in accordance with the performance review mechanism set out in the contract.
- b) Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director Economy and Environment to:
 - i. Finalise the contract and any ancillary contract documents;
 - ii. In consultation with Property Services, agree and enter into the necessary leases to the successful bidder to enable the provision of the Public Realm Services;
 - iii. On receipt of payment from the successful bidder, transfer the Council's existing equipment (plant and fleet but excluding the winter maintenance fleet) to the successful bidder so as to enable the provision of the Public Realm Services;
 - iv. Accept the transfer of identified roles (circa 60) pursuant to the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment Rights (TUPE) from the incumbent; and
- c) Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director Economy and Environment to make all operational decisions necessary to implement recommendations a) and b).

The Cabinet Member for Local Engagement and Community Resilience proposed the vote, the Cabinet Member for Environment seconded.

The recommendations were unanimously approved.

50. HEREFORD WESTERN BYPASS PHASE ONE LAND ACQUISITION CPO

- The proposed Cabinet decision begins the process of acquiring land, aiming first to reach agreements with landowners and their agents through negotiation, to

purchase land to pave the way for the Western Bypass – Phase 1 infrastructure project.

- If negotiations are unsuccessful, the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process approved by Cabinet will serve as a backstop to ensure land acquisition stays on schedule.
- Where individual land parcels are acquired through negotiation, they will be removed from the CPO process.
- It was noted that some land was already owned by Hereford Council, while National Highways and Network Rail have interests in smaller parcels.
- The land to be acquired matches that of a previous CPO process concluded in 2019, but that order has now expired.
- If Cabinet approves the new CPO and Side Roads Order (SRO), the draft statement of reasons will be finalised and served on all relevant parties, along with the orders and recommendations as outlined in the report.

Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:

The Liberal Democrat Group outlined their views and noted that:

- They support the Cabinet's recommendations regarding land acquisition - they view the measures as prudent precautions, ensuring that if there are any difficulties during negotiations for acquiring land, the council will have the ability to trigger further action to secure the required land.
- The group expresses their support for the recommendations to safeguard the process.

The Green Group outlined their views and noted:

- Significant concerns about the Hereford Western Bypass Phase 1 land acquisition process, criticizing the lack of transparency and detail regarding costs, risks, and the strategic business case.
- Additional concerns that the council is borrowing an additional £30 million, leading to a long-term financial burden for local taxpayers.
- Members do not have clear visibility on likely costs or risks of overspending which in turn is frustrated by the absence of a full strategic business case.
- The lack of clarity within the Compulsory Purchase Order process, biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements, and up-to-date transport modelling opens the council up to the risk of being in breach of Department for Transport appraisal guidance.
- That the group would be more supportive if there were realistic prospects of the project staying within budget and if information were provided in a timely and transparent manner.

The Independent for Herefordshire Group outlined their views and noted:

- Concerns about the speed of the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process for the Hereford Western Bypass, warning that rushing could lead to mistakes as happened in 2019.
- A challenge to the claims in the report about the bypass removing significant traffic from the A465/A49 junction, citing personal observations and a self-conducted traffic survey that found little evidence to support these statements.
- A contention around the factual accuracy in the report and questions the validity of claims about road collisions and the availability of supporting data.
- A lack of transparency, noting that some referenced data in the modelling had not been published or made available to councillors or the public. They request that all relevant documents be listed and accessible for scrutiny.
- That the administration is intent on proceeding with the bypass and associated housing developments without sufficient evidence.

- That the governance process for approving the final business case should involve a full council meeting due to the public interest and use of taxpayer money.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussions noting that:

- Having a western bypass is an obvious necessity, despite differing views among councillors.
- There has been a commitment to provide and publish all the information in due course when that is appropriate. It is misplaced to insinuate that information has been hidden. It was confirmed that when officers have had the opportunity to process all the information and it is deemed necessary, the information will be published and will be transparent.
- The decision proposed at this meeting is not about debating the merits of the bypass but about putting in place a necessary backstop process in case negotiations for land acquisition do not proceed as hoped.

