

## CABINET MEETING 11<sup>th</sup> July 2012

The following Statements and Questions had been registered by the time of publication.

### REGISTERED SPEAKERS

There were 17 notices of intention to make a statement at the meeting. Where the intention is to speak about an item on the Agenda, the speaker will be offered the option to speak near the beginning of the meeting or just before the Agenda item.

#### **Statements about issues NOT on the Agenda**

- Cllr Charles Gerrish  
Re: Petition - Double Yellow Lines, Dursley Hill, Keynsham
- George Bailey (Radstock Public Transport Group)  
Re: Frome – Radstock Branch
- ~~David Redgewell (South West Transport Network)~~  
Re: ~~Radstock/Bath Spa interchange~~
- ~~John Spratley~~  
Re: ~~NRL and reopening of the railways~~
- Karen Emery  
Re: The Future of the Oak Tree

#### **Re: Agenda Item 14 (Future of Victoria Hall)**

- Cllr Eleanor Jackson
- Amanda Leon (Radstock Action Group)
- Bruce Shearn
- Colin Currie
- Rupert Bevan (Chair, Friends of Radstock Victoria Hall)
- Heather Chipperfield
- Sue Hill
- ~~Deborah Porter~~

#### **Re: Agenda Item 19 (Bath Transport Package)**

- ~~David Redgewell (South West Transport Network)~~

#### **Re: Agenda Item 20 (MoD Concept Statements)**

- Caroline Kay (Chair, Bath Preservation Trust)
- Philip Haile (Transition Bath)
- Adrian Tinniswood (Beckford Tower Trust)

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - COUNCILLORS

<b>M 01</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Councillor John Bull
<p>What is the long term future for Fairfield House given its importance to the Rastafarian community in Bath?</p>		
<b>Answer from:</b>		Councillor David Bellotti
<p><i>Consideration is currently being given to developing the role of Fairfield House as a local community asset serving the needs of a variety groups within the community. In order to render the building fit for this purpose, substantial capital works are required to the property. The Council is investigating the most beneficial and prudent means of funding these capital works as a key part of the current review exercise.</i></p> <p><i>The important focus is to ensure that the building remains available for use within the community without favouring one specific group, funded by a sustainable source of income meaning the building is able to operate self-sufficiently, without reliance upon Council financial support.</i></p> <p><i>Work underway includes the creation of a stakeholder group empowered to take the community project forward.</i></p>		

<b>M 02</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Councillor Tim Warren
<p>At the March Cabinet meeting, at which the contract was awarded for the Bath Park and Ride services, I asked the Cabinet Member to instruct officers to work with First Bus on the possibility of creating a monthly and/or season ticket for our Park and Rides to make the service more attractive for commuters, as well as a group 'family' ticket to make the service cheaper and more attractive than city-centre car parks for those with three or more travelling together.</p> <p>I was pleased that the Cabinet Member agreed to this request. Can he please provide an update on progress with these discussions with Firstbus?</p>		
<b>Answer from:</b>		Councillor Paul Crossley
<p><i>Officers have held positive discussions with First about extending the range of tickets available on Bath Park &amp; Ride services. First agree that there is plenty of scope to expand the range of tickets available and, as a first step, they propose to extend the validity of their network ticket range (including monthly and annual tickets) to include Park &amp; Ride services.</i></p> <p><i>Further discussions will be held between officers and First on the implementation of the</i></p>		

*new contract and officers will continue to press for the range of tickets to be expanded at the earliest opportunity.*

*The existing family “offer” on Park & Ride services of free travel for up to 5 children travelling with a fare-paying adult or concessionary passholder will continue for the time being, in the absence of a family ticket.*

**M 03**

**Question from:**

Councillor Colin Barrett

**Grass cutting verges**

In April this year I asked the Cabinet Member the frequency for cutting grass on verges in Weston. He informed me this was carried out every two to three weeks. Will the Cabinet Member confirm that is still the case as certain areas were not cut until 14th June and some areas have still not been cut which is some thirteen weeks.

**Cutting hedges**

Additionally, can the Cabinet Member please confirm the frequency for cutting hedges in Weston which are the responsibility of Bath and North East Somerset.

