

CABINET MEETING 12th November 2014

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

- Kim Donovan
Re: Petition - North Road Pedestrian Safety
- Cllr Charles Gerrish
Re: Petition – Rest a While Café Double Yellow Lines
- Duncan Hounsell
Re: Saltford Station

Re: Agenda Item 12 (Placemaking Plan)

- Cllr Eleanor Jackson
- Colin Currie (Radstock Action Group)

Re: Agenda Item 14 (Getting Around Bath Transport Strategy)

- Robin Kerr (Chairman, Federation of Bath Residents' Associations)
- Adam Reynolds (Chair, Cycle Bath)
- Professor Donald Thomas
- Steve Bradley (Liberal Democrat Prospective MP for Bath)
- Anne Marie Jovcic-Sas (Radstock Town Councillor)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - COUNCILLORS

M 01	Question from:	Councillor Eleanor Jackson
<p>How many former blue badge holders have had their applications for renewal refused since the new regime was put in place? Why is the council apparently being more stringent than neighbouring authorities? How many appeals have been successful as a percentage of the whole?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Caroline Roberts
<p><i>Since the introduction of the new and improved national Blue Badge system provided by Northgate Systems, we have received 8908 applications for Blue Badges and issued 8221 badges. Of these, 5754 have been recorded as renewals.</i></p> <p><i>Badge applications that have been refused fall with a number of categories:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Fraudulent applications – 1</i> <i>Payment not received – 6</i> <i>Did not meet the criteria – 509</i> <i>Duplicate Applications – 24</i> <i>Evidence not received – 118</i> <i>Withdrawn – 23</i> <i>Not resident within the Local Authority area – 6</i> <p><i>This is a refusal rate of approximately 8% of all applications submitted. Unfortunately refusals are not broken down into whether they are new or renewal applications and, as this is a national database, it would require a request from numerous Councils to Northgate to implement this type of report change.</i></p> <p><i>When the new system was introduced, the Department for Transport provided a Blue Badge Scheme Local Authority Guidance (England) document to assist all issuing LAs and Officers involved in the processes to help ensure that a consistent approach was taken across the country. This documentation provides useful information on the eligibility criteria, best practices, model application form and appeals processes. We pride ourselves on adhering to the Guidance and will liaise with the Blue Badge Centres of Excellence should we need clarification or guidance on any matter surrounding Blue Badges whilst ensuring that we do not breach the Data Protection Act. I therefore suggest that we are no more or less stringent when considering applications for blue Badges than any other Local Authority who are also adhering to the Guidance.</i></p> <p><i>Since the introduction of the new system on 1st January 2012, we have received a total of 91 Appeals. Of these, 49 have been successful, 35 have failed and 7 are currently in the process of being reviewed. The Appeals have on many occasions provided additional evidence to allow us to consider the rejection again and correctly issue a Badge to a member of the public. Appeals are therefore submitted in less than 1% of all cases and in 13% of cases where the badge has been refused.</i></p>		

M 02	Question from:	Councillor Eleanor Jackson
<p>Re Cllr Roberts answer to the question of 20mph speed limits in Radstock and Westfield, can she indicate where these have actually been installed? The only sign of activity is in Peasedown St John.</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Caroline Roberts
<p><i>I understand from Skanska, that more than two-thirds of the poles for the signs are now in place in Radstock and installation of signs erection will take place after this has been complete. I would expect all signs and road markings to be in place by the end of November.</i></p>		
Supplementary Question:		
<p>Will the Cabinet member be writing to parents to apologise for the 3-year delay in responding to the petition?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Caroline Roberts
<p><i>I did not see the petition 3 years ago since I was not in this post but I will be happy to respond to parents.</i></p>		