The Leader of the Council invited a proposer and seconder for the decision before them which is:

To agree to resolve that the Council

- a) note the draft Statement of Reasons (at Appendix 1);
- b) makes The County of Herefordshire District Council (Hereford Western Bypass – Phase One) Compulsory Purchase Order 2026 (CPO) pursuant to sections 239, 240, 246, 250 and 260 of the Highways Act 1980 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 for the acquisition of all interests (both residential and commercial), and any other interests as may arise, which are not already owned by the Council and new rights within the areas shown edged red and shaded pink and blue on the plans attached at Appendix 2
- c) note The County of Herefordshire District Council (South Wye Transport Package – A4194 Southern Link Road) (Classified Road) (Side Roads Order) Order 2018 (2018 SRO) attached at Appendix 3 which was confirmed by the Secretary of State in March 2019.
- d) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Economy and Environment to
 - a. make The County of Herefordshire District Council (Hereford Western Bypass – Phase One) Side Road Order 2026 (SRO) (if required) under Section 14 and 125 of The Highways Act 1980 and all other purposes necessary to
 - i) Improve the lengths of highway referred to in the SRO and the corresponding plan
 - ii) Stop up each length of the highway as referred to the SRO and the corresponding plan
 - iii) Construct a new highway along each route as referred to in the SRO and the corresponding plan;
 - iv) Stop up each private means of access to premises as referred to in the SRO and the corresponding plan;
 - v) Provide new means of access to premises as referred to in the SRO and the corresponding plan which will be as per the plan appended to the 2018 SRO (subject to any amendments to the said plan the Corporate Director for Economy and Environment shall determine as being necessary if the SRO is required);
 - b. to make such minor or technical amendments to the CPO and SRO (together “the Orders”) and associated plans as the Corporate Director for Economy and Environment shall determine

- c. take all necessary and ancillary steps, including preparing and finalising all necessary documentation (including the Orders and supporting statements of reasons), the submission of the Orders to the Secretary of State for confirmation, publication and service of all statutory notices and the presentation of the Council's case at any public inquiry to secure the confirmation of the CPO and SRO by the Secretary of State;
- d. acquire all interests in land within the areas of the CPO either compulsorily or by agreement;
- e. deal with objections to the Orders including agreeing terms for the withdrawal of objections in order to secure the delivery of Phase One of the Hereford Western Bypass Scheme;
- f. negotiate and enter into agreements or undertakings with persons with any interest in the land affected by or relating to the Orders;
- g. remove from the CPO any plot (or interest therein) no longer required to be acquired compulsorily and to amend the interests scheduled in the CPO (if so advised) and to alter the nature of the proposed acquisition from an acquisition of existing property interests to an acquisition of new rights;
- h. make any minor amendments as are considered necessary to the Orders arising as a result of negotiations with affected persons or further design work to enable the delivery of Phase One of the Hereford Western Bypass Scheme
- i. make any amendments to the Statement of Reasons a draft version of which is annexed at Appendix 1 to this report as are considered necessary prior to its submission to the Secretary of State;
- j. confirm the CPO if granted power to do so by the Secretary of State;
- k. to implement the CPO, SRO and 2018 SRO, including the acquisition of all necessary land and interests and new rights and to take all steps to secure the settlement of compensation arising from the implementation of the Orders including referral to the Upper Tribunal Lands Chamber.
- l. to pay such compensation and to carry out any other additional steps needed for the implementation of the CPO, SRO and 2018 SRO and make any other operational decisions to implement these recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure proposed the vote, the Leader seconded.

The recommendations were unanimously approved.