**Answer from:**

Councillor David Dixon

**Grass cutting verges**

*I can confirm that the cutting cycle remains every two to three weeks, however I’m sure Councillor Barrett will appreciate how difficult it has been for the Council’s parks and grounds staff to keep up with the maintenance programme during a season of extremely vigorous grass growth and some of the wettest conditions on record over the past two months. Despite the difficulties staff have continued to work hard and are largely on top of the Council’s own grounds maintenance responsibilities. Having looked at the concerns in Weston in more detail, officers have identified that the areas of concern are over land that is in the ownership and maintenance responsibility of Somer Housing. Officers are working with Somer Housing to resolve and clarify this issue currently. A general note has also been issued to councillors recently to highlight and explain the apparent confusion and lack of clarity surround the difference in maintenance standards between areas of land managed by the Council and those areas under the management responsibility of Somer Housing.*

**Cutting hedges**

*Hedge cutting is generally carried out between January and February in order to avoid disturbing any nesting birds. This is to protect nesting birds from disturbance as all wild birds, their nests, young and eggs are protected under law and it is an offence to damage a nest intentionally while it is in use or being built. This is also the best time to cut hedges, as by this time birds and small mammals will have eaten most of the nuts and berries which were laid down in the hedges in the preceding autumn. Where vegetation obscures sight lines, or obstructs paths and signage during the growing season, an assessment of each particular situation is carried out before any cutting takes place in order to balance safety requirements against the protection of wildlife.*

<b>M 04</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Councillor Tim Warren
<p>Is the Cabinet Member aware of what, if any, response the Department for Transport has yet given in answer to the concerns raised by the Highways Agency, and Wiltshire and Somerset Councils to the proposed A36 Beckford weight limit?</p>		
<b>Answer from:</b>		Councillor Paul Crossley
<p><i>The Department for Transport met with the Council last month to discuss the concerns and DfT have asked for a written response from us to the representations made against the proposed A36 Beckford weight limit. DfT have written to the 3 Highway Authorities letting them know that they consider that following receipt of our statement they will make their decision known in August or September.</i></p>		

<b>M 05</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Councillor Tim Warren
<p>In the light of the objections raised by Wiltshire and Somerset Councils to the proposed A36 weight limit, what steps is the Cabinet Member taking to improve this Council's working relationship with its neighbouring authorities?</p>		
<b>Answer from:</b>		Councillor Paul Crossley
<p><i>We have very good relationships with our neighbouring authorities. Officers meet with adjoining authorities on a regular basis and these meetings will continue notwithstanding discussion on the proposed weight limit. Councillor Symonds and I meet members of adjoining authorities on a regular basis and there is no reason why these useful meetings will not continue.</i></p>		

<b>M 06</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Councillor Vic Pritchard
<p>Government statistics recently released indicate the number of households accepted as homeless between January and March this year went up 2 percentage points on the previous quarter and up 16% on the same quarter last year. Can the Cabinet Member release the figures for that period in B&amp;NES?</p>		
<b>Answer from:</b>		Councillor Tim Ball
<p>Yes.</p>		

<b>M 07</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Councillor Vic Pritchard
<p>In a recent article in The Times, Bath and North East Somerset is identified as 7th of 10 local authorities with the lowest concentration of provision for children in care. Can we be assured that children requiring care are not being unnecessarily being placed outside of the authority area?</p>		
<b>Answer from:</b>		Councillor Nathan Hartley
<p><i>This position is due to the fact the provision for children in care within Bath and North East Somerset represents only those foster carers registered with or living in Bath and North East Somerset. We do not have any residential provision for children in care and there are no independent care homes located in the area. We do have BANES registered carers who live just across our border in Wiltshire, Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire and these are technically outside the Local Authority area, but the children placed are close to their family home and community and continue to attend their schools. Only a small number of the 160 children in care are placed outside this immediate area and this only occurs when it has been judged to be in their best interests. Councillor Pritchard can be assured that children requiring care are not being unnecessarily placed outside the local authority area.</i></p>		

<b>M 08</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Councillor Francine Haeberling
<p><i>[Cllr Haeberling submitted the following question after the greed deadline, but the Leader of the Council agreed to accept the question because of the urgency of the issue]</i></p> <p>Please would the Leader of Council make a statement setting out the Cabinet's position/view on the announcement of the Bristol City Deal, which has significant implications for the authority?</p>		
<b>Answer from:</b>		Councillor Paul Crossley
<p><i>The government has accepted a proposal from the West of England Unitary Authorities to establish a City Deal with extra incentives to reward each authority for economic growth. The 'in principle' proposal will require more detailed work before it can be recommended for approval. Once this work has been completed, I have asked officers to submit a further report to Cabinet and then Council in the autumn.</i></p> <p><i>For this Council, the effect of the Deal means that the Council would retain 100% of the growth in business rates from Bath Western Riverside Enterprise Area (instead of 50%). Up to 90% of our business rates growth might come from the Enterprise Area, based on figures in the draft Core Strategy. The arrangements are very complex, and negotiations are still taking place with government.</i></p> <p><i>I have asked that a report be attached to the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting, giving further details.</i></p>		