M 03	Question from:	Councillor John Bull
<p>What plans does the Lib Dem administration have for continuing the Welfare Support scheme in the year 2015/16?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor David Bellotti
<p><i>Bath & North East Somerset Council received a budget of £249,000 (Plus £60,000 Revenue funding for administration) for each of the last two years to fund local Welfare Support initiatives following the abolition of certain elements of the Social Fund that had previously been administered by the Department For Work & Pensions (DWP). The Treasury have now taken this funding back from the DWP and will be allocating it as part of the Revenue Support Grant funds from 2015 onwards. This decision is still subject to review and following a recent visit to Bath, the Director General for the DWP has said that he will follow up our concerns in relation to this proposal. The Council believe that this fund has provided invaluable support to some of our most vulnerable residents over the last two years and is proposing to continue funding for this purpose in 2015/16.</i></p>		

M 04	Question from:	Councillor Bryan Chalker
Can the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods confirm what date in November the toilets in Larkhall Square will be reopened?		
	Answer from:	Councillor David Dixon
<p><i>Well this is also as much of a waste of cabinet's time as the question that Cllr Brian Webber recently brought to us with regards to the quality of loo roll being used at the Guildhall. If Cllr Chalker cares to cast his mind back to last Monday he will recall an email from the officer implementing our ground breaking public convenience improvement plan, advising him that it has now agreed with the prospective tenants to target end February for the shop opening. They are looking to submit planning application any day now.</i></p>		

M 05	Question from:	Councillor Malcolm Lees
<p>I have just received the following response from my Local Police Team in relation to the 20 mph speed limit as follows: "The force will not enforce (20mph) at this moment but will try to engage more with the members of the public," which was confirmed by the duty Inspector.</p> <p>It has now become apparent that Avon and Somerset Police are now carrying out enforcement in selected areas. Will the cabinet member please advise if she is intending to carry out any publicity regarding enforcement as our residents are receiving mixed messages.</p>		
	Answer from:	Councillor Caroline Roberts
<p><i>The Police are currently enforcing 20 mph speed limits in Avon and Somerset. Neither the Council nor the Police are proposing further publicity regarding enforcement of 20mph speed limits at the present time.</i></p> <p><i>Bath-based Chief Inspector Norman Pascal said: "Generally we are in favour of any scheme that makes the roads safer for all users. Reducing the speed of motorists in built-up areas should help that. We would like motorists to take responsibility for their driving behaviour and to obey the new limits. Community Speed Watch volunteers, who we support, will monitor the 20mph zones, and we can use our mobile safety speed camera vans if there's evidence that the public are at risk in any particular area".</i></p>		

M 06	Question from:	Councillor Sally Davis
<p>M&M, on behalf of Hibernia Atlantic UK Ltd, are undertaking work to run a cable through parts of my ward, including along the A39 from Corston towards Compton Dando. It is understood that the conduit is for a fibre-optic cable apparently running from New York to Frankfurt. As the Cabinet Member will be aware, many of our rural areas are</p>		

desperate for faster, more reliable broadband. Was the Cabinet Member aware that this was to take place, and if so, why was the opportunity not given to another internet company such as BT or Wansdyke Telecom to run fibre-optic cables through the same trench so that local residents can benefit from improved broadband and minimise disruption?

Answer from:

Councillor Ben Stevens

We do know about the Hibernia Atlantic network. They have the same statutory rights as Gas, Water and other utilities issued by the Secretary of State and are classed as a utility, so can put the cables in without recourse to us.

Having taken advice we understand that it would be technically possible to tap into the network, but it would not be commercially realistic for a company to put in a junction and offer a regular broadband service at an affordable price to local people given the costs involved. However this would be for potential commercial providers to negotiate with the company direct.

Supplementary Question:

Would it not be better if Cabinet had notified the Parish Council of this?

Answer from:

Councillor Ben Stevens

We will consider whether any improvements might be made to the way we communicate with Parish Councils – however, I repeat that Hibernia Atlantic have the right to dig up the road without contacting us.

M 07

Question from:

Councillor Geoff Ward

How can we be confident that we still have sufficient capacity and capability to undertake effective investigation into major accidents or food poisoning incidents, within the current budget and for Environmental Services? Are these services being evaluated for further cuts in the forthcoming budget round?

