

CABINET MEETING 10th October 2012

REGISTERED SPEAKERS

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

- Gillian Risbridger (Resident)
Re: Petition, 20mph Speed Limit, Wells Road, Bath
- George Bailey (Radstock Action Group)
Re: Radstock-Frome Railway Feasibility Study

Re: Agenda Item 12 (Grand Parade and Undercroft)

- Cllr Brian Webber

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - COUNCILLORS

M 01	Question from:	Councillor Geoff Ward
<p>Whilst it is recognised that this year's weather has not helped the situation with overgrown verges on highways and footpaths, the increased levels of complaints from members of the public have been unacceptable. Given the untended state of many verges throughout the authority, and the increased level of complaints this year, does the Cabinet Member agree that the cuts to this service were short sighted and should now be restored?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Roger Symonds
<p><i>The likely impacts of this budget reduction were made clear when the budget was agreed and the weather this summer has of course created considerable demand for verge grass cutting. On balance, I would prefer that we reinstate a cutting frequency similar to that before the budget reduction made for this year and I have therefore asked officers to review the budget with a view to recommending alternative ways in which we can balance the budget and reinstate the budget.</i></p> <p><i>The financial impact of reinstating the budget, along with any compensating reductions to balance the overall budget, will be considered as part of the Medium Term Service & Resource Plan and budget setting processes for 2013/14.</i></p>		

Supplementary Question:

What was the saving generated by the new approach? My parish council approached a local farmer to quote for cutting all the verges in Chalcombe, and was quoted £350. Will the Cabinet member agree that the saving is not therefore very large/

Answer from:

Councillor Roger Symonds

The following answer was provided within 5 working days of the meeting:

The net reduction to the revenue planned verge maintenance budget for 2012/13 was £22,244. Utilising the funding allocated and working with our contractor we re-prioritised the service to achieve the best possible outputs with the funding available as shown in the following schedule:

Details	Timing
1st CUT 1 metre swathe cut and full cut to visibility splays to all rural A and B Classified Road Verges. To include selective High Risk visibility splays in other locations.	May/June
1st CUT 1 metre swathe cut to verges along cycleways.	May/June
2nd CUT 1 metre swathe cut and full cut to visibility splays to all rural A, B, C Classified and Unclassified Road Verges.	Aug/Sept
One CUT 1 metre swathe cut to lane 1 verges and roundabouts and full cut to central reservation and visibilities to A4 Dual Carriageway Keynsham Bypass, A4 Dual Carriageway Twerton and A39 Dual Carriageway Marksbury.	Sept
2nd CUT 1 metre swathe cut to verges along cycleways.	Aug/Sept

We do not have the final in year costs as we are finalising the Aug/September programme which has run into October due to the growth conditions in what has been a very wet year. The final out turn will be known once the final claims have been agreed with our contractor.

This cost reduction and associated impacts were considered via the Council's Scrutiny process and was included in the budget as no alternatives were proposed.

M 02**Question from:**

Councillor Tim Warren

Can the Cabinet Member please provide evidence to support the belief that 20mph limits improve road safety and reduce road accident and injury rates?

Answer from:

Councillor Roger Symonds

The current 20mph proposals are not being promoted solely on accident reduction

grounds, as evidence available so far from other authorities which have introduced blanket 20mph limits suggests the incidence of injury accidents is not significantly reduced. However, Road Safety Web Publication No.16, produced by Department for Transport in 2010, investigates the link between vehicles speeds and risk of injury to pedestrians, and concludes that this risk is significantly reduced as vehicle speed drops. The perception that safety is improved is difficult to measure, however the results from Bristol City Council's 20mph Pilot Area Monitoring Report suggest that the public perception is that safety has been improved. The report identifies an increase in walking of between 10-36%, and in cycling of between 4-37%, in the 20mph pilot areas. It also identifies around 82% support for the 20 limits amongst residents. The introduction of 20mph areas are therefore considered to have social and environmental benefits beyond road safety.

