

Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from members of the public

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Mr McGirr, Ross-on-Wye	The Section 106 agreement for the Hildersley Farm development, planning reference 150930, was varied on 29 March 2022 to specifically include “the provision of a footpath and cycle link to the town centre trail”. The Council’s S106 records, updated in September 2026, show that £375,409.51 has been received for transport/highway measures, of which £257,538.77 remains available. Why has the promised footpath and cycle link still not been completed, who is now responsible for delivering it, and by what date will the Council ensure that this S106 obligation is fulfilled?	Cabinet member Transport and Infrastructure
Response: Thank you for your question. The Council remains committed to delivering the footpath and cycle link, recognising its importance to the local community in providing access to the Town and Country Trail. The Section 106 contribution for the scheme remains available, and we have actively sought to progress the link, subject to the necessary permissions and approvals. Although the Ministry of Defence has indicated that it intends to cease using the adjoining rifle range, the land remains in its ownership and the Council requires the MOD’s agreement and the necessary legal access before the scheme can proceed. We have written to the MOD recently, and have followed this up with a second letter, to encourage progress on this issue and we will keep the public and members informed of progress.			
PQ 2	Mr Milln, Hereford	Item 14 of the Leaders' Report on Housing Delivery refers to proposals to 'bring council-owned buildings back into use' and the development of business cases 'to convert vacant council-owned buildings into self-contained temporary accommodation'. As a City Councillor representing Hereford Central I welcome this as I imagine do many other City members who, with their local knowledge, may be able to help and advise. So far as Hereford City is concerned which buildings are being referred to?	Cabinet Member - Economy and Growth
Response: Bringing vacant buildings back into use, particularly where they can help address housing need and reduce reliance on more costly forms of temporary accommodation, represents an important opportunity for the council. The programme referred to in the Leader's Report is being developed on a phased basis. At this stage, work is focused on the former John Venn building in Hereford. As the programme progresses, other council-owned assets may be considered where there is a viable opportunity to support the council's housing objectives. However, no final decisions have yet been taken on any additional buildings and the current focus remains on the John Venn building.			

The council would very much welcome the input of all local councillors as this work develops. City Councillors' knowledge of local communities, buildings and potential opportunities can provide valuable insight in helping to identify suitable properties and shape future phases of the programme. Officers will therefore be keen to engage with all local councillors as further options are explored and business cases are developed.

PQ 3	Ms Hewitt (on behalf of Dore Citizen Science), Hereford	With prolonged autumn drought leaving long stretches of the River Dore completely dry, the Peterchurch sewage treatment works is effectively discharging effluent directly onto a dry river bed, creating a severe environmental and public health hazard. This ecological crisis exposes a systemic regulatory failure, as standard, permits do not account for climate-driven zero-flow conditions in our watercourses. While Welsh Water and the Environment Agency hold direct regulatory duties, Herefordshire Council has a statutory obligation to safeguard local public health, biodiversity, and the county's environment. Given the scale of catchment-wide drying, how many other sewage treatment works across Herefordshire are currently discharging into dry or non-flowing river beds, and what urgent pressure is this Council applying to regulators to force immediate permit reviews?	Cabinet member Culture and Environment
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Response: Herefordshire Council do not hold information on the discharge of sewage treatment works to dry or non flowing river beds. This is the responsibility of Welsh Water. The responsibility for Environmental Permit reviews is with the Environment Agency. As part of the future growth of the county, the council has consulted with all of the statutory undertakers, including Welsh Water and the Environment Agency, to ascertain what infrastructure would be required to accommodate the growth.

PQ 4	Ms Robertson, Hereford	A petition has today been handed to the Chairman for action and shows the strength of feeling amongst our community for improvements to the C1095 Towtree Lane junction following the death of one of our parishioners. We acknowledge the improvements recommended in a recent traffic study but feel they do not go far enough. With the camber, blind pull-outs and increase in traffic using the road, will the Cabinet Member for Highways give assurance that physical alterations to this junction will also be investigated alongside the traffic study recommendations?	Cabinet member Roads and Regulatory Services
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Response:
Thank you for submitting your petition, which will be formally responded to in due course. I was saddened to learn of the recent fatality at the Towtree Lane junction. Once all investigations have been concluded and the Coroner's report has been issued, we will be able to understand if any mitigation measures are appropriate. These will first consider education measures, then enforcement and finally engineering solutions.