Answer from:

Councillor David Dixon

The resource levels for food safety and health and safety interventions in the authority have not altered in this financial year. By combining the former environmental protection and public protection teams we have created increased resilience within the service to react to major incidents, and the service is currently looking at ways this can be enhanced further by working in close partnership with North Somerset Council.

Officers work with colleagues from the former Avon and Swindon and Wiltshire via the Workwell Wessex H&S partnership and the Wessex Food Liaison groups which promote local consistency of approach and sharing of support and skills in the event of an emergency.

Training and up-skilling of staff is still a key priority and this year the Food Safety team

has, for the first time, recruited an Environmental Health graduate intern to supplement the team resource and provide a training and development opportunity. The service is not currently required to provide additional MTSRP savings but opportunities for efficiencies and new ways of working are constantly under review.

M 08	Question from:	Councillor Terry Gazzard
Can the Cabinet Member confirm what tendering process was conducted prior to the awarding of the bus subsidy to First Bus for the operating of the number 4 service, and were any other bids received from other bus operators?		
Answer from:		Councillor Caroline Roberts
<p><i>Following advice that the commercial service was to be de-registered by First, a short notice tender was undertaken under the emergency provisions of the Transport Act 1985. Using the procurement portal shared by southwest councils, an open procurement process was used to invite bids from bus operators to provide service 4 on the basis of operating a 40 minute interval service with a mid-day break. This frequency was selected in order to permit one operator/one bus operation in order to minimise costs. Bidders were also invited to propose alternative timetable and service options. Four different operators submitted bids on the basis of the published specification. On a net subsidy basis (i.e. revenue retained by the operator) the lowest bid was £41,986 per annum, and the highest bid was £74,950 per annum. Of the 4 bidders, only First also offered different timetable options at different prices. One of these options was to retain the commercial timetable (a service operating every 30 minutes) at a cost of £42,435 per annum. This offered a 33% gain in service levels for a very small financial premium compared to the lowest standard bid and was selected as offering the best value for money to the Council.</i></p>		

M 09	Question from:	Councillor Anthony Clarke
How has the Cabinet Member decided to implement the recommendations contained within the resolution of the July Full Council in relation to the parking charges petition presented by independent shops of Bath?		
Answer from:		Councillor Caroline Roberts
<p><i>Officers have undertaken a detailed analysis of the proposals submitted within the petition and are due to provide a report to me later this month. I will make a decision once I have discussed the issues with my Cabinet colleagues.</i></p>		

M 10	Question from:	Councillor Anthony Clarke
<p>Has the Cabinet Member completed the promised review of the effects of changing parking restrictions and charges at Royal Victoria Park, and if so have any knock-on effects been noted in nearby streets?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Caroline Roberts
<p><i>Cabinet colleagues and I considered an officer report in January 2014 which reviewed the charging regime. Two changes were agreed in response to requests we had received. These were:</i></p> <p><i>1) The reduction of the first and second hour charge from £1 per hour to 50 pence per hour. This change was completed in February 2014.</i></p> <p><i>2) The time limit in specific sections of the western side of the Park was increased from 2 hours to 4 hours and this was implemented in April 2014.</i></p> <p><i>Knock-on effects have been noted in some surrounding streets and officers are working with residents within those areas to consider how the impacts can be mitigated. This work is continuing as currently there is no clear consensus amongst residents to what needs to be done.</i></p>		
Supplementary Question:		
<p>What response might the golf club receive to their submission on this matter? They have asked for a reply.</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Caroline Roberts
<p><i>I am aware of the submission from the Golf Club. Their members have the same rights as other people – they may park in this area for up to 4 hours.</i></p>		

M 11	Question from:	Councillor Anthony Clarke
<p>Can the Cabinet Member please confirm when work is due to be completed (and open to the public) on each the following projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossiter Road/Widcombe Parade; • London Road alterations; • Newbridge Park & Ride expansion; • Keynsham civic centre highway works; • Kelston Road; • Radstock town centre. 		
Answer from:		Councillor Caroline Roberts
<p><i>The Council is delivering a significant amount of infrastructure improvements in the district and can I provide updates on the completion dates of the following projects:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossiter Road/Widcombe Parade - <i>The programme has been revised and will</i> 		

comply with the Christmas embargo requirements. The improvements are due to be complete in the new year (a firm date is due to be confirmed before the end of this week).