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - PUBLIC

P 01

Question from:

Rae Harris

What support can Cabinet Members give, both collectively and individually, to the petition recently sent to Mike Butler, Interim Highway Services Manager, re the cleaning up of Old Orchard, Walcot Street, Bath (see below)? I should also like to add that this is a matter affecting the public realm in the middle of the World Heritage Site, and that the petition builds on a remarkably co-operative working relationship between the Council's Highways Department and the community.

### **Petition re cleaning up Old Orchard, Walcot Street, Bath**

**Please would you do everything possible to restore Old Orchard, Walcot Street, Bath to its proper standing as a public highway, and ensure that in future it is maintained accordingly. It is one of the last remaining historic side streets linking Walcot Street to the River Avon (see maps below), but over a number of years has been allowed to become a local rubbish tip (the photo shows it on one of its better days). This is no longer acceptable to the many residents, small businesses and newly-arrived complementary health centre for whom this narrow street provides the only access for both pedestrians and vehicles.**

**The following issues are all important and need to be addressed:**

- **improvement of sight-lines at the junction with Walcot Street**
- **restoration of the traditional road surface at the same junction**
- **signing to indicate a cul-de-sac with no turning head**
- **ban on all trade waste and recycling bins (except just prior to collection)**
- **regular road-sweeping**
- **repairs to concrete kerb to side of 90 Walcot Street**
- **repairs to damaged/dangerous gas meter boxes to the same building**
- **removal of ground-floor extractor fan and grill to 90a Walcot Street (this appears to have neither planning permission nor listed building consent)**
- **educating local smokers about dropping their cigarette ends on the street**
- **educating Club XL about queue management and the use of fire exits as alternative entrances (both of which are intimidating to residents, restaurant-goers and general passers-by, mostly due to an insistence on queuing etc in the wrong direction)**

**It is recognised that this is a 'work in progress' and that some of the above have already been improved, which is very encouraging. However much of what remains can only be resolved with additional help from various parts of the Council, and this is what we are now asking for.**

<b>Answer from:</b>	Councillors David Dixon and Paul Crossley
<p><i>Officers from Environmental Services have been working with the local community for several weeks on the range of issues noted by Rae Harris, in the most part these have been relatively straightforward to address and where the solution required is improved community relationships we have promoted improved communications between the interested parties.</i></p> <p><i>The issues remaining revolve around parking/ access and storage and to that end Rae has canvassed the local community in support of the changes, albeit minor changes are required, to the parking places around the entrance to Old Orchard. We have received numerous emails in support of the changes.</i></p> <p><i>A further site meeting has been arranged with Mr Harris and officers will continue to work with the community to achieve the most effective solutions available within budgets and overall strategic and operational requirements.</i></p>	

<b>P 02</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Karen Emery
<p>There is a lot of confusion in the eyes of the general public as to the situation of the Radstock road scheme, the safety audit, the housing funds, the underpass and the future of the oak tree. We were led to believe it would have all started by now with completion in the autumn. Clearly they are all linked in making the next one required or for the changes to happen. With that in mind, Can you clarify where we are exactly with all of these topics and if indeed what time scale we are now realistically dealing with, if at all?</p>		
<b>Answer from:</b>		Councillor Paul Crossley
<p><i>The Council has listened to the concerns raised regarding the oak tree is the centre of Radstock and has agreed to do what can be done to save the tree. The best chance to successfully transplant the tree will be in November. In addition to transplanting, work is underway to cultivate cuttings from the existing tree.</i></p> <p><i>Work to the road cannot take place until the tree has been removed from its existing location.</i></p> <p><i>In the meantime, the Council is liaising with Linden Homes to work out how best to accommodate the new improved road scheme within the wider development of the former railway land. A more detailed programme will be available within the next 3 months.</i></p>		

