

COUNCIL EXECUTIVE MEETING 7th Mar 2007

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

REGISTERED SPEAKERS

There have been 3 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.

- Helen Woodley of the Allotments Association
Re: Green Spaces Strategy (Agenda Item 13)
- Frank Thompson of "Two Tunnels Group"
Re: Two Tunnels, Greenway
- Cllr Gitte Dawson
Re: Two Tunnels Project

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1 **Question from:** Chris Beezley

The University of Bath has recently announced that it is likely to cancel its plans to create a new campus university in Swindon because Government priorities for the future of higher education are shifting away from traditional campus-based courses towards increased opportunities for study in the workplace, i.e. increasingly part-time and vocational foundation degrees.

At the 2005 public inquiry into the emerging B&NES Local Plan, the University of Bath convinced the Inspector that a key exceptional circumstance then was that expansion of the Claverton Down campus was necessary to contribute to the Government's target of putting half of young people through university by 2010.

In the light of the University's recent concerns at the risk of not securing recurrent public funding for traditional campus-based courses, will the Executive Member for Sustainability and the Environment postpone any Local Plan decision to redraw the Green Belt boundary at Claverton Down until it can be shown conclusively that exceptional circumstances actually exist in this fundamentally changed funding environment?

Answer from: Councillor Gerry Curran

The Local Plan policy for expansion at the University is based on the Inspector's recommendations arising from her consideration of the issues at the Local Plan Inquiry. The changes to the funding environment arise from the Higher Education

Act 2004 which preceded the Inquiry. The Inspector was explicitly made aware of this changing funding environment but still came to the conclusion that there is a need for expansion at the University campus.

Furthermore, the University state that they do not believe that the funding priority changes that have led to their withdrawal from the Gateway project in Swindon will have a significant impact on the growth projections for the robust, high quality model already operating at the Claverton Campus .

The University has confirmed that it does not consider that there is any funding uncertainty associated with its planned growth in Home/EU student numbers on the Claverton Campus .

At its Council meeting on the 1st March the University made its decision to withdraw from the Swindon Gateway project but also re-iterated its commitment to expanding its base in Bath, at Claverton Down. The decision on Swindon will allow the University to commit more resource to the future in Bath.

2 Question from: Ian Thorn

Is Cllr. Curran aware that the large residents' refuse bin at Fountain Buildings, Lansdown Road has been removed? Is he aware of its importance to many residents in the area and its use in preventing the accumulation of rubbish sacks in the city centre? Recognising the problems of its previous location and the success of similar bins in the area, can he and his officers provide another bin in a close but more practical location?

Answer from: Councillor Gerry Curran

The refuse container was removed from Fountain buildings due to the health and safety implications of the staff lifting the containers up and down the high curb in this area.

To help alleviate storage difficulties of local residents, a twice weekly refuse collection (Tuesday and Friday) has been arranged, and an alternative bulk bin can also be found at the bottom of Hay Hill/The Paragon. Unfortunately there is no where suitable in the immediate area of Fountain Buildings for an alternative container.

3 Question from: Ian Thorn

a) Does Cllr. Jenkins understand the disappointment of very many residents in Abbey ward at his failure to offer any firm commitment and timescale to provide more dropped kerbs in the city centre? Will he meet me as a matter of urgency to discuss this matter?

b) Will Cllr. Jenkins ask officers to investigate the provision of a handrail on the pavement leading from Guinea Lane to Vineyards? Will he meet to discuss this matter further?

Answer from: Councillor Sir Elgar Jenkins OBE

a) Money is provided each year for dropped kerbs where necessary in Bath and throughout Bath and NE Somerset. If Mr Thorn rings me I will be happy to have a meeting with him. I will have with me the appropriate officer and one of the Ward Councillors.

b) Yes

4

Question from: Peter Marsden

You are quoted in the minutes of the B&NES Parishes Liaison Meeting held on 14th February 2007 as re-assuring the meeting that B&NES would 'vigorously defend the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)' against any urban extension or potential development (para. 49, Regional Spatial Strategy). Would such vigour exceed that which was applied to the defence of the 40 acres of the Cotswolds AONB at Claverton Down - land which also enjoys Green Belt and World Heritage Site status - and which B&NES Council has consistently argued should lose its Green Belt status to facilitate expansion of the built campus of the University of Bath within the AONB?

