

B&NES Council Meeting 28 March 2012

Statement by Amanda Leon, on behalf of Radstock Action Group

Radstock Action Group maintains that councillors have not had any access to most of the statements and complaints made by individual members of the public and organisations regarding the proposed Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) originally published last year. If they had, then they might well have had a better insight into why there is such opposition to the proposals and also be better equipped to reach rational decisions on these matters. So, on 17 February 2012, RAG made a substantial request to B&NES under the Freedom of Information Act.

Our requests were the release of:

1. All questionnaire responses to the questionnaire regarding the revised TROs
2. All comments and additional points made on either the same side or the reverse side of the questionnaire
3. All other submissions made in response to the same exercise
4. The records kept from the 'exhibition' held in Radstock Methodist Church on 9/10 December 2011, including how comments made by visitors were recorded and what these comments were
5. All information passed from the above to the Cabinet prior to the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday 11 January in connection with the agenda item 12 on Radstock, *Radstock Town Centre Highway Infrastructure Improvements*.

In response, we were told that, in view of the volume of materials we had requested under the first three questions, we would have to pay £40 – we have done this.

Distasteful as this is to a group which has no regular income, the response to Questions 4 and 5 gave very serious cause for fundamental concern. It said, 'The only information the Council holds in relation to questions 4 & 5 of your request is a list of the visitors' and then went on to explain how they could not release the names of individuals despite the fact that we had already acknowledged that this was not allowed. Besides which we didn't want to see the names of individuals.

Please reflect on the following:

1. In December of last year, B&NES organised an event in Radstock Methodist Church. This must have involved considerable expense particularly as there were several members of staff present at all times. And yet they claim to have kept no record of the event, even though visitors had clearly commented on the exhibits, asked questions and pointed out short-comings in the accuracy of the paperwork.
2. B&NES does not keep a record of which paperwork goes to Cabinet meetings in connection with specific agenda items. We conclude, in this case, that Cabinet members were not given the information.

Then answer the following questions:

1. Will you as council members:
 - a. Ensure that, in future, proper records are kept of what is circulated for meetings?
 - b. Accept that such breaches of transparency and neglect for the views of the public are unacceptable?

2. What will you do to ensure that decisions which will radically and irreversibly alter an entire major community within your area, are now reconsidered?

Most of you do not live in Radstock, some of you may never have been there, but you have a responsibility to ensure that you listen to the voices of those who do and take into account their views when reaching such momentous decisions as the ones, made in ignorance of such views, on the future of our town.