- **London Road alterations;** - Works to improve the public realm in the area of London road will be complete in February 2015. The programme has been developed to comply with the Christmas embargo requirements.
- **Newbridge Park & Ride expansion;** - The alterations to the Lower Bristol road will be complete by December 2015. The additional car park will be complete by the end of the year with the remaining work to improve the existing parking areas and the facilities building will be complete by April 2015
- **Keynsham civic centre highway works;** - The improvements to the highway on Bath Hill and Temple St will be complete by March 2015. The footway improvements adjacent to the new development has been completed and is now open to the public. Due to the extensive works by Bristol Water in the area the works to the northern footway and highway has been delayed until after the Christmas embargo.
- **Kelston Road** – the road is due to be open this month.
- **Radstock town centre.** – The new link road is due to open to pedestrians by the end of December 2014. Works in the town centre will commence in January and be complete by the end of May.

M 12	Question from:	Councillor Anthony Clarke
In light of the recent difficulties experienced by one of the Council's major transport contractors, ERH, what is the Council doing to review its tendering and due diligence procedures to try and avoid a repeat of these types of problems in future?		
Answer from:		Councillor David Bellotti
The Council reviews systems and procedures on a regular basis to ensure they meet appropriate governance standards and best practice including through a comprehensive annual audit programme. As such, the issues identified will be considered to establish if any changes are required to our relevant systems and procedures		

M 13	Question from:	Councillor Anthony Clarke
Is the Council ensuring, through its liaison with Network Rail, that the importance of the visual aspects of the electrification of the Great Western Mainline through B&NES is taken into consideration throughout the heritage area?		
Answer from:		Councillor Tim Ball
Network Rail's own Environmental Impact Assessment very much recognises the likely visual impact of the electrification works through B&NES. Using this assessment as a		

basis along with pre-application advice being provided by Officers Network Rail are now submitting Listed Building Consent applications for the necessary modifications to the listed structures and prior approval notifications for the non-listed structures. It is expected that these applications will address the concerns raised in their own EIA and where appropriate, in the pre-application advice given.

M 14	Question from:	Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones
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How many hours of emergency power generation does the Council have at Lewis House in the event of a prolonged national or regional power outage?

Answer from:	Councillor Paul Crossley
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At present there is emergency power for lighting and alarm functions of up to 4 hours for Lewis House if there were to be a power outage. All teams in Lewis House have Business Continuity Plans in place to manage the impact of such an eventuality, these plans are currently being reviewed as a result of recent moves and our new flexible working approach will support everyone in meeting these needs. An advantage of having more than one main office site, and the new flexible ICT, is that if one building becomes unavailable staff running essential services can base themselves at a different office building, work in the community, from home or on the move. With effect from May / June 2015 a power generator will have been installed at Lewis House, once installed the generator can supply power as long as fuel is available. We do have a fuel plan and this should ensure sufficient power for any lengthy period of power outage.

M 15	Question from:	Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones
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When is the target completion date for 100% of households in B&NES to receive superfast fibre-optic broadband?

Answer from:	Councillor Ben Stevens
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The Connecting Devon and Somerset broadband programme aims to provide to 95% coverage by 2017 and 100% by 2020 with a target speed of up to 24mbps. This will be fibre to the cabinet, but the actual speed will depend on distance of the individual premise from the cabinet.