Supplementary Question:

The roll-out of the 20mph zones has a cost attached. Will the Cabinet member ensure that rural areas are not overlooked?

Answer from:

Councillor Roger Symonds

The following answer was provided within 5 working days of the meeting:

Monitoring of the current programme will help determine the future plans for 20mph zones. Rural areas will not be overlooked and where appropriate will be considered, alongside other transport related initiatives for inclusion in future programmes of work.

M 03

Question from:

Councillor Tim Warren

With the Council currently consulting on the roll-out of 20mph speed limits on roads throughout B&NES, I am sure that the Cabinet Member agrees that this Council must learn from the experiences of other authorities which have already implemented 20mph zones.

Can the Cabinet Member therefore please provide information on the following:

- The number and percentages of casualties within the trial 20mph zones in Bristol since their implementation, compared to the numbers prior to implementation.
- The number and percentages of KSI (Killed or Seriously Injured) within the trial 20mph zones in Bristol since their implementation, compared to the numbers prior to implementation.
- The number and percentages of casualties within the 20mph zone in Portsmouth since its implementation, compared to the numbers prior to implementation.
- The number and percentages of KSI within the 20mph zone in Portsmouth since its implementation, compared to the numbers prior to implementation.

Answer from:

Councillor Roger Symonds

Officers will apply to the relevant Councils for the latest information. Any information received will be made available to Cllr Warren upon receipt.

M 04	Question from:	Councillor Tim Warren
<p>How does the Cabinet Member intend to monitor and review the effectiveness of the 20mph speed limits and how often will the Cabinet report upon this monitoring? Will the Council monitor and report upon changes to accident and casualty numbers within the 20mph zones on a regular basis?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Roger Symonds
<p><i>A representative set of roads within each roll-out area of the 20mph scheme is subject to automatic vehicle speed counts before and after the implementation of each scheme. Customer satisfaction surveys are also proposed once the 20mph limits have been in place for a significant period. No Cabinet reporting regime has yet been agreed, however as the information is collected it will become available on request. Injury accident monitoring will be carried out at 1 year and 3 year post implementation, as is the norm for new traffic schemes.</i></p>		

M 05	Question from:	Councillor Anthony Clarke
<p>In your answer to a question regarding free parking by Cllr Michael Evans at the last Cabinet Meeting, you stated that: 'Unrestricted car parking does not on the whole generate a level of vehicle turnover necessary to support the economic viability of destinations as the parking spaces are usually taken up by commuters, workers and other long stay parking and this can reduce accessibility for those wanting to visit.' And that 'Implementing charges in some locations and not others of similar size or facilities is not consistent and might be considered an anomaly in strategy.'</p> <p>The arguments you have put forward are clearly not limited to one location and could therefore be taken as applying to any part of the authority. This naturally raises concerns that the Council could be looking to implement parking charges at many car parks throughout the authority which are currently free, including within Bath.</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member please provide reassurance that the Council will not seek to implement charges at local car parks such as Larkhall Square and Church Road in Weston?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Roger Symonds
<p><i>Although the Council has not completed the formal budget setting process and without wishing to prejudice the outcome, I can confirm that whilst all income opportunities will be examined, there is currently no intention to introduce charges at these locations.</i></p>		

M 06	Question from:	Councillor Eleanor Jackson
<p>Why is there no consideration of the future of the Victoria Hall at this meeting, given the promises made at the July Cabinet Meeting?</p>		

Answer from:	Councillor David Bellotti
<i>The report has been deferred to the following Cabinet meeting to enable the finalisation of a full refurbishment plan to include electrical and heating installations, and to consult with other Council Services which may have an accommodation requirement within the building.</i>	