The meeting ended at 15:37

Chairperson

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](#)

Supplementary Question:

None

Supplementary Response:

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
-------	---------------------------------	---	---

<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>			
<p>Supplementary Question:</p> <p><i>Given the Council's public acknowledgement of severe and urgent SEND pressures — including rising demand, escalating costs, and the recent withdrawal of funding for a proposed SEND school — can Cabinet explain what assessment was made of alternative capital priorities before committing £13 million to the Aylestone School expansion, which delivers no new SEND places, and whether Cabinet is satisfied that this decision represents best value and appropriate prioritisation in the current circumstances?</i></p>			
<p>Supplementary Response:</p> <p>Cabinet's decision to proceed with the Aylestone School expansion reflects the Council's statutory duty to secure sufficient school places and the evidence of very limited secondary school place headroom in the city (approximately 2.4% surplus only). The scheme is funded through the Department for Education's Basic Need capital grant, which is specifically intended to support the creation of mainstream places. Cabinet is satisfied that using Basic Need for this purpose represents appropriate prioritisation and best value against the identified mainstream demand and delivery considerations.</p> <p>Special educational needs pressures are being addressed in parallel through the appropriate High Needs grant route. Aylestone also supports pupils with additional needs in mainstream classes and hosts a Specialist Resourced Provision, which the Council expanded from 8 to 24 places over the summer using High Needs capital. This demonstrates that the Council is progressing both mainstream place sufficiency and targeted SEND capacity through the relevant funding streams.</p>			
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</i>	Cabinet Member: Economy and Growth

		<i>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>	
--	--	---	--

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.

Supplementary Question:

The white house hub has been fenced off for nearly a year now what does the council see as a practical timeline to have the building repaired and fit for use again, thank you.

Supplementary Response:

Thank you for your supplementary question. Subject to conducting a building survey and addressing compliance, the council will identify capital budget to complete the works as soon as practical as previously stated.

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
-------	-----------------------------------	--	--

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.

Supplementary Question:

No modelling data has been published with the papers for today's Cabinet meeting. No traffic modelling reports have been published to support the recently adopted Local Transport Plan which includes the ambition for a Western Bypass. Would the cabinet member please advise me where I may find the empirical evidence/data that supports his answer that increased bus services, particularly for students and children, would have no meaningful impact on congestion vs the construction of the new Southern Link Road?"

Supplementary Response:

Thank you for your supplementary question. The council has nothing further to add. 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	<p><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 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>	Cabinet Member: Transport and Infrastructure
-------	--------------------------	--	---

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.

Supplementary Question:

The Statement of Reasons says that Phase 1 of the Western Bypass "will enable additional housing provision"(para 1.4(vii)). An outline planning application (ref P242558/O) for part of the Southern Urban Extension from Bloor Homes for 540 new homes, employment land, etc. is currently awaiting section 106 agreement. To reduce the cost to Herefordshire Taxpayers of the new road, which will undoubtedly help improve access to this new development, why has Herefordshire Council not identified any funding from this specific developer or other future developers?

Supplementary Response:

Thankyou for your supplementary question. The council will provide you with a written response, it is quite complex about the specific developer and any other future developers that we don't yet know about.

Supplementary written response:

Having reviewed the draft Statement of Reasons document it is clear that the elements about the Bloor Homes site needs to be revised before the document is finalised for publication. Some of Bloor developments in the area have already been delivered and the reference too it from the 2018 document should reflect this. This will be revised before the CPO consultation starts. The construction of Phase One could potentially lead to some of the constraints on the Bloor Homes site being reduced allowing for more houses and the potential for S106 funding to be sought to support the costs of construction of Phase One.

PQ 6.	Gian Carlo Paganozzi, Bosbury Ledbury	<p>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.</p> <p>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 from whoever manages the new public realm contract due to economy of scale.</p>	Cabinet Member: Local Engagement and Community Resilience
-------	--	---	---

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.

Supplementary Question:

None

Supplementary Response:

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.</i></p> <p><i>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
-------	---------------------------	---	---

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.

14

Supplementary Question:

Your response is untruthful. You did not say the full business case (and by implication the underlying environmental studies, options appraisal, impact assessment and updated transport model) for the proposed Southern Link Road (aka Bypass Phase 1) would be provided next year.