M 16	Question from:	Councillor Liz Richardson
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The wards of Chew Valley North, South and Mendip have recently had to cope with significant closures and delays on A368 due to building development and drainage work, similarly there has been a prior closure and delays on the B3130 for drainage works, on both of these occasions local businesses in Chew Stoke and Bishop Sutton have been hit hard. There is major disruption and road closures planned for Chew

Magna in December when a fibre cable will be routed straight through the village. On top of this the Council is planning to resurface and at times again close the B3130 through Chew Stoke, both of which will mean a massive diversion. The businesses in Chew Stoke and Chew Magna are extremely worried about the effect these closures and diversions will have on their businesses they are all small businesses, many are lifeline facilities for these remote rural communities and many operate with very little margin. Can the cabinet member offer any form of extra support to these businesses to help them through what may otherwise be a particularly difficult Christmas period?

Answer from:

Councillor Caroline Roberts

These essential programmes of work are necessary to keep the road safe and ensure that the public can access the traders and communities mentioned. Road closures are necessary to ensure the works can be completed safely but officers have and will work closely with communities to ensure that information is posted in a timely manner and will provide appropriate signage to minimise the impact on residents and businesses. The programming of the work will be carefully considered to ensure that we complete the works as quickly as possible whilst minimising disruption and noise for residents adjacent to the works.

M 17

Question from:

Councillor Liz Richardson

Can the cabinet member explain why some 6 months after contacting council connect residents are getting a request to fill in an online customer satisfaction survey? Does the cabinet member not feel that 6 months after an event is far too late to request such information?

Answer from:

Councillor David Bellotti

Typically customers are invited to complete a survey within 4 weeks of contacting Council Connect. Due to staff changes some surveys were sent out far beyond the four week period. We will be keeping to our four week period in future. However all the replies received have been greatly valued. We are currently looking into how we can automate these invitations so as to ensure that all customers receive a timely invitation to provide us with the crucial feedback we require in order to improve the service that we deliver.

M 18

Question from:

Councillor Charles Gerrish

Why are all the lights left on in the new Keynsham development at night and the weekend?

Answer from:

Councillor David Bellotti

The Keynsham Project is partially handed over to B&NES. The project has ongoing

work to complete the final commissioning which is being carried out at night and weekends. A number of the lights have to be left on during this period to allow these works to be completed. The cost of this is being met by the Contractor. Once fully handed over to B&NES the new development will be one of the most energy efficient buildings in the country.

Supplementary Question:

Could the community of Keynsham be given a public statement about this. We have already begun to occupy the building.

Answer from:

Councillor David Bellotti

We have no control over those parts of the building not yet handed over by the contractor. When fully handed over, the building will be highly energy saving.

M 19

Question from:

Councillor June Player

In light of the information below will the Cabinet Member for Homes and Planning please review the Additional Licensing procedure to ensure that HMOs are fully licensed so that these properties meet ALL the criteria before tenants are allowed to move in to them?

To me the current system is not good enough. We introduced this Additional Licensing Scheme to raise the standards of all these properties for the tenants, yet we appear to be failing to do so for some of them. My reason for asking this question is because:-

Now that the HMO's Additional Licensing Scheme has been operational since January of this year, I feel that it should be reviewed and tightened up so that it does the job it was brought in to do, properly - namely, to ensure that HMO properties meet the standards set for renting purposes. Standards which are, after all, only MINIMUM ones, as stated in the Council's HMO Licensing Standards and I quote: 'Standards for Licensed HMOs provide a consistent approach across licensed HMOs and are the minimum requirements for fire precautions and household amenities such as kitchens and sanitary provisions to ensure safe and healthy homes'. End quote.

Due to these standards being so minimal, I feel it is most important therefore, that tenants are not allowed to move in to an HMO, until a Licence has been issued that meets all the conditions in full.

Currently, Landlords fill out a form to apply for an HMO Licence and once checked to have been filled in correctly, plus having the correct fee accepted, a property inspection is then done within, I understand, two weeks. Provided there are no VERY serious Health & Safety issues, any other works to be done to fulfil the Licence criteria are written down as a Condition of the Licence. This means therefore, that landlords can be issued a Licence when there are works still to be carried out which the landlords can then be given anything from 6 months to a year to rectify. Consequently there are some HMOs that are fully

tenanted with work outstanding which results in tenants living in sub-standard conditions whilst still paying the full rent.

