

CABINET MEETING 3rd February 2010

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

REGISTERED SPEAKERS

There were 5 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.

- David Redgewell (Campaign for Better Transport)
Re: Corporate Plan Refresh (Agenda Item 14) (specifically Rapid Transit)
- Cllr John Bull
Re: Budget (Agenda Item 16)
- Cllr Dr Eleanor Jackson
Re: Budget (Agenda Item 16)
- Fred Cotterell, DAFBY
Re: Budget (Agenda Item 16)
- David Redgewell (Campaign for Better Transport)
Re: Budget (Agenda Item 16) (specifically Rapid Transit)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - COUNCILLORS

01 **Question from:** Councillor Nicholas Coombes

Bathwick Hill, where I live and represent, has Friday waste collections. Unfortunately, no collections took place for four consecutive Fridays during December and January. While the individual missed collections were understandable and excusable, the cumulative effect has angered many residents.

Will the council be making any changes to its procedures for the 2010/11 festive period? Mondays 27th and 3rd will again be bank holidays and it will be difficult to use Saturday collections. Poor weather should also be expected at this time of year.

Will the council also reconsider their plans for dealing with waste in snowy or icy conditions? The manned collection points used this January do not appear to have been effective and were not accessible to the majority of residents. Will the cabinet member consider collections from designated points along gritted roads, at junctions with untreated residential streets, say?

Answer from:	Councillor Charles Gerrish
<p><i>This route was collected as normal on Friday 18th December, with no collection on Friday 25th December or 1st January, but the double collection was completed on Sat 2nd January. Residents were therefore missed for 2 weeks and 1 day. The only reported misses in this area were houses in the Priory. The severe weather caused us to cancel all collections on the following Friday 8th but collected as usual on Friday 14th. Refuse Collection arrangements for 2010/11 will be considered in due course, taking account of issues raised this year, and taking account of Xmas Day and New Years day falling on the Saturday. The Overview and Scrutiny panel have reviewed the severe weather arrangements, and we will be reviewing our contingency plans taking in to account comments made and lessons learned.</i></p>	

02

Question from:	Councillor Nicholas Coombes
<p>Bathwick residents are disappointed to discover that the 18, 418 and U18 shall not have use of a Dorchester Street bus stop until March. I read that the space will be used for parking equipment. Could the cabinet member express our dissatisfaction to the Southgate builders over this matter and negotiate an earlier hand-over date, as has been previously suggested?</p>	
Answer from:	Councillor Charles Gerrish
<p><i>The completion of laybys adjacent the new Debenhams store on Dorchester St and Manvers Street are not scheduled to be handed over until September 2010. The Developer, Multi have agreed to hand the Manvers St layby back to the Council early, at the end of March to enable the 18, 418 and U18 to use a dedicated stop close to the bus station. The main development is now well progressed and Multi have worked hard to hand over areas of the highway, including bus stops and laybys in advance of the deadlines agreed with the Council. The layby to the east end of Dorchester St is to be completed as an integral part of the Bath Spa railway station, Dorchester St and Brunel Square works which is still the subject of ongoing approvals with Network Rail and First Great Western.</i></p>	

03

Question from:	Councillor Caroline Roberts
<p>With regard to changes in car parking charges, what has the Cabinet member learnt from previous consultation processes, and how will the Council be improving the process in the next round of consultations?</p>	

Answer from:	Councillor Charles Gerrish
<p><i>I recognise that consultation is a key component when making decisions about parking charges. From consultation work undertaken last year it is evident that consultees understand the Council must live within our resident's means and a balanced package of measures is needed to achieve a sustainable budget. As the parking charges affect residents' commerce and tourists, views will be widely sought from individuals and representative groups to ensure any changes are reasonable and in accordance with the Council's policies/priorities.</i></p>	

04

Question from:	Councillor Will Sandry
<p>I understand that there is a priority system for gritting our highways during extreme weather. During the recent cold snap I was contacted by numerous residents with individual gritting requests, however the common theme that seems to stand out is the need for improved gritting immediately around schools. I understand that Chantry Mead Road (Moorlands Junior School) and Upper Oldfield Park (Hayesfield School - Widcombe Ward) were particularly treacherous. Would it be possible for your team to consider specifically adding these roads, or generally "roads around schools" throughout the district to the gritting programme in the future?</p>	
Answer from:	Councillor Charles Gerrish
<p><i>Throughout the bad weather officers continually focussed operations on keeping the strategic network (main roads, bus routes and routes to hospitals) open. The resources are not available within Highways to treat routes to and around schools, especially as Govt instructions asked us to cut our grit usage by 25%. However, during the bad weather the Neighbourhoods team supported a number of schools by clearing access routes. Officers and Members have received extensive feedback from the public as a result of the prolonged bad weather and these comments including 'roads around schools' will be considered as part of a review of 'Winter Maintenance' arrangements at the end of the winter.</i></p>	

05

Question from:	Councillor Ian Gilchrist
<p>Parking charges are clearly an important revenue generator for the Council. With charges set to increase again following this year's Council budget, does the Cabinet member consider that there is a risk of diminishing income from parking charges?</p>	
Answer from:	Councillor Charles Gerrish
<p><i>It is recognised that any change in the parking tariffs can inevitably lead to some</i></p>	

individual changes in the way that people use our Car Parks. The feedback from consultation along with our patronage records allows officers to form a view on the likely impact/risk of any change to parking charges and this is factored into the budget planning process.