M 07	Question from:	Councillor Vic Pritchard
In your answer to the supplementary question which I asked at the last Open Cabinet meeting, you stated 'Where long grass becomes a possible safety risk, we cut it immediately'. Why is the Council waiting for uncut verges to become a safety risk before taking action?		
Answer from:	Councillor Roger Symonds	
<i>The Council does not wait until long grass becomes a hazard before taking action. Overgrown vegetation reported by the public or spotted by officers likely to cause a safety risk is attended to as quickly as possible.</i>		

M 08	Question from:	Councillor Charles Gerrish
Local traders and residents are keen to know progress as to when the Cabinet will be take a decision on whether or not to agree to Full Council's request to create free parking in Keynsham. Can the Cabinet Member therefore please inform of what decision has been made or provide an update on when he is likely to take a decision on this matter?		
Answer from:	Councillor Roger Symonds	
<i>I have responded to the request submitted to Cabinet confirming that officers have investigated this proposal and it is not possible to make it cost neutral. Therefore based on the cost and the impact on the budget I have decided not to implement free parking. However, 17 additional free bays will be installed in Ashton Way car park to replace the bays lost at the Civic Centre.</i>		

M 09	Question from:	Councillor Charles Gerrish
When might we expect the outcome of the overall assessment of traffic requirements in Keynsham to be completed? This is especially important in view of the pending planning		

application expected re the Cadbury site where the community are pressing to ensure that the developers are required to provide a second access.

Answer from:

Councillor Roger Symonds

The Council has provided the developers of the Cadbury site with a traffic model of the existing highway layout and traffic flows in Keynsham to assess the impact of proposed new development on the existing highway network in future years and, in particular, the need for a second site access. The results of this assessment will be submitted with the Planning Application, I understand that it is the intention of the developer to submit their application in November.

M 10

Question from:

Councillor Vic Pritchard

Placemaking Plans are a central component of the Council's Core Strategy in determining the location of any development, for example in RA1 classified villages. What is the Council doing to accelerate the process of developing these Placemaking Plans?

Answer from:

Councillor Tim Ball

At its meeting on 12th September the Cabinet agreed to revise the Local Development Scheme (work programme for the preparation of the Local Development Framework) and identified the necessary resources to progress the Placemaking Plan in parallel with the further work needed on the Core Strategy to address the concerns raised by the Examination Inspector. The importance and benefits of progressing the Placemaking Plan alongside the Core Strategy were identified in the report to Cabinet (see paragraph 9.3).

Supplementary Question:

Can the Cabinet member confirm whether this will coincide with the close of the year's grace period given by government?

Answer from:

Councillor Tim Ball

The following answer was provided within 5 days of the meeting:

The year's grace period given by the government to which Cllr Pritchard refers is assumed to be that which is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Paragraph 214 of the NPPF refers to Council's being able to give full weight to policies in Local Plan's adopted under the 2004 Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act for a period of 12 months (up to March 2013) in determining planning applications. The B&NES Local Plan was prepared and adopted under the provisions of the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act. Therefore, the 12 month period does not apply to the B&NES Local Plan. The NPPF (paragraph 215) makes it clear that in B&NES from the date the NPPF was published (March 2012) the Council should give weight to the Local Plan

policies according to the degree of consistency of these local policies with those set out in the NPPF. In addition, those policies in the emerging Core Strategy which are consistent with the NPPF also have some weight in decision making in light of the Core Strategy's advanced state This emphasises the importance of progressing preparation of the Placemaking Plan in parallel with the Core Strategy in order to get in place an adopted local up to date planning policy framework