On a short term agreement then, some tenants may have lived in properties which have never met all the criteria for all of their tenancy. This situation to me is unacceptable, because the whole point of landlords having to apply for a Licence is to ensure that their properties meet with what are only basic Health & Safety Standards.

Having been invited into a number of student properties recently, because the students were unhappy with the condition of them, I noticed, and reported, issues such as nails sticking out of doors half hanging off from the wall; no key available to open a window at the top of the property with a loft conversion; kitchen floor tiles which had been gaffer taped down by a tenant because they were a trip hazard; no floor covering virtually throughout an entire house whilst a tenant had been living there and waiting for the landlord to 'get round' to doing the job; water leaking down through a Perspex roof into an area used by the tenants; met a mother who took her son and his friend to stay in a B&B for a night because she was concerned about the smell of gas. She called a gas firm in to check the boiler out before she felt it was safe for them to return to the property the next day. This same mother had washed carpets because they were so dirty as well as painted a number of walls because of the state of them. In another property a student was told by the landlord when she complained about the damp in her room that it was her fault because she 'sweated too much'!

These examples are no way ensuring 'safe and healthy homes' as stated above. However I must point out that there are many landlords who 'go the extra mile' and have excellent properties but, because there are some unscrupulous landlords who do not, I feel changes need to be made to protect and improve the conditions some tenants find themselves in. We must ensure they all have decent accommodation at all times. I am not in any way putting blame on Council Officers, because they are correctly following the guidelines but I do think we must tighten up the rules.

I was astonished to read that out of over 1,000 properties that have been inspected (and are operating as HMO's) ONLY 4.9% are fully compliant with the terms of the licence.

Answer from:

Councillor Tim Ball

Whilst I have some sympathy with the sentiment of the question the law that governs the HMO licensing scheme, as detailed in the Housing Act 2004, is clear that Council cannot refuse to issue a licence because works of improvement are required. That said regardless of the order of events any required works of improvement are rigorously enforced by the Council, albeit at the same time as the licence is issued.

Hence, as a result of the introduction of additional licencing in January 2014 over 1,000 additional HMOs have been brought into remit of the system and inspected. The majority of works required to improve safety have already been completed making homes safer and a healthier places to live.

Poor standards identified and remedied the scheme include:

- *No adequate smoke alarms*
- *Dangerous layouts which could leave occupants trapped in the event of a fire*
- *Very small bedrooms*

- Out of date fire extinguishers
- No communal bathroom
- Dilapidated conditions
- Out of date electrical condition reports

It is also important to note that that the term 'minimum' does not mean below standard. It means properties meet an acceptable and to our agreed and published standard. It is also worth pointing out that last week in a parliamentary question the Rt Honourable Member of Southampton Test, Alan Whitehead, lodged an early day motion in which he praised the energy efficiency requirement in our HMO licencing standards and asked the House to build upon on our example and introduce national legislation that would have the same effect.

The Council now know where the majority of HMOs are in the additional licensing area and have developed a comprehensive list of owners, managers and contact details which will allow these properties to be monitored and quickly improved if required. As the scheme progresses local residents, tenants looking for a place to live and landlords will have access to a public register of HMOs (www.bathnes.gov.uk/hmos) so they know which properties are licensed and who runs the property.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - PUBLIC

P 01	Question from:	Eric Lindsay
<p>Given the large and increasing demand from Peasedown St John residents for a roundabout to be built at the junction of the A367 and Bath Road at the western end of the PSJ bypass will the Cabinet Member please give serious consideration to such a project and indicate a timescale in which it might be completed?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Caroline Roberts
<p><i>This junction experienced a history of accidents until improvements were made (a left turning lane for vehicles approaching from Radstock) in 2010. Some Section 106 funding for junction and public transport improvements was negotiated in relation to the Wellow Lane housing development (as the Traffic Impact Assessment suggested that traffic at the A367/Bath Road junction would increase as a result of the development). Our most recent assessment observation indicated that there is a minimal capacity problem at this junction and the predicted rise in vehicles using the junction is very unlikely to have a major impact. Consideration has however been given to replacing the existing priority junction with either traffic signals or a large roundabout. The estimated cost for either option is in excess of £250K, of which less than £100K is currently available via Section106. Both</i></p>		

proposals will be assessed and the preferred scheme will be included on our task register (which includes all highway improvement requests received) and given a priority rating.

