

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

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1.	Peter McKay, Leominster	The Street Works Register still shows few, if any, of our unadopted highways, i.e., those not being maintained at public expense, with them filling many gaps in highway record connectivity, subject of the 2007 Regulations as referenced in your reply to my question 16 May 2024, and I seek your assurance that you plan to show those you are aware of, before putting onus on Parishes to report any omissions, and when this could be expected?	Councillor Hurcomb
Response: The Council publishes its Street Works Register as an online map and this contains all unadopted highways that it is aware are subject to recorded public highway rights. Members of the public and Parish Councils are welcome to submit applications under the Councils Highway Records Protocol for any routes which they have evidence are subject to public highway rights.			
Supplementary Question: Do you have any formal process, e.g. guidance, application form, example, for a parish to follow that considers that a hitherto unadopted highway should now be adopted and added to the List of Streets ?			
Supplementary Response: The information can be found via this link: Amendments to the highway records - Herefordshire Council			
PQ 2.	Amanda Martin, Hereford	In the Q4 Performance Plan Appendix A at p9, I note that the Council has postponed presentation of the Full Business Case (FBC) for the Southern Link Road (SLR), Phase 1 of the Western Bypass, from this meeting until September. However, the documentation appears to indicate that the Council would contemplate entering into a binding construction contract before the FBC has been considered and approved.	Councillor Price

		Would the Council contemplate entering into a construction contract before the Full Business Case is approved?"	
Response: No, the Council will not enter into the construction contract until the FBC has been published and reviewed by Cabinet which is planned for the September meeting.			
Supplementary Question: Can the Cabinet member for Transport and Infrastructure also confirm that no construction contract would be let for Phase 1 before all necessary land acquisition has been completed?			
Supplementary Response: Thank you for your question. We will know in due course about whether or not the full contract is awarded and the negotiations with private land owners remain subject to strict commercial confidentiality. The position will be updated in the next report to Cabinet in September 2026.			
PQ 3.	Kate Seekings, Hereford	In the Q4 Performance Plan Appendices I note that the Council has delayed presenting the Full Business Case (FBC) for the SLR ("Phase 1 of the Western Bypass") from this meeting till September's. Does the Council constitution allow a binding construction contract to be entered into before and if a FBC is approved, before the Council has acquired all the land it needs to build the SLR, and when planning conditions remain undischarged?	Councillor Price
Response: The Council will not enter into the construction contract until the FBC has been published and reviewed by Cabinet which is planned for the September meeting. The report to Cabinet for the September meeting will set out the current status of land acquisition and the discharge of planning pre-construction planning conditions so that Cabinet are making a fully informed decision.			
Supplementary Question:			

What will Cabinet do if the contract cost for SLR construction exceeds the allocated budget, including contingency?

Supplementary Response:

Cabinet has set the delivery of Phase One as a priority and it is the first stage in unlocking future economic growth and unleashing Hereford's potential. Currently there is sufficient contingency to deliver the scheme within available budgets. Officers have also been developing value engineering options should they be required to keep the scheme costs within available budget. The council also continues to engage with the Government over the possibility of gaining grant funding to support the project.

PQ 4.	Barry Jenkinson, Hereford	In the Q4 Performance Plan Appendices, I note that the Council has postponed presentation of the Full Business Case (FBC) for the Southern Link Road (SLR), described as Phase 1 of the Western Bypass, from this meeting until September. What legal advice has been given to the Council regarding the risks it would face were it to enter into a construction contract for the Southern Link Road ("Phase 1 of the Western Bypass") without delivering and first approving a Full Business Case?	Councillor Price
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Response:

No legal advice has been sought as the council does not intend to enter into a construction contract without first having published and approved the FBC. This is planned for the September Cabinet meeting.

Supplementary Question:

Has the Council acquired all the land it needs to build the SLR?

Supplementary Response:

Sam answer as provided for Question 2.