I understand from Officers that the recommendations identified within the road safety review to which you refer are intended to help improve road safety along the C1095 and at the Towtree Lane junction. In particular, the proposed reduction of the national speed limit to 50mph would better align the maximum permitted speed with the character and function of the road. Complementary engineering measures, including enhanced signing and road markings would also improve driver awareness of hazards and junctions along the route, encouraging positive behavioural changes, including more appropriate approach speeds and increased driver awareness.

I thank you again for taking the time to submit your petition.

PQ 5	Ms Morris, Hereford	The Leaders report is notable for its silence on the Hereford Library and new Museum and Art Gallery projects. According to the last publicly available minutes of the Stronger Hereford PDG, the board were told that key decisions around the new Hereford Library and Museum and Art Gallery projects lie with Herefordshire Council and 2 further meetings were taking place to enable the Board to reach a final view on the deliverability of the projects. As the last of these meetings took place on 2nd October, can the Cabinet member involved in these discussions advise and update fellow councillors what is happening in respect of these two “trailblazing projects transforming the city by 2025” that rely on Herefordshire Council to bring them to fruition?	Leader
Response: The council remains committed to securing the long-term future of both Shirehall and Hereford Museum & Art Gallery. As work has progressed, further surveys, technical investigations and cost reviews have been undertaken to ensure both projects remain affordable, deliverable and provide lasting benefits for residents and visitors. We are currently reviewing the detailed designs and corresponding cost plans in the context of budget and funding timelines. We will work closely with partners to maximise the benefits delivered through these investments and ensure the best possible value is achieved within the available budget and funding deadlines. Our aim is to provide a further update on this work by the end October.			
PQ 6	Ms Morawiecka, Hereford	With fuel prices continuing to increase, any measures that Herefordshire Council can take to reduce costs, particularly around transport, would help residents across Herefordshire. The Government is helping with schemes to cap bus fares at £2 from January 2027. Another way to reduce costs is to increase transport choice with good Active Travel options for residents. To increase the Active Travel funding Herefordshire can access, improving its Active Travel Capability rating from Level 1 to Level 2 would have a significant impact. What steps are being taken to ensure that since the last Active Travel England assessment, Herefordshire Council will be	Cabinet member Transport and Infrastructure

		able to demonstrate strong local leadership and organisational capability, with clear plans that form the basis of an emerging Active Travel network with a few elements already in place?	
Response: Herefordshire Council is committed to continually improving travel choices, including active travel provision and has taken a number of practical steps since the previous Active Travel England assessment to strengthen organisational capacity, network planning and delivery. The adoption of the Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan, and its incorporation into the Local Transport Plan 2025–2041, provides a clear, prioritised framework for developing a connected active travel network. The plan was informed by around 1,600 consultation responses and is being used to identify schemes, support bids for external funding and ensure investment is directed towards routes that will make the greatest difference to residents. This strategic approach is being translated into delivery. Examples include the completed improvements to Great Western Way, providing segregated space for people walking, wheeling and cycling; the Holme Lacy Road active travel scheme, which is being progressed as an important connection between residential areas, the Hereford Enterprise Zone and the wider network; and the Hereford Transport Hub, which will improve links between walking, cycling, bus and rail travel. The council is also progressing its Safer School Streets programme, using vehicle restrictions and supporting measures around school gates to make walking, wheeling and cycling safer and more attractive for children and families. Alongside individual schemes, the council is strengthening the programme management, technical design and governance arrangements needed to maintain a credible pipeline of projects. This includes ensuring proposals reflect Active Travel England design guidance, engaging communities as schemes are developed, and using monitoring and evaluation to demonstrate their impact. These measures provide clearer evidence of leadership, a planned network and an emerging record of delivery. We will continue to work with Active Travel England to identify any remaining areas for improvement and to place Herefordshire in the strongest possible position at the next capability assessment.			
PQ 7	Ms Seekings, Hereford	Rose Regeneration was awarded a new contract in April 2026 by Herefordshire Council for delivery of the final stage of the Towns Investment Programme and to support the Hereford Stronger Board in completion of the fifteen Town Fund projects. It appears that this company is now looking at 'Plan B' options for the reallocation of funds, in the event of a decision not to continue to support the Museum and Library projects being made. The fifteen projects were the result of a mass conversation about what Hereford is and what people want it to, with ideas, opinions and proposals gathered from residents, communities and businesses. What consultation is being undertaken to inform decisions around the new museum, library and the "Plan B"?	Leader
Response: The council remains committed to securing the long-term future of both Shirehall and Hereford Museum & Art Gallery. As work has progressed, further surveys, technical investigations and cost reviews have been undertaken to ensure both projects remain affordable, deliverable and provide lasting benefits for residents and visitors. We are currently reviewing the detailed designs and corresponding cost plans in the context of			