<b>P 03</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Lesley Mansell (Chair, Radstock Town Council)
<p>Last year B&amp;NES said they are committed to regeneration in Radstock. Can the council explain how and when it intends to address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• re-energise the Radstock and Westfield Economic forum and develop an action plan to promote regeneration</li> <li>• start the new housing development in the centre of Radstock</li> <li>• start the new road scheme</li> <li>• support traders in Radstock following the Portas application</li> <li>• develop a retail impact assessment for Westfield and Radstock to guide the Sainsbury's application and other potential future initiatives</li> <li>• provide support to and consult with Radstock Town Council to produce a neighbourhood plan for Radstock</li> </ul>		
<b>Answer from:</b>		Councillor Paul Crossley
<p><i>The Council is already spending significant resources in Radstock to support regeneration. This year the Council has:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Set aside a further £500,000 for infrastructure improvements for the town</i></li> <li>• <i>Allocated £486,000 for a new nursery in the centre of the town</i></li> <li>• <i>Set aside £300,000 for road resurfacing this year</i></li> </ul> <p><i>In addition to these investments, the following demonstrates the Council's continuing commitment to support the local economy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>re-energise the Radstock and Westfield Economic forum and develop an action plan to promote regeneration</b></li> </ul> <p><i>The action plan will be finished at the end of July, a draft will be distributed to the members of the Economic Forum for comment in early August. The Economic Forum group will then meet in late September to agree the action plan interventions, set targets and milestones.</i></p> <p><i>The Economic Action Plan will contain a range of actions to support local businesses. These include a set of sector based initiatives to support businesses focussed on Manufacturing, Retail and Construction/ Low Carbon; the promotion of new business start-ups especially focusing on potential home working opportunities; a skills and employment plan, which will focus on supporting Norton Radstock College's new build and curriculum development, and the adult apprenticeship agenda.</i></p> <p><i>The Economic Forum and the Economic Development Action plan are not part of the physical regeneration plans for the area and are purely concerned with business and employment &amp; skills development.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>start the new housing development in the centre of Radstock</b></li> <li>• <b>start the new road scheme</b></li> </ul> <p><i>The Council has listened to the concerns raised regarding the oak tree is the</i></p>		



centre of Radstock and has agreed to do what can be done to save the tree. The best chance to successfully transplant the tree will be in November. In addition to transplanting, work is underway to cultivate cuttings. Work to the road cannot take place until the tree has been removed.

In the meantime, the Council is liaising with Linden Homes to work out how best to accommodate the new improved road scheme within the wider development of the former railway land. A more detailed programme will be available within the next 3 months.

- **support traders in Radstock following the Portas application**

The Council's Economic Development Team has approached the Town Council to participate in a set of supported business visits, aimed predominantly at local traders. The intention of these is to see how we can jointly help them through signposting to support. The particular focus will be on low carbon practices, such as low energy lighting and bill consolidation to help lower overheads – all of which would impact positively on the profitability of local companies.

Cllr Mansell and Fuller will be meeting with B&NES ED on the 17/07/2012 to have further discussion around the intention and principal of these visits, following the Town Council vote to support the visits in March.

- **develop a retail impact assessment for Westfield and Radstock to guide the Sainsbury's application and other potential future initiatives**

B&NES have a retail strategy for the district which is part of the Draft Core Strategy evidence base. It is available online. Any planning application for significant new retail space will be required to submit a retail impact assessment and this will be assessed through the planning application process.

- **provide support to and consult with Radstock Town Council to produce a neighbourhood plan for Radstock?**

The Council has prepared a range of information and practical support for Neighbourhood Planning. Including:

- A document entitled *My Neighbourhood: A Neighbourhood Planning Protocol for B&NES* which outlines the processes and practical support offered in B&NES
- Web-based resources, including the latest funding information [www.bathnes.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning)
- A series of Neighbourhood Planning focus groups (which a representative of Radstock TC attended)
- A series of talks, seminars and workshops on Neighbourhood Planning (many of which have been attended by Radstock TC). The latest briefing event on Neighbourhood Planning was held on 9th May in Radstock.

The Council has also been able to provide further information on Neighbourhood Planning and various funding sources for Radstock Town Council; although to date a request for further input into a Neighbourhood Plan has not been received. The Planning Policy team can provide further support on request (but at present these resources are limited). It is advisable that the Town Council register a formal expression of interest to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan with the Planning Policy team when they are ready to take the next steps.