M 11	Question from:	Councillor Brian Webber
<p>May I warmly congratulate the Parks Department on the wonderful displays of flowers in the Parade Gardens, Bath, which have elicited much praise from visitors and residents? Has this been reflected in increased receipts at the entrance gate, relative to previous seasons? Are congratulations also due to the proprietor of the teahouse, who I understand has helped maintain the small beds near his business? If so, is this an example of mutually beneficial co-operation between the Council and the private sector, which could be publicised and replicated?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor David Dixon
<p><i>Thank you for your acknowledgement of the excellent work of the Parks team in creating and maintaining the wonderful displays in Parade Gardens which I am pleased that these have been appreciated by residents and visitors. Parade Gardens has been visited by in excess of 25,000 visitors over the summer period. The wettest summer on record and the dip in visitor numbers to Bath means that these numbers are lower than last year and as a result receipts at the gate are down considerably. Mr Stafford, the proprietor of the tea house, became involved at the start of the season to help plant the beds near his business, which is very welcome. The quality of the planting and maintenance is however due to the work of the Parks team. There are a number of similar initiatives and partnerships taking place under the auspices of the successful In Bloom programme within Bath and throughout North East Somerset and these have been acknowledged and recognized as part of the excellent results achieved throughout the district in the South West in Bloom results.</i></p>		

M 12	Question from:	Councillor Brian Webber
<p>Regarding the co-operative efforts of the Council and the Bath Preservation Trust to re-instate the illuminated lanterns on North Parade Bridge, Bath, what is the expected date for the completion of the project?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Cherry Beath
<p><i>The damaged lanterns have been removed by the Council's Street Lighting contractor but some difficulties have been experienced in removing the fixings associated with the iron upstands. A specialist tool has been ordered to assist in removing these fixings</i></p>		

and, as soon as this has been delivered, the upstands will be removed and sent for repair. The reproduction and repair work needed is of a specialist nature and the target date for completion for this project is spring 2013.

M 13	Question from:	Councillor Brian Webber
Having regard to the attention which is paid by the Council's Planning and Conservation officers to relatively minor infractions of listed buildings legislation by private property owners, is not the ugly condition of the Council owned Cornmarket a grave reproach on successive Administrations? When might something be done to improve its appearance?		
Answer from:		Councillor David Bellotti
<i>We are currently considering the future opportunities which exist in relation to the Cattlemarket car park, and any options going forward will include the work required to bring the Cornmarket building back into effective use</i>		
Supplementary Question:		
Will the Cabinet member agree that the technicolour hoarding around the Cornmarket is an eyesore, and that it gives a bad impression to visitors to the city?		
Answer from:		Councillor David Bellotti
<i>I do agree. It has been in such a state for too many years.</i>		

M 14	Question from:	Councillor Brian Webber
Though the space standards in Lewis House within which the Planning staff have to work may satisfy Health and Safety requirements, are they conducive to efficient working, having regard to the large and bulky documents on which officers have to work and the lengthy and complex telephone conversations they often need to carry on in close proximity to their colleagues? Are the space standards in the Planning department broadly consistent with the standards in other open plan Council departments?		
Answer from:		Councillor David Bellotti
<i>Full consultation was carried out with officers in Planning Services as part of the "Workplaces Project" which resulted in the agreed space planning and working methods which now exist within Lewis House</i>		

M 15	Question from:	Councillor Brian Webber
<p>Whatever the merits of homeworking and hot-desking may be, is it not the case that short impromptu discussions with and between individual officers is often impossible because the officer is working at home and, if contacted there by telephone, does not have the necessary papers? Are the homeworking and hot-desking arrangements kept under regular review?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Paul Crossley
<p><i>The Council has successfully been reducing its office space, reducing costs and improving team working by using flexible working. This has been incorporated into the design of Lewis House, the Hollies and applies partially in Keynsham.</i></p> <p><i>Flexible working only occasionally involves home working. The approach is much more about supporting staff to work on site, reducing their need to waste time travelling. It frees up space that was previously left empty whilst staff are away, for example, at meetings or on site. It has also helped enable much co-location of staff and teams which helps to break down departmental divisions.</i></p> <p><i>When flexible working does involve home working, the member of staff generally has access to the information they need over the internet using a secure connection, through e mail or even using paper.</i></p> <p><i>No system is perfect so we constantly keep the arrangements under review as part of the workplaces programme. If there are any specific issues you want us to look into please do let me have the details.</i></p>		