We are due to learn the value of our Integrated Transport Block Grant settlement in December at which point we will be able to determine whether the proposal can be funded as part of next year's works programme.

P 02	Question from:	Rachel Willis
<p>In light of the fact that 21% of children in Bath are living in poverty, and that Banes are listed as members of the end child poverty action group, what steps do our council propose to take to ensure the life opportunities of children and young people in our area are not severely limited by an economic situation that they have no influence over?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Dine Romero
<p><i>There are a number of methods and studies that seek to try and measure the impact of poverty, and what is defined as "poverty", therefore it is important to be mindful of this when commenting on whether or not this figure is accurate for Bath. The experience of staff delivering services locally would be that the scale of this pressure is not as high as the figure you have quoted. However it is clear that the continuing economic pressures we face continue to have an impact upon the city.</i></p> <p><i>The Council continue to develop a range of responses to this challenge as we recognise that there is no one single answer to addressing poverty. Our initiatives in stimulating the economy and creating jobs through our participation in the LEP and the 'City Deal' initiatives are examples of how we are seeking to attract new businesses into the area. Our "Worklessness" team continue to link with families to improve interview skills, CV writing and identifying re-training options for those who have been out of work. In addition our Connecting Families initiative has an established, and excellent reputation in working alongside families to address many issues that are associated with poverty. In addition to these initiatives, the Council is also currently committed to ending zero hours contracts for our own employees. This underlines our desire to focus on fair, family-focused working arrangements. All of these projects link together to meet the challenge presented by the current economic pressures and to ensure that we continue to take a pro-active position in relation to this challenging issue.</i></p>		

P 03	Question from:	Rachel Willis
<p>Can the council assure us that early years support for these children living in poverty, despite 59% of them living in households have at least one adult working, will be prioritised particularly through first steps and children's centres?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Dine Romero
<p><i>The focus upon maintaining services to our most vulnerable families has been a paramount concern in re-shaping our Early Years and Children's Centre Services whilst</i></p>		

responding to the financial challenge that we face, the report to cabinet in September 2014 contained the following information:

STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

Consideration has been given through all the preparatory work to issues relating to need, poverty, disability and disadvantages of children and families. Service reductions have been designed to ensure those children and families most in need of help continue to receive “early help” services.

The statutory guidance for Children’s Centres states that before making a significant change to services, the Council must formally consult everyone who could be affected by the proposed changes, for example, local families, those who use the centres, children’s centre staff, advisory board members and service providers. Particular attention should be given to ensuring disadvantaged families and minority groups participate in the consultation.

This was of course done. Continued focus on how we reach the families most in need will remain. Now that the full complement of new health visitors have been recruited by Sirona, we can be sure that in delivering their new contract they will be identifying those children that need help and support to achieve positive outcomes and working with us and other agencies to achieve this. We are confident that the good working relationships between the Council and Sirona will enable us to support the children and families most in need.

We will continue to subsidise nursery provision for some of our most vulnerable children under 5 including at First Steps and other relevant Children’s Centres. Funding to support inclusion in early years has not been affected by the budget reductions and new government funding to 2 year olds will ensure that children living in households that would be eligible for free school meals or Disability Living Allowance, receive access to free nursery care for up to 15 hours per week.

