

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

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1.	Deborah Suthons, Hereford	I understand that Hereford Town Hall is owned by Herefordshire Council. The lift there has been out of action for years. This renders the building not fully accessible. I consider that this is contrary to equality legislation. Would the Chairperson explain why its repair or replacement is not a priority?	Councillor Bramer, Community Services and Assets
<p>Response:</p> <p>Herefordshire Council deeply values the historic Hereford Town Hall and recognises its importance to the city and county's heritage. It remains a key civic building, and the Council is committed to maintaining and upgrading it to ensure its continued use, while at the same time improving its accessibility so it can be enjoyed and utilised by all. The existing lift has reached the end of its operational life and will be fully replaced. Repair is not a viable option given the age and obsolescence of the current installation, so the Council has prioritised a complete replacement as part of an enhanced maintenance programme.</p> <p>As part of this commitment, the Council has identified £750,000 of investment from 2026/27 to support wider works to the Town Hall. The lift replacement is an early element of this programme and is now being progressed. Given that the Town Hall is a Grade II* Listed Building, the Council has been working with Historic England and conservation specialists to develop a solution that improves accessibility while respecting the building's heritage. In the meantime, the Council has put in place reasonable and precautionary measures, including the use of evacuation chairs and a stair climber, alongside staff support where required, to assist those with access needs while the replacement lift is progressed.</p>			
<p>Supplementary Question:</p> <p>Herefordshire Council's webpage about hiring rooms at Hereford Town Hall states today:</p> <p>'There is a lift available to the first floor and a stair lift to the second floor'</p> <p>I wish to reiterate that the lift at Hereford town hall has not been working for years. I understand that the stair lift can only be used if the custodian is free to assist. Often they are not free, especially in the evening. I consider mentioning Historic England to be blame-shifting, the council has responsibility for ensuring accessibility for everyone in the here and now. When will Hereford town hall be accessible in compliance with current legislation?</p>			

Supplementary Response:

You are right to raise the importance of accessibility at Hereford Town Hall and it is important to us that it can be used and enjoyed by everyone. I also recognise the point you make regarding the website, and that will be reviewed to ensure it accurately reflects the current position.

The Council has previously explored options to resolve the lift without the need for full replacement. However, this was not considered a reasonable or sustainable solution. The existing lift has reached the end of its operational life and is no longer repairable in any meaningful or reliable way. Any short-term intervention has not and would not provide a safe or lasting outcome.

For that reason, the Council has taken the decision to fully replace the lift. The project is being issued for tender this week, and the application for Listed Building Consent is already progressing through the planning system. Based on current discussions, we anticipate the consent process taking approximately five weeks, followed by a twelve-week construction programme to deliver the replacement lift.

PQ 2.	Haydn Osborne-Brookes	Herefordshire Council has committed to a policy that development has to deliver a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain. With the Bypass Phase 1 destroying ancient woodland and their unique habitat, along with the destruction and removal of red list species, such as hazel dormice, why is there no assessment criteria to confirm that the scheme, and the budget, will achieve a minimum of 10% net biodiversity gain in line with Council policy?"	Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure
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Response:

The Council supports and pursues biodiversity enhancement wherever possible and the bypass will be no different. The Phase One scheme was granted planning permission before a quantified minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement applied. However, the Council is aiming to minimise environmental impacts and deliver biodiversity enhancements in the scheme, including additional planting and habitat creation within and adjacent to the route, beyond the original approval. This includes an estimated 13 additional acres of tree planting in areas connected to Grafton Wood, new hedgerows and animal crossings – with mitigation measures being developed in consultation with Natural England. The bypass will be delivered with care, keeping disruption to a minimum while upholding strong environmental, ecological and heritage standards.

Supplementary Question:

None

Supplementary Response:

PQ 3.	Graham Andrews, Hereford	<p>The AECOM Hereford Bypass Scheme Information report from March 2026 states in paragraph 4.12.9: “The Phase 1 scheme will provide improved access to any new housing and employment sites that are identified in the south and south west of Hereford.”</p> <p>Given this direct benefit of the road scheme, could the Cabinet report on how much land will be opened up for new housing and employment in South Hereford by Phase 1?</p>	Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure
<p>Response:</p> <p>Phase One will be the key anchor scheme allowing Phase Two of the Bypass to come forward, which will be a major enabler of housing and economic growth that will unleash Herefordshire’s future. In the meantime, Phase One will improve access to existing areas of employment in the south of Hereford, primarily the Hereford Enterprise Zone and Rotherwas industrial estate – and in doing so, increases the attractiveness to employers and investors. The first phase of the bypass will also reduce traffic, including freight, in the surrounding South Wye area, benefitting thousands of local residents with reduced noise, tCO2e emissions and accidents.</p>			
<p>Supplementary Question:</p> <p>The answer provided to my question, appears to contradict the Bypass Phase 1 Scheme Information Report that states this section of road “will provide improved access to any new housing and employment sites that are identified in the south and south west of Hereford”(para 4.12.9). The Leader told the Secretary of State for Transport that “The successful completion of phase 1 will connect key industrial sites to the south of the city and is expected to remove existing limitations to economic development in the area, such as access to land and supporting infrastructure.”</p> <p>With Herefordshire Council needing to build over 27,000 new homes in the next 20 years why will the investment of £45million in this road not open up land for housing and employment in South Hereford?</p>			
<p>Supplementary Response:</p> <p>We refer you to public statements and content in previously published documents, including the Scheme Information Report, Strategic Narrative and multiple other Cabinet and Council papers.</p>			
PQ 4.	Paul Newman, Hereford	The updated Outline Business Case for the Southern Link Road claims benefits for the road between the A49 and A465 that “By removing	Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure

		<p>unnecessary through traffic from the city centre local retail, leisure and hospitality businesses will be better placed to welcome visitors to the city”.</p> <p>With the City Centre located to the north of the River Wye and this road over a mile to the South of the Wye, what “unnecessary through traffic” will the Southern Link Road remove from the City Centre and please explain the evidence to support this answer?</p>	
<p>Response:</p> <p>Phase One will be the key anchor scheme allowing Phase Two of the Bypass to come forward, which will be a major enabler of housing and economic growth that will unleash Herefordshire’s future. Without Phase One, the full bypass will not be feasible, and the added resilience and benefits to Hereford of a second river crossing will be lost - the fully realised bypass will unblock the whole city. In the meantime, Phase One will bring improvements to the South Wye area with reduced traffic, including freight, for thousands of city centre and South Wye residents, while at the same time improving access to the Hereford Enterprise Zone, bringing about economic benefits to the whole city.</p>			
<p>Supplementary Question:</p> <p>None</p>			
<p>Supplementary Response:</p>			
PQ 5.	Julie Furniss, Hereford	The Assessment Criteria for the Hereford Bypass Phase 1 under Economic Case says that the BCR must be 1.5 or above. However, it then states that “Combined Present Value of Benefits (PVB) is greater than £50m”. With the scheme expected to cost at least £45million, surely the correct assessment figure for PVB should be greater than £67.5million (ie 1.5 times the cost of £45million)?	Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure
<p>Response:</p>			

The Benefits to Cost Ratio (BCR) and the Present Value of Benefits (PVB) are related measures, but they are not calculated or used in the same way. The BCR is a ratio that compares the scheme's monetised benefits with its construction costs, calculated in line with government (Green Book) guidance so that schemes can be fairly compared nationally. It does not use the full headline budget, which can include development, land and other sunk costs.

The PVB, by contrast, is the total estimated value of all monetised benefits the scheme is expected to deliver over its lifetime. Because the two measures use different inputs, multiplying the overall scheme cost by the BCR does not produce a figure that can be compared with the PVB. The £50m PVB figure is simply a minimum benchmark, set to reflect the scale of economic benefit expected from a scheme of this type, rather than being derived from the scheme cost.

For context, the Scheme Information Report already indicates PVB values ranging from around £53m under a low growth scenario to over £93m under a high growth scenario. The Full Business Case, due to be published in June, will present the final BCR and PVB figures for low, medium and high growth scenarios to support Cabinet's decision making.

Supplementary Question:

None

Supplementary Response:

<p>PQ 6.</p>	<p>Mrs E Morawiecka, Hereford</p>	<p>The current Assessment Criteria for Traffic Outcomes does not show over what period and when journey time changes arising from construction of the Hereford Southern Link Road are to be measured, eg 5 years, 10 years, 20 years post opening.</p> <p>With the Scheme Information Report acknowledging extra housing and employment land is to be opened up by the new road in South Hereford, and the Council now proposing a Park & Ride site located alongside the Bypass Phase 1, how long will it be before the reduction in journey times forecast by AECOM for the standalone road, will be negated by traffic growth?</p>	<p>Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure</p>
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Response:

Phase One of the bypass is the anchor to the full scheme, which when fully realised will unblock traffic congestion and significantly improve resilience for the city, while at the same time unlocking economic growth for Herefordshire, benefitting all its communities. The bypass is not feasible without Phase One.