PQ 5.	Jeremey Milln, Hereford	In my Hereford Central ward both the Museum & Art Gallery and the Library & Learning Centre projects are red flagged for delivery (purple flagged for c/fwd in the Delivery Update sheet at Appendix A to the Q4 Performance Report at agenda item 7). These are supported substantially by the Stronger Towns Fund which has extended the deadline for delivery from March 2025 to March 2028.	Councillor Bramer
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		It is understood these projects are at risk of running into the sand financially and are significantly delayed. In £ terms what exactly is the financial requirement for these two projects, how will the shortfall be addressed and when might we expect completion?	
Response: The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government extended the deadlines for all 100+ Stronger Towns areas across the country to 2028, it was not a local request. For both the Hereford Museum and Art Gallery and Shirehall project we are working through respective Pre-Construction Services Agreement periods with the selected contractors to finalise designs and costings which are commercial in confidence at this stage. As with any historic building project, there are significant challenges and costs associated with bringing these building's back into use. We are working through these challenges with the contractors, design teams and external funders at this stage. We are aiming to be able to say more about the next steps and timescales over the next few weeks.			
Supplementary Question: I asked what in £ terms is the financial requirement for the overdue Museum & Art Gallery and the Library & Learning Centre projects, how will the shortfall be addressed and when might we expect completion? The response evades this on the pretext of 'commercial confidentiality' around services agreements and selected contractors about which I had not asked. It is tedious to have to use my supplementary to ask the question again but in doing so you have the opportunity at least to demonstrate you do know the answer. Therefore please answer the question and do so in an open, honest and transparent way consistent with the Nolan Principles.			
Supplementary Response: We explained in the previous answer that we are working with contractors to finalise costings with these projects, and our various funding partners. The final financial requirements are therefore not known until we complete this process. The costs are commercial in confidence as they are subject to tender processes, contract arrangements with private businesses, and the detailed costs provided by their supply chains. Thank you.			
PQ 6.	Mrs Morawiecka, Hereford	With the “School Run” being the biggest cause of significant congestion at peak times on the urban road networks & with the Government focussing funding on active travel between schools, home and work, will the Cabinet be looking to expand safer routes to schools and colleges, so that the children who have benefitted from Bikeability can apply their skills to cycling to & from home	Councillor Price

		and activities, helping reduce the biggest cause of urban congestion?	
Response: Cabinet recognises that journeys to and from schools make a significant contribution to peak-time congestion on the urban and rural road network and that enabling more children and young people to walk, wheel and cycle safely can play an important role in reducing car dependency and therefore give a reduction to congestion. The council currently deliver Bikeability training to children and are recognised as a leading council in England in the number of children being trained. Additionally we also provide road safety education in schools along with partnership working with all emergency services The recently adopted Herefordshire Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5) includes commitments to improve active travel, promote school travel planning and deliver a programme of safer routes to school. It also identifies the need to reduce congestion, improve road safety for vulnerable users and increase travel choice. Public consultation on LTP5 highlighted strong support for safer walking and cycling routes to schools which is something Cabinet have prioritised. In addition, the council has recently completed its Herefordshire Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan (LCWWIP), which provides an evidence-based programme of walking, cycling and wheeling improvements and will help prioritise future investment opportunities. The LCWWIP supports the national objective of increasing the number of children travelling actively to school and identifies the delivery of connected, safe active travel networks as a key priority, this is support by the allocation of our Active Travel Grant for 2026/27 being entirely on a safer school route in Ledbury. The draft Parking Strategy recently consulted on also supports this approach by recognising the importance of reducing obstructive and unsafe parking, improving conditions for active travel and integrating parking management with wider transport objectives. Measures such as School Keep Clear enforcement, improved crossings and support for sustainable travel can help create safer environments around schools and colleges. Therefore, the Cabinet will continue to seek opportunities to deliver safer routes to schools and colleges where funding is available, drawing on priorities identified through the LCWWIP, LTP5 and future Active Travel England and Department for Transport funding programmes. This will help ensure that children who have benefited from Bikeability training are better able to put their skills into practice for everyday journeys, while also contributing to reduced congestion, improved air quality and healthier travel choices across Herefordshire.			
Supplementary Question: It's good the Cabinet recognises the "School Run" as a significant contribution to peak time congestion and that providing safer walking & cycling routes to school is a key priority. However, Cabinet's Budget priorities do not reflect the answer given.			

The answer says “the Cabinet will continue to seek opportunities to deliver safer routes to schools and colleges **where funding is available**”.

The Council are borrowing over £40million for a road, which their own report says will reduce walking and cycling (para 5.5.4), increasing fatal and serious accidents, all contrary to LTP5 policies.

Why then is the Cabinet not prioritising public borrowing for funding safer active travel routes to schools to effectively reduce urban congestion, improving health and safety of our young people and generating a better return on the investment than a new road?

Supplementary Response:

Cabinet does not accept the premise of the question. The council's investment programme is not a choice between supporting active travel and improving the highway network; both are important elements of the transport system and both are reflected within the priorities set out in the Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5).

As set out in LTP5 and the recently completed Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan (LCWWIP), the council is committed to increasing opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling, including the delivery of safer routes to schools, school travel planning, Bikeability training and measures that improve safety for vulnerable road users. The LCWWIP provides a long-term, evidence-based pipeline of active travel schemes that will be used to support future funding bids and investment decisions.

Funding opportunities for active travel infrastructure are typically delivered through specific Government programmes, including Active Travel England and Department for Transport grant funding. The council continues to pursue these opportunities alongside investment in the wider transport network. Through this approach we aim to reduce congestion, improve road safety, support healthier lifestyles and provide residents with greater travel choice. Ultimately, the objective of LTP5 is not to promote a single solution, but to deliver a balanced and integrated transport network that supports economic growth while increasing the proportion of journeys made by sustainable modes where that is a practical and attractive option.