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PQ 8	Ms Bowes, Hereford	The Leader's report mentions that Herefordshire Council is in negotiations and engagement with National Highways. The Southern Link Road planning conditions requires HGVs that would previously use the Belmont Road, to divert onto the new Southern Link Road and then onto the A49 (Ross Road) before they can cross Greyfriars Bridge. With this extra traffic, particularly HGVs, on the A49 in Hereford what safe, active travel measures are National Highways looking to implement and fund along the A49, to ensure that the local residents can safely connect with the Rotherwas HEZ and other locations around Hereford safely by Active Travel means?	Cabinet member Transport and Infrastructure
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Response: The original Southern Link Road application formed part of the wider South Wye Transport Package, which included a range of active travel improvements. Although the road scheme was cancelled in 2021, a number of those measures have since been taken forward, including improvements along Holme Lacy Road. The council will continue to work closely with National Highways to identify and implement any measures required as part of phase one of the Bypass to ensure safe active travel provision, including connections to Rotherwas and the Hereford Enterprise Zone. Further active travel schemes are also proposed through the council's Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan and Local Transport Plan. These include improvements along Belmont Road and a network of quieter walking, wheeling and cycling routes across south Hereford, with better crossings, paths, signage, road markings and accessibility measures.

PQ 9	Mrs Protherough, Hereford	The last Cabinet meeting heard from the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure that the "biggie" for revenue cost savings is reducing the cost of the Council's estate by sales of Council owned buildings and assets. The previous Conservative administration sold off most of the County farms which in other Councils have provided jobs and a regular revenue stream to support Council services. What Council buildings and assets are being considered by the Cabinet for future sale?"	Cabinet member Community Services and Assets
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Response:

Parts of the council's farming estate were operating at a loss and were not providing residents with value for money. Farms sold by the council continued to operate under new ownership, protecting jobs and productive agricultural use, while the capital receipts were reinvested in county priorities and infrastructure, such as roads and schools. This helped reduced the financial losses associated with the estate and provided greater flexibility to support wider investment.

Council taxpayers would rightly expect the council to retain assets only where they continue to provide demonstrable value. That value should be considered in the broadest sense, including their contribution to service delivery, social value and wider benefits to local communities. Equally, where

an asset no longer delivers sufficient value, the council has a responsibility to consider how it can reduce the liabilities, maintenance costs and other ongoing expenditure associated with it.

Officers are reviewing the council's remaining land, buildings and other assets to assess how they are used, whether they support effective service delivery in line with the Council plan, and whether running costs can be reduced. No decisions have yet been taken on specific future disposals. Any recommendations will be presented to Cabinet in due course and considered through the appropriate decision-making process.

PQ 10	Ms Laan, Hereford	In his report the Chief Executive says that "We must also maintain momentum across the council's key projects and programmes, alongside the wider programme of investment to support regeneration, infrastructure and service". The Hereford Museum and Art Gallery was to display the Herefordshire Hoard, amongst many other artefacts and art, important to the County's history and identity, and to support the local economy by increasing footfall in the City, alongside the new City library. With lead officers on the Museum and Art Gallery having left the Council will he confirm whether these projects continue to be affordable and deliverable and that momentum on these 2 key city projects is being maintained?	Leader
Response: While there have been changes in personnel, these projects are council priorities and continue to be supported through established governance and project management arrangements. Major projects do not depend on a single individual, and work continues to ensure that the necessary expertise and capacity are in place to support delivery. The council remains committed to securing the long-term future of both Shirehall and Hereford Museum & Art Gallery. As work has progressed, further surveys, technical investigations and cost reviews have been undertaken to ensure both projects remain affordable, deliverable and provide lasting benefits for residents and visitors. We are currently reviewing the detailed designs and corresponding cost plans in the context of budget and funding timelines. We will work closely with partners to maximise the benefits delivered through these investments and ensure the best possible value is achieved within the available budget and funding deadlines. Our aim is to provide a further update on this work by the end October.			
PQ 11	Ms Albright, Hereford	Significant planning restrictions on new homes were adopted in October 2019 We're entering the 8th year of restrictions in more than 40% of the county. This is causing significant harm to local communities, Herefordshire businesses, individual families - and to council coffers. NE have recently categorised the ecological condition of the Lugg as 'unfavourable declining' which is just above 'destroyed'. EA have recently confirmed that Welsh Water are responsible for just 4-9% of the phosphate load in the Lugg, with agriculture contributing the remaining.	Cabinet member Culture and Environment