M 16	Question from:	Councillor Brian Webber
<p>The recent press notice triumphantly announcing the commencement of the 20 mph speed limits in Twerton and Southdown trotted out, by way of justification, the truism that an accident at high speed will cause more injury than an accident at low speed. No-one disputes that. However, where is the evidence that blanketing 20 mph speed limits on streets which already have low average speeds reduces the incidence of high speed driving as opposed to merely inducing all motorists to marginally reduce their speeds? 20 mph speed limits in Portsmouth and Bristol do not appear to have reduced accidents.</p> <p>Would not traffic calming measures (possibly including speed limits) at selected blackspots and rat-runs be more effective?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Roger Symonds
<p><i>Bristol City Council's 20mph Speed Limit Pilot Area Monitoring Report states that 65% of roads in the pilot areas saw a reduction in mean speeds. We are not aware of any evidence on the balance between marginal reductions of all speeds as opposed to reduction of the incidence of high speed driving.</i></p> <p><i>Generally there are no accident concentration sites in residential areas; accidents tend to occur on a fairly random basis and are widely spread, therefore implementing traffic calming as a means of reducing injury accidents would be very difficult to justify.</i></p>		

It is however clear to me that by reducing traffic speeds the severity of the injuries arising from accidents will be significantly reduced.

M 17	Question from:	Councillor Anthony Clarke
<p>In the papers relating to the new funding formula no mention is made of the Pupil Premium. Can the Cabinet Member confirm that this provision will remain and give some indication of which schools will benefit and to what extent?</p>		
	Answer from:	Councillor Dine Romero
<p><i>The pupil premium is a government initiative that will continue until the government decides otherwise. The school funding reform process does not take the pupil premium into account as it is supposed to be in addition to main funding streams available to schools. The pupil premium is currently £619 for every child recorded as being in receipt of free school meals in the past 6 years, plus £619 for every child recorded as looked after and £250 for every child from a service family.</i></p> <p><i>For 2013-14 the DFE have confirmed that the first 2 categories will be increased to £900 per child with the service children still to be decided.</i></p> <p><i>Attached is a file that shows the current and estimated funding levels of each school through the pupil premium. Schools that converted to academies prior to April 2012 are omitted from the data as we do not have records of their pupils in the same way as maintained schools. Schools highlighted are those schools that have converted to academies since April 2012</i></p> <p><i>Schools are required to report to parents how they have utilised the pupil premium to ensure pupils from deprived backgrounds have been supported to attain better outcomes</i></p>		

M 18	Question from:	Councillor Anthony Clarke
<p>While it is accepted that there should be transitional arrangements so that those school with a significant reduction in their funding have time to adapt, can the Cabinet Member offer reassurance that the proposed Cap on Gains, when balanced against the Minimum Funding Guarantee, will not lead to an excessive taper in funding which will result in a disincentive to schools needing protection to either improve their recruiting of pupils or making the necessary changes to ensure they can live within their allocated budget and also deprive other schools of funding needed to meet the needs of their pupils? Can the Cabinet Member state the maximum time period that is anticipated for the taper in funding to come to an end by applying the Cap on Gains?</p>		
	Answer from:	Councillor Dine Romero
<p><i>The transition allowed to enable schools to adjust to reduced resources has been created by the DFE and imposed on Local Authorities in the form of the Minimum</i></p>		

Funding Guarantee (MFG). This protects schools to a fall of 1.5% per pupil in any financial year. The MFG will exist for 2013-14 and 2014-5 (set in regulations by the DFE), but after that there is no guarantee. Schools will need to plan for no protection in 2015-16 as the DFE may not agree to any protection of this kind from that date.

If the MFG were to be in existence for the future then some schools would be protected for many years, depending on pupil number changes, possibly as long as 10 years or more. The DFE recognise that this may occur and have therefore intimated that National Funding Formula they intend to introduce may have different protection mechanisms.