It is important to note that the government have set Herefordshire the target of building 27,260 new dwellings over the next 20 years. We must meet this target or face direct central government intervention, meaning local people would have less say in where and how those houses are built. In adopting a responsible and strategic planning approach, we must build sustainable and resilient infrastructure, otherwise housing sites will be developed on an ad hoc, uncoordinated and sporadic basis across the county. The bypass is critical for providing the resilience needed to deal with that future growth, and the economic benefits that will follow.

The Council is looking for potential Park and Rides sites as part of its long-term strategy, but at this stage a site on Phase One has not been included in any plans.

Supplementary Question:

I'm sorry but the answer doesn't seem to answer my question as it doesn't mention any journey times. The cabinet agenda only mentions the Hereford bypass phase one as the council is borrowing money for this part of the scheme and the assessment criteria are to assess the benefits of the £45m investment in the road as a standalone capital project so that the Herefordshire tax payer can see how investing £45m of their money in a single road scheme will directly benefit them. Would the Cabinet member please answer my original question and detail the journey time changes on roads in south Hereford and how long these journey time savings will last. I understand if he doesn't know the answer, but I'm asking about the journey time changes on roads in south Hereford and how long journey time savings will last.

Supplementary Response:

In the meeting the cabinet member advised a written answer would be provided.

Written response provided:

The journey time savings created by Phase One are likely to be eroded as general growth across Hereford puts more traffic on the road network. It is difficult to predict when this would happen. The Bypass Phase Two is aligning with the Council's new Local Plan for housing and employment. More importantly, with additional housing growth targets now set by government, we know additional growth is coming and without the necessary infrastructure in place this growth would result in additional traffic on our already congested road network. Phase One will be an anchor for Phase Two and demonstrates to government how serious Herefordshire is to see a full bypass built to enable delivery of future housing and employment growth. The specific journey time savings you are asking for will be published in the Full Business Case in June. The Scheme Information report we have published on our website also shows some of the outcomes from the traffic modelling data that indicates improved journey times.

PQ 7.	Kate Seekings, Hereford	The Assessment Criteria for Land “The land is in council ownership or control with remaining land in route to acquisition through CPO”. What is the risk to the project and the cost base, if the contract to construct the new road is issued prior to the Council acquiring full title to the land through which it will be built?	Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure
<p>Response:</p> <p>The Council’s approach reflects established practice for major infrastructure schemes. While voluntary land acquisition remains the preferred route, the use of Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers is a necessary and proportionate safeguard to ensure delivery if agreements cannot be reached. In the meantime, negotiations continue with landowners in good faith.</p> <p>Letting a construction contract before all land title is finalised does not, in itself, create unacceptable risk to the project or cost base. The CPO process is designed to run in parallel with design, procurement and early works, helping to prevent delay and protect value for money for taxpayers. This approach provides certainty and momentum, reduces the risk of cost escalation caused by delays, and ensures the scheme can proceed within planned timescales, which is why it is standard practice on projects of this scale.</p>			
<p>Supplementary Question:</p> <p>I understand that the Council is planning to start work on the road scheme in December 2026. How long has been allowed in the project timescales for land to be acquired by CPO, including any possible public enquiry, and will these delays and costs, along with the risk to the construction contract, be included in the project cost for the full business case?</p>			
<p>Supplementary Response:</p> <p>The project includes sufficient time and contingency to accommodate land acquisition, including any possible CPO process and related matters.</p>			
PQ 8.	Barry Jenkinson, Hereford	<p>I understand that the last road Herefordshire Council built was the City Link Road, part of a much bigger transport scheme called the Hereford City Centre Package, all budgeted to cost circa £40million.</p> <p>To inform the Hereford Bypass Phase 1 assessment criteria and to confirm that all costs are being covered in the initial budget, would the Cabinet member please state how much the Hereford City Centre Package have cost to date and what they now expected to cost once the whole transport scheme promised in the original budget,</p>	Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure

		including the Transport Hub and other projected road works, are completed?	
Response:			
<p>The City Link Road was one element of the wider Hereford City Centre Package and has delivered significant benefits for the city, including improved connectivity and regeneration.</p> <p>The City Link Road was budgeted at £40 million, with a total spend to date of £36.4 million, and is now complete. The scheme delivered around 0.8km of new road infrastructure and was a key enabler of the £80 million Old Market redevelopment, supporting over 800 jobs and improving access to key services.</p> <p>The wider package also included a Transport Hub. While this was originally expected to sit within the overall £40 million envelope, higher-than-anticipated land costs meant it was removed from the City Link Road project. The Transport Hub is now being delivered as a standalone scheme, supported by Levelling Up Fund investment, with a current forecast cost of £11.8 million.</p> <p>The City Link Road has also enabled further development, including the Health Hub, Station Approach student accommodation, and land unlocking at Merton Meadow, where a flood alleviation scheme is now enabling up to 400 new homes and wider city centre benefits.</p>			
Supplementary Question:			
<p>Thank you. The answer indicates that the Hereford City Centre Transport Package appears to have cost £48.20million vs an original budget of £40million for 0.8km of road and yet none of the bus and cycling infrastructure promised for Newmarket & Blueschool Streets and Commercial Road have been delivered, as originally promised within the original budget package.</p> <p>Please can the cabinet member confirm that the Hereford Bypass Phase 1 capital budget has sufficient contingency so that there is no danger of this road scheme exposing Herefordshire taxpayers to paying more than the £45million capital cost to complete the full scheme, including any mitigation and landscaping?</p>			
Supplementary Response:			
<p>The two schemes are not comparable. All construction projects come with risk. The Council has confidence that risks are being managed robustly and have put a strong project management team in place as well as a competent experienced contractor and consultant team. The budget includes contingency which the Council believes will be sufficient for the delivery of the scheme.</p>			
PQ 9.	Jeremy Milln, Hereford	If this Council is to proceed with its proposed SLR it will need to demonstrate it learned the lessons around the silo'd governance,	Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure

		<p>poor design and financial mismanagement which resulted in the enormous overspend and under-performance of its CLR project.</p> <p>How then will the Cabinet Member address the following crucial omissions from the list of assessment criteria for developing its business case which were not picked up by Scrutiny on the 15th or subsequent revision?</p> <p><i>Viz: Modelled traffic induction/ shift from sustainable modes; full carbon cost accounting for materials, scheme operation and construction; natural capital cost for mitigation from destroying highly graded 'best and most productive' farmland; compensation measures for impacts on historic environment including setting of listed buildings; emissions, light, aquatic and noise pollution impacts on sensitive receptors; impacts on drainage and flooding; farmland and habitat severance.</i></p>	
<p>Response:</p> <p>The assessment framework for Phase One of the Hereford Bypass is being developed in line with HM Treasury Green Book, Department for Transport guidance and other nationally recognised frameworks for major transport schemes. It has been refined with input from Scrutiny and now comprises 37 assessment measures, which summarise the evidence that will be set out in full within the Full Business Case (FBC). Many of the key matters referenced in the question – including traffic modelling, carbon impacts, environmental and natural capital considerations, heritage impacts, air and noise pollution, drainage and flood risk – will be included within the scope of the business case and its supporting technical work. These are not omissions; they form part of the detailed assessments that underpin the FBC.</p> <p>The FBC will be published in June and will be subject to further Scrutiny review before being considered by Cabinet in July, ensuring transparency and independent challenge. Strong governance and project management arrangements are in place to ensure effective cost control and risk management.</p> <p>The City Link Road has delivered significant benefits for Hereford, including improved access to key services and facilities, enhanced connectivity, and the unlocking of development land such as Merton Meadow, opening up space for 400 new homes. It has played an important role in supporting regeneration and access across the city.</p>			
<p>Supplementary Question:</p>			

My main question asked about missing assessment criteria and to what extent the lessons of the ill-designed and managed City Link Road project had informed them. Let us take the issue of severance as an example. HM Treasury Green Book and the DfT's Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG) explicitly requires severance to be assessed. The lesson of the 1960s A49 scheme was not learned and, as anyone alighting the station walking into town or from town to the Medical Centre will know, the CLR effectively severs the route making the experience hazardous and unpleasant. Badly conceived motor road infrastructure inhibits movement by sustainable means, divides communities and divorces habitats with wider adverse impacts on society and the environment. How is the Council to include severance in its assessment criteria for its so-called bypass?

Supplementary Response:

In the meeting the cabinet member advised a written answer would be provided.

Written response provided:

The Full Business Case will be fully compliant with Green Book standards and will address issues of severance as required. The assessment criteria is a framework of key information that will be drawn out of the FBC to help guide Cabinet in its decision making and can't include every factor; however, the FBC will be published and Cabinet will have all of the information available to them to make their decision.