06

Question from: Councillor Ian Gilchrist

Will the Member please confirm, as far as he is able, that the sums currently allowed in the Highways Capital Plan for a future Rossiter Rd (A36) re-routing scheme are being at minimum preserved in the budget currently in preparation:
 2010-2011 - £566K
 2011-2012 - £550K
 On the same topic, can the Member please outline the decision process and timescale relating to the progress (or otherwise) of options currently being considered?

Answer from: Councillor Charles Gerrish

The draft Transport Capital Programme for 2010/11 as reported to the PID Group in November 2009 makes a budget provision of £1.1m over four years for the A36 Rossiter Road scheme, which is spread over the years as follows:

Year	Provision
2010/11	£115k
2011/12	£400k
2013/13	£485k
2013/14	£100k

*The current situation with the Rossiter Road scheme is that work is being progressed to define a Rossiter Road scheme that meets the Council's strategic and Bath City Centre transport requirements.
 Due to the size of the scheme it will require its own PID which will be reviewed by the PID Group, Capital Strategy Group and Project Programme Board, with approval to the scheme's incorporation within the transport capital programme being given in the Single Member Decision on the Transport Capital Programme for 2010/11, which is anticipated in March 2010*

Supplementary Question:

Given that a decision is close, could the Cabinet Member say what is the likelihood of a scheme of some sort being approved?

Answer from: Councillor Charles Gerrish

It would not be possible for me to commit the Council in advance – but I certainly hope to be able to help in this way.

07

Question from:	Councillor Andrew Furse												
How many Council-owned retail properties are currently unoccupied? How many were unoccupied 6 months ago, 1 year ago and 2 years ago?													
Answer from:	Councillor Malcolm Hanney												
<p><i>The numbers for temporary void council owned retail units over the various time periods requested are shown in the table below.</i></p> <p><i>Of the 9 units currently vacant, three are under offer and two form part of the as yet uncompleted development at 7-9 Broad Street (the former postal museum), which are being marketed pending completion of the development scheme.</i></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>Number of Voids</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><i>Jan-08</i></td> <td><i>14</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Jul-08</i></td> <td><i>17</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Jan-09</i></td> <td><i>17</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Jul-09</i></td> <td><i>13</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Jan-10</i></td> <td><i>9</i></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>These figures refer to retail units owned by the Council and directly managed by Property Services. There will be a number of retail units leased by the Council to third parties, generally institutional investors, who themselves may have vacant units. The Council, however, has no control over the marketing or disposal of these leased properties.</i></p>		Date	Number of Voids	<i>Jan-08</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>Jul-08</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>Jan-09</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>Jul-09</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>Jan-10</i>	<i>9</i>
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08

Question from:	Councillor Andrew Furse
What criteria did the Cabinet member use, over and above the evaluations set out by officers and presented to informal Cabinet, to select James Street West as his preferred site for the future homeless hostel and wet house? Can the Cabinet member give details of the forthcoming consultation on the wet house facility?	
Answer from:	Councillor Vic Pritchard
<p><i>The location of the homeless hostel, James St West, became the preferred site due to its city centre location and close proximity to associated supporting services. The proposed plans are backed by our partners, including Julian House, the current providers of our homeless shelter in Manvers Street.</i></p> <p><i>The James St West site is of a size which will accommodate all our area's requirements whilst not being so large as to result in a regional 'hub'.</i></p> <p><i>Independent research has been commissioned into the issue of street drinking in Bath, including the merits, and possible locations, of a potential controlled area in Bath to assess its viability.</i></p>	

09

Question from:	Councillor Marian McNeir
<p>The Entry Hill Corporation Yard is totally unsuitable as a site for travellers and is the cause of daily complaints by residents. Can the Cabinet members reassure residents and me that he is pursuing the creation of a dedicated site in Bath and North East Somerset? Where will this be (I understand Twerton is a possibility) and what is the timescale for eviction of the travellers in Entry Hill?</p>	
Answer from:	Councillor Charles Gerrish
<p><i>Planning - The identification and allocation of sites to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in the district is already underway. This work is being undertaken through the preparation of a planning document entitled the Gypsy and Traveller site Development Plan Document (DPD). The published timetable is detailed in the Council's Local Development Scheme. This does not preclude the early identification of appropriate sites.</i></p> <p><i>In light of the fact that addressing the needs of the Gypsy & Traveller Communities falls across a number of services, a multi-disciplinary officer working group has been established to address issues for Gypsy & Traveller households in Bath & North East Somerset. The co-ordination and progression of the DPD is being overseen by this group.</i></p> <p><i>Environmental Services - The Council's response to situations of unauthorised occupations is to investigate complaints, monitor and collect information which can be used to inform the decision on what action the Council should take in respect of Council owned land. In the case of occupations on privately owned land, the Council liaises with the identified land owner over complaints that are received and investigated.</i></p> <p><i>The Strategic Director for Customer Services has by reference to the Council's own policy on unauthorised encampments concluded that there are insufficient grounds at the moment to support any eviction proceedings. Council officers will continue to monitor the situation to enable this decision to be reviewed on a regular basis and residents and ward members will be kept informed of what action is taken.</i></p>	