		Yet neither agency have been able to produce a compliant recovery plan or bring forward actions to release the moratorium or restore the catchment. Does the council agree that the evidence shows that planning restrictions on new homes is unjust, ineffective & disproportionate and that Govt agencies have failed their responsibilities?	
Response: We recognise and share the frustration caused by the prolonged restrictions. They have now been in place for several years and have constrained housing delivery, affected businesses, housebuilders and families, and limited the county's ability to meet housing need and support economic growth. The available evidence indicates that new housing accounts for only a small proportion of phosphate entering the River Lugg, with much of the wider phosphate load arising from other sources. However, the council, Natural England and the Environment Agency each have distinct statutory responsibilities and must operate within the legal framework established by Parliament. The council cannot lawfully set those requirements aside when determining planning applications. We have sought to steer a responsible course between the urgent need for new homes and our duty to protect and restore the local environment. This includes establishing our phosphate mitigation and credit scheme, which is helping to unlock development that might otherwise remain stalled, while we continue to work with government, its agencies and other partners on longer-term solutions. As stated in the Leader's report, "at the point of drafting, £2,331,168 (up by £140,678 since my last report in July) in phosphate income has been received. To date these actions have released planning permissions for 1,096 dwellings (an increase of 116 dwellings)." We would support proportionate changes to legislation or regulation that maintain strong environmental safeguards but allow decisions and mitigation measures to progress more quickly. Until the national framework changes, the council must continue to determine applications in accordance with its legal duties, while pressing for practical, evidence-based solutions that protect the River Lugg and enable the housing and sustainable growth Herefordshire needs.			
PQ 12	Ms Martin, Hereford	Following the Cabinet meeting of 24th September, it's crystal clear that even after attempts to reduce costs, cuts to services, "selling off the silver" and borrowing to be serviced through Council Tax, the Southern Link Road would be unaffordable. Given the urgent need to address declining footfall affecting city centre businesses and the serious congestion across the local network, when will the Council acknowledge that pursuing this road scheme is perverse and irresponsible and that the time has come to abandon it in favour of a third crossing to the east together with a tried and tested traffic reduction strategy of the sort that is working well all over the Netherlands, Denmark and elsewhere in Europe to deliver less congestion, higher quality of life and a thriving local economy?	Cabinet member Transport and infrastructure

Response:

We recognise there are strongly held views about how best to tackle congestion, support the city centre and improve transport in Hereford. However, this administration does not accept that pursuing phase one of the bypass is “perverse” or irresponsible.

We must adopt a strategic approach to reflect the scale of future housing, economic growth and the infrastructure needed to support it. The Government has set a target for 27,000 new homes to be delivered in Herefordshire by 2041. A fully realised western bypass, with phase one providing the essential anchor for a future river crossing and supporting infrastructure, offers the best opportunity to accommodate that growth in a planned and sustainable way. It would support new homes, jobs, skills and investment, create opportunities for younger and working-age residents, and reduce pressure on existing communities and the road network.

The benefits would extend beyond transport. By reducing through-traffic and congestion in Hereford, the scheme would support city-centre regeneration, improve air quality, reduce carbon emissions from queuing traffic and create safer, more attractive places for walking, cycling and public transport. This would contribute to a better quality of life for residents and a stronger environment for businesses and visitors.

PQ 13

Mr Sherlock,
Hereford

With the planning department running with approximately just 25% of staff needed to maintain its operations over the summer, how will this level of staffing cope with the new responsibilities and delegations under the changes to the Constitution proposed to be approved by Full Council on 9th October?

Cabinet member
Culture and
Environment

Response: It is not an accurate reflection of the staffing levels within the service.

In terms of the proposed constitutional changes and the introduction of a national scheme of delegation, these changes are not expected to have a significant impact on the volume of planning applications received by the Council, nor on the number of cases allocated to individual planning officers. Applications will continue to be submitted and processed in broadly the same way as at present.