In our consultation document we modelled the impact of keeping a MFG mechanism in place for 5 years with stable pupil numbers and we found that 14 primaries and 2 secondary schools would be still protected by the MFG at that point. We have not modelled beyond 5 years but suspect that some schools may be protected for about 7-8 years.

The cap on gains is proposed to limit gains in order to pay for the protection. As the protection reduces year on year the cap will eventually grow until schools see no cap. In year 1 we are estimating 1.74% and year 2 approx. 2.03%. In year five the cap would be around 2.7%. As the increase is cumulative a school that was gaining each year would gain over 10% in the 5 years.

Supplementary Question:

If the minimum funding formula should change, would the Cabinet member assure us that the very considerable cap on increases will be removed earlier, so as not to deny schools the funds they are acknowledged to need and deserve?

Answer from:

Councillor Dine Romero

The following answer was provided within 5 days of the meeting:

The proposal that has been consulted on with schools and has now been decided makes the intrinsic link between the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) and the cap on gains, in that the sum of resources used to support the MFG would be utilised to calculate the cap on gains. If the MFG were to be removed or significantly altered to require less resource, the cap on gains would be recalculated to release the resources to those schools that would gain.

The regulations the DFE have established require that the whole resource currently available for schools (including the resource used to support the MFG) has to be available to schools in future years. This ensures that as resources are released from the MFG they will be paid to the schools that gain.

M 19

Question from:

Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones

The Council has understandably been preoccupied with the imminent developments in Keynsham and Radstock.

In the meantime, however, Midsomer Norton Town Council has been working, with B&NES officer support, on plans for its own future development. The vision for the town is known and laid out clearly in the Council's draft Core Strategy. Unfortunately, there are concerns that this valuable support is due to be withdrawn before work on the plans

has been completed.

Will the Cabinet member please give an undertaking to continue to provide the officer support so that the people of Midsomer Norton will be in a position to decide the future of their town rather than simply having to be reactive, with the danger of being overtaken by events or other external pressures?

Answer from:

Councillor Cherry Beath

The Cabinet recognises the work that is being undertaken in Midsomer Norton and is committed to supporting this within its resource constraints. A number of development & regeneration opportunities across the area are currently being progressed and the full programme, including projects in Midsomer Norton, is provided in tonight's Cabinet Paper about the Development, Regeneration, Employment & Skills Agenda.

Supplementary Question:

Can the Cabinet member explain why no projects in that area are planned within the first 12 months?

Answer from:

Councillor Cherry Beath

The report does explicitly say that the plans include projects in Radstock and Midsomer Norton. The local councils will be able to explain to him why these are not planned for the first year.

M 20

Question from:

Councillor Eleanor Jackson

Why are they proposing to move the Jubilee Oak Tree to the grounds of Writhlington School when there has been no consultation with Radstock Town Council, whose predecessor body Radstock Urban District Council planted it or with this ward councillor about this strange choice of off centre location? It has been central to Radstock's history since 1897 or perhaps 1905, and should remain so, as there is no operable planning permission for the development of the railway lands or the destruction of the subway.

Answer from:

Councillor Paul Crossley

The initial intention was to move the oak tree to Waterloo Road open space. However, it was found to have major underground services in the location we planned to move the tree. Through consultation with the family of the young man who died near the tree, Cllr Allen suggested Writhlington School. There is sufficient space for the tree and are prepared to help re-establish it (water it mostly) to help it survive.

Supplementary Question:

There has not yet been any work done to change the road layout; why therefore has the tree been moved unnecessarily?

Answer from:

Councillor Paul Crossley

The substantive planning application has been approved. The new one is for minor variations. Trees can only be moved at certain times of the year, so this is the right time to consider to move it, in addition to which there was an assurance that it would be looked after on its new site. The cuttings at both Writhlington School and the Norton-Radstock College are doing well.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - PUBLIC

There were none