Answer from: Councillor Gerry Curran

The allocation of land at Claverton Down to facilitate expansion of Bath University campus was the subject of public consultation and examination by at the recent B&NES Local Plan Inquiry. The inspector considered evidence from all parties who had made representation on the issue before making recommendations in her report.

The Council have resolved a response to the report and made modifications to policy. Following further statutory consultation which took place in November and December 2006 it will be considering responses and adoption of the modified plan on 28 March 2007. This will include the consideration of allocation of land at Claverton Down.

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the South West of England has been prepared by the South West Regional Assembly. B&NES council has resolved its formal response to the draft RSS on 14 September 2006. The draft RSS will be the subject of an Examination in Public (EIP) starting in April 2007. B&NES Council will be represented at the session discussing the West of England. The council have resolved to resist any urban extension development within the ANOB.

Planning Policy Statement 7 sets out the protection afforded ANOB's and the criteria for considering development within them.

In the case of Claverton Down, Council resolved that exceptional circumstances to justify development in the AONB had been established. This was tested at the Local Plan Inquiry.

It has resolved that no such circumstances have been established to justify strategic urban extension through RSS policy and will be asserting this case at the forthcoming EIP.

5	Question from: Councillor Gitte Dawson
Please will you make it possible for the Two Tunnels Greenway to be part of Sustrans' Connect 2 project - which, if it is won, will get us some £1.6m to spend in our area?	
	Answer from: Councillor Sir Elgar Jenkins OBE
<p><i>The Two Tunnels project prepared by Sustrans is an exciting project which has much to offer the environment as well as the needs of cyclists and pedestrians and, as the Chief Executive said in a letter last October to Sustrans, carries the support in principle of the Council. I hope that it gets Lottery funding. It will also need considerable additional funding support from various people and groups. Given it gets all necessary approvals the Transport Department would consider it for some capital funding in 2008 and successive years.</i></p>	

6	Question from: Councillor Gitte Dawson
Please will you give me your view of the Two Tunnels Greenway - and whether you think it is a project which this Council should do its best to bring to implementation?	
	Answer from: Councillor Paul Crossley
<p><i>The Two Tunnels Greenway project is one of the most exciting projects being proposed in our area. It is a key link in the network of cycle/walk ways around the authority.</i></p> <p><i>The Council would need details about schedules and commitments first but in principle this is a project I would be proud for the Council to partner in.</i></p>	

7	Question from: Councillor Gitte Dawson
Over the past four years you have overseen the building of the Council's three Elderly People's Homes which the Liberal Democrats voted to should be built five years ago. Please will you tell me to what sustainability rating these homes are built? Are they really built to Eco-Homes Excellent standard as you told me a month ago?	
	Answer from: Councillor Francine Haerberling
<p><i>As Councillor Dawson will be aware, the Council is making a very significant investment in services for older people in Bath & North East Somerset. The overall capital investment in the Community Resource Centre Programme is more than £28 million.</i></p> <p><i>St John's Court, Bath extra care flats were the first phase of the programme to</i></p>	

open. The flats have been open for over a year now and have proved to be very popular with both new residents and existing tenants, who have benefited from the improvements in communal facilities.

The Bath Community Resource Centre, to be known as "Cleeve Court", is due to open this month. Cleeve Court has 45 registered residential care beds and a day centre for older people. The new Carrswood day centre for adults with learning difficulties is on the same site and will also open later this month.

Construction of the second and third CRCs at Greenacres, Midsomer Norton and Hawthorns, Keynsham is also underway. In both cases, the CRCs will contain 30 self-contained sheltered 'extra care' flats, 30 Registered Residential Care beds with en-suite facilities and a day centre for older people.

All of the new CRCs have been assessed using BREEAM, which is a national evaluation model similar to ECO Homes. Each project has had a bespoke model for assessment drawn up by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) and the assessors are Halcrow Engineering.

The current anticipated scores for the three new centres are:

- Cleeve Court – Good
- Greenacres - Good
- Hawthorns - Very good

An excellent score would have needed increased capital to fund solar, wind, biomass and/or other green energy systems. This increased capital investment was very carefully considered by the Project Board. However, having received further information about the periods over which the cost of these further enhancements would be recouped through energy savings the Project Board, which does include Elected Member representation, recommended that they were not taken forward. Mindful of the importance of delivering the overall CRC Programme within the overall budget set by Council, the Strategic Director and Executive Member with responsibility for committing expenditure within the overall budget decided to accept this recommendation.