

Agenda item no. 5- Questions from councillor

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1.	Cllr Hitchiner	<i>There are surely opportunities for Hoople to provide additional services to others within the Teckal framework including Wye Valley Trust and other local authorities if an agreement can be reached. Done the right way this could result in savings to the Council and other customers resulting in reduced budget pressures for both and so benefiting the community we serve. Would the Leader agree with me that this is an opportunity that should not be missed? What steps will the Leader take to advantage if this?</i>	Leader to the Council
<p>Response: The council will continue to explore opportunities through its subsidiary company, Hoople Ltd, to deliver savings and efficiencies in services delivered to the council via the Service Level Agreement and as part of the company's wider growth strategy.</p>			
<p>Supplementary Question: This concerns Hoople. Your answer didn't really answer my particular question. You referred to exploring opportunities for savings and efficiencies at Hoople which probably means reducing fees with a consequent almost inevitable reduction of service levels. You also refer to a service level agreement. Given the past history is he able to confirm that a service level agreement exists for the current 2025/26 year? So far as going forward is concerned, its very helpful if the service level agreements can be put in place before the beginning of the year and a contract and surely this should be happening at this time. So maybe he would be able to confirm to the next Shareholder Committee that a new service level agreement for next year is in place.</p> <p>As asked in my question, is Hoople taking advantage of the opportunities? He refers to Hoople having a wider growth strategy. I look forward to hearing about this at the next Shareholder Committee meeting because I believe the council is missing out on opportunities for working at other councils and also with the NHS. This requires investment rather than cost cutting. Perhaps the Leader, may wish to comment.</p>			
<p>Supplementary Response: Thank you Councillor Hitchiner. Making sure that Hoople has the right strategy, it's a great company and making sure they are moving forward and progressing as a key company for Herefordshire to provide services for Herefordshire people. We want that to continue and improve, and we will work with them as best we can to ensure that they're going in the right direction. Obviously, also a good partnership working relationship with Hoople addresses the savings that we need to make. So all of those actions will continue to take place and with regard to the service level agreement as you suggest, we will report back at the next Shareholder meeting. Thank you.</p>			

PQ 2.	Councillor Charlotte Taylor	<p><i>Despite being funded by taxpayer's money, the Cabinet has not made the Traffic Modelling Study 2025 available to other Herefordshire Councillors or to the public. Withholding evidence that would inform Councillors in decision making is against the Nolan Principles and the Constitution.</i></p> <p><i>How does the Cabinet expect Herefordshire Councillors to make an informed decision on the Budget proposals around transport, and particularly the borrowing of £40million for a new road, when import evidence such as the Traffic Modelling Study 2025 is withheld from them</i></p>	Councillor Price
<p>Response: The modelling information is not being withheld, the work on the business case that frames and puts the modelling work into context is being completed and will be published by the end of March. A Full Business Case will also be published before July and in advance of the Cabinet making its final decision to award the construction contract</p>			
<p>Supplementary Question: Thank you for confirming that the Traffic Modelling Study 2025 is not being withheld. Given that the Full Council meeting to consider the Capital Budget is scheduled for the 13th February 2026, just eight days away, would the Cabinet member please provide me, and other Herefordshire Councilors, with a copy of the Traffic Modelling Study 2025, in advance of that meeting? This would enable councilors to comply with the Council's Constitution and the Nolan Principles around decision making, and I will have evidence to confirm the claim in the Outline Business case, that spending £45.3million on a road between the A49 and the A465 for motorised traffic will reduce congestion and journey times in Hereford and free up space for bus services, making them more reliable.</p>			
<p>Supplementary Response: Thank you. As stated previously and in respect of the funding already approved as part of the budget, the outline business case provide sufficient information for cabinet to propose approval from council to add this financial commitment to the capital investment budget. It is not considered that a copy of the traffic modelling study 2025 was required in respect of a decision to approve the additional 28/29 funding for this scheme in the capital investment budget. Importantly, council agreeing the budget is not approval to spend. Additional governance will be required which will include cabinet decisions supported by a full business case before any further progress is made or spend committed. Cabinet has also been clear that the further modelling that has been referred to has not yet been published. It is the intention to publish this in due course.</p>			