10

Question from:	Councillor Will Sandry
<p>As the UK economy begins to emerge from recession, does the Leader feel the Council did enough to help Bath and North East Somerset face the recession? Does the Leader regret that the Council did not implement all of Don Foster MP's suggestions of measures to help local businesses (such as offering a free parking period once a week; giving local businesses a single point of contact in the Council, conducting rent reviews that reflect the economic situation and consulting properly with local small businesses on all changes)?</p>	
Answer from:	Councillor Francine Haerberling
<p><i>The Council has taken a range actions over the past year which have had a real impact on supporting the local economy and helping residents through the worst</i></p>	

recession since the second world war, going much further than Don Foster has ever suggested.

Some of the measures taken by the Council include:

- *The creation of a 'Recession Reserve', used to protect tax-payers from shortfalls in Council income and to spend on actions which have supported the local area.*
- *The distribution of 'Recession Relief Grants' through the Quartet Foundation, providing grants to organisations which have helped residents affected by the recession. For example, £18,600 was given to the local Citizens Advice Bureaus to expand outreach services and provide two extra client interview rooms. A £20,000 grant was also given to Care & Repair and the Centre for Sustainable Energy in a joint project to deliver energy-saving advice to older people.*
- *Promoting the local economy and supporting local businesses alongside partners such as GWE Business West, with events including 'Credit Crunch Clinics' offering advice to local businesses, and 'Meet the Buyer' events to help build relationships between local businesses.*
- *Supported the Jobs Bus which has toured the local area, providing information on job and training opportunities.*
- *Supported public events throughout the area through an additional 'Supporting Public Events fund' to attract additional visitors to the local area, This included:*
 - *Somer Valley flower festival*
 - *Midsomer Norton Lantern Festival*
 - *Keynsham 'shop window dressing' event/trail*
 - *'Flavours of the west' event organised by Milsom Place*
 - *Earth from the Air exhibition*
 - *Comedy festival*
 - *Dance festival (including waltz world record attempt)*
 - *'Bath Prize' art event, where artists are encouraged to paint views of Bath*
 - *Christmas lights.*

These are just some examples, with a more extensive list available if Cllr Sandry wishes to request it. The majority of these measures were included in the Cabinet's budget proposals for 2009/10, which had the support of the majority of Members but unfortunately not all.

11

Question from: Councillor Eleanor Jackson

Given the importance of adequate road systems and good public transport to the economic regeneration of an area and to community sustainability, what measures are going to be taken to protect and improve 'bus services through Norton Radstock to Bath, Bristol, Shepton Mallet, Chilcompton and other local employment centres, and will anything to be done to ringfence the sums identified in the B&NES report to the West of England Partnership Joint Scrutiny committee for road improvements in Radstock 2010-13, or does he consider this money (£750,000) would be better spent on higher priorities?

Note: According to the West of England Partnership Board papers 14 January

2010: Single Conversation. Delivery and Infrastructure Investment Plan p25: 'Place Based Priority. Somer Valley Opportunity for market town regeneration and intensification.

.... Further public investment is now requested to enable the regeneration of brown field sites in the town centres and to bring forward employment land at Old Mills. This includes £0.75 million for infrastructure, traffic management and public realm improvements in Radstock town centre, £2.25 million for land assembly, remediation, traffic management and public realm improvements in Midsomer Norton town centre, £3m on highways and public utilities to make available employment land at Old Mills, and £22.1m in support of affordable housing.'

Answer from:

Councillor Charles Gerrish

The measures currently being undertaken to protect and improve public transport in the Norton Radstock area include:

The Greater Bristol Bus Network which includes two corridors to the Norton Radstock area: Corridor 6 from Midsomer Norton to Bristol along the A37 and Corridor 10 to Bath along the A367.

Some £2.65m is being also invested in bus infrastructure along these routes to improve reliability and quality of service. In addition realtime information displays are being installed along these routes at a cost of some £222k.

The Council will make Quality Partnership Schemes covering the corridors and bus operators wishing to use the new infrastructure along those routes will be required to meet minimum standards. In addition, the Council will negotiate Voluntary Partnership Agreements with participating operators to agree improvements to be made progressively.

I am unsure what Cllr Jackson means when she refers to 'ring fencing' and '£750,000 being better spent on higher priorities'. The council's priorities for investment in transport priorities are set out in the Joint Local Transport Plan and investment in transport to support economic growth in the Somer Valley is considered on this basis. The report identifies funding needed for transport infrastructure to bring forward development and economic growth in the area, and reduce the need to travel to other employment centres.

Supplementary Question:

I welcome the Cabinet member's response. Can he say whether the Council has invested funds in these schemes?

Answer from:

Councillor Charles Gerrish

The figures quoted are the amounts allocated - not the sources of funding.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - PUBLIC

There were none