On the contrary the Cabinet member in his responses both to mine and Ms Morawiecka's questions at Cabinet on 23rd January said this would be available later this year, specifically May, June, July time. This is what he said. Its in the minutes which you approved.

You have two options: either correct your untruthful response or make good on your promise to provide the SLR's FBC and supporting studies this year by spending the remaining 13 days of it at work on them. Which is it to be?

Supplementary Response:

I refer to the fact that we keep moving through this project, we do meet time delays on various things, and it will be available in due course and I will write to you with the answer to your question.

Supplementary written response:

I have reviewed the January 23rd questions and responses. My response should have clarified that I was speaking of May, June, July 2026 which is the date that officers have consistently been working to. The modelling and ecology data was being collected in 2025 to inform the and update the business case but the intention has always been to provide the full business case by summer 2026 ahead of the Cabinet making a decision on the construction contract award.

PQ 8.	Jackie Morris, Hereford	<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>	Cabinet Member: Transport and Infrastructure
-------	----------------------------	--	---

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.

Supplementary Question:

None

Supplementary Response:

PQ 9.	Mrs Morawiecka, Hereford	<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> <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 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>	Cabinet Member: Transport and Infrastructure
-------	-----------------------------	--	---

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.

Supplementary Question:

Herefordshire Council has approved £40.3m in its Medium-Term Financial Strategy for Phase 1 of the Western bypass. That's the link between the A49 and the A465. In view of the detailed answer provided to my question, including that risk assessment viewed monthly and that contingency allowances reflect current conditions, why wont the cabinet member confirm that Phase 1 of the Western Relief Road can be designed, constructed and completed inside the cost envelope of £40.3m. Will he confirm it or not?

Supplementary Response:

Thank you for your question. I think we have said every time we publish anything or say anything on this subject that this is an amount of money that is put on the side whilst we build the full business case. You know that the full business case will be available next year along with all the documentation for it and we will be able to satisfy ourselves to the full price once the contractor has reviewed the design and come forward with a price to build it. So, we expect it to be built within the price that we've put aside but if anything changes you will probably be the first to read about it. Thank you.

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.

Supplementary Question:

How much is budgeted in Phase 1 for BNG and what physical surveys were conducted for this evidence based approach? If you do not have a budget for BNG at this stage, please explain why not.

Supplementary Response:

Thank you for your supplementary question. The council has nothing further to add to our original 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	<p><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></p> <p><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></p>	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 (PCSAAs) 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.

Supplementary Question:

I understand that the Council now has a robust capital project monitoring system which can show how the costs are tracking both against budget and the expected completion date. This administration previously announced that the new library to be located in the Shirehall would open in August 2026 and the new Museum in Broad Street would open in late 2026. Can the cabinet member confirm that these dates will still be achieved, and if not, when?

Supplementary Response:

Thank you for your supplementary question. The council has nothing further to add. As we stated in our original response, contractors have been engaged under Pre-Construction Services Agreements (PCSAAs) to develop designs and refine budgets to address any challenges that arise.

PQ 12.	Jim Hardy, Hereford	<p><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></p> <p><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></p>	Cabinet Member: Transport and Infrastructure
--------	------------------------	--	---

Response: The further modelling that is referred to has not yet been published. It is the intention to publish this in due course.

Supplementary Question:

Under Codes and Regulations for Local Government and in line with the Nolan Principles, objective and factual data on which the Council relies as evidence for decision making should be made public. As the Statement of Reasons for the Compulsory Purchase Orders refers to the “modelling undertaken in 2025” this data should be available to Councillors and members of the public. Why has the Cabinet member not made the traffic modelling publicly available if it provides robust evidence to councillors that the benefits identified over 6 years ago for the Southern Link Road remain valid?

Supplementary Response:

Thank you for your supplementary question. As has been stated the further modelling that is referred to has not yet been published. It is the intention to publish this in due course. Thank you.