P 04	Question from:	Vicky Drew
<p>(a) Could Cabinet please publish the results of the Safety Audit conducted on the junction outside St Saviours Schools in Larkhall and reveal an approximate cost to put all safety measures in place to protect children at this dangerous crossing point.</p> <p>(b) Are councillors aware that a serious accident involving a parent being knocked down by a car in the immediate vicinity of this junction was reported to B&NES earlier this year? If so, why have councillors denied this publicly and in the media?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Caroline Roberts
<p>(a) Following receipt of a petition for a pedestrian crossing, safety aspects of the proposed location were assessed and in the light of the various constraints of the proposed site it is proposed to install a zebra crossing. The scheme is only a draft proposal at present but is estimated to cost in the region of £35,000.</p> <p>(b) I cannot speak for other Councillors but I can confirm that I am kept apprised of all reports of serious accidents in B&NES.</p>		

P 05	Question from:	Vicky Drew
<p>Could cabinet please confirm the total cost of improvements to Queens Square during October/November 2014.</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Caroline Roberts
<p><i>The Queen Square 2014 Rejuvenation project budget is £100,000. In addition, the budgeted cost of highway improvements to the north west corner of the Square is £9K.</i></p>		

P 06	Question from:	Vicky Drew
<p>(a) Are the council prepared for the potential of huge B&B and Hostel bills if Curo refuses to house those they consider "unable to afford the rent" under their new pilot experiment that involves subjecting potential tenants to credit checks.</p> <p>(b) Are the council prepared to extend discretionary housing payments or seek to provide other means of funding for potential tenants to be able to afford Curo's week, or months rent in advance?</p> <p>(c) Will the council be increasing their financial contribution to the Citizens Advice Bureau to ensure the costs to help all potential tenants referred to them by Curo after failing credit checks are covered?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Tim Ball
<p><i>I am assuming that the question is referring to the joint Curo & CAB pilot, known as "Passport to Housing", that aims to provide free and optional advice and assistance to prospective social tenants on the Homesearch register, particularly around maximising income & management of debt. In these challenging times of welfare reform and rising living costs growing numbers of households are suffering financial hardship and experiencing problematic debt. In extreme cases this can impact on a household's ability to secure or sustain a tenancy, particularly given that universal credit is paid directly to tenants. Hence this pilot, initially suggested by the CAB to Curo, provides each applicant with a bespoke success plan, which addresses financial planning & "jam-jar" accounts, grants for furniture, benefit maximisation, cheapest utility tariffs and the developing Curo offer around help accessing employment, education and training. The pilot is currently restricted to just existing Curo tenants on the Homesearch scheme, however, given the clear benefits of the scheme I am looking at ways in which the Council could assist in it being rolled out to other applicants who may wish to take up the offer.</i></p> <p><i>The initial outcomes of the pilot have been both concerning and encouraging. Of concern is that of the 61 households who have opted for the service only 10% had a debt less than £1,000 whilst 10% had debts over £10,000, with one having a £40,000 debt. The average monthly income was £1,200 which included benefits. However, what is encouraging is that with the support of this initiative there is no reason why any of these households cannot go on to have a successful and sustainable tenancy.</i></p>		

The premise of the initiative is not to exclude prospective tenants, something which already happens in some limited cases, but rather to remove any potential barriers to a successful tenancy. As such I do not see this having a negative effect on households in B&B, indeed it has the potential to do the opposite. It should also be noted that due to the Council's proactive homelessness prevention agenda, including supporting this and similar initiatives, this Council has an exceptionally low number of households in temporary accommodation compared to the national average.

The rent in advance that you refer, which is now fairly standard practice in both the social and private sector, is not part of this pilot. It is not about restricting tenancies, rather it is about ensuring that households are set to succeed by ensuring that the matter of rent, and how it will be paid, is considered at an early stage. However, Curo have advised that this requirement is not fixed and no one has, or will be, excluded from a tenancy, if they are unable to provide the required rent in advance. This is being monitored by the Council's Housing Service who are keeping me apprised of the situation.

P 07	Question from:	Laurel Casserley
Do B&NES council intend to comply with Curo's wishes and allow them access to people on the B&NES Homesearch register, in breach of data protection, for the purpose of Curo conducting credit checks on those on the list?		
Answer from:		Councillor David Bellotti
<p><i>Bath & North East Somerset Council have been working successfully with CURO for many years supporting citizens in finding suitable housing provision. Curo however are directly responsible for the application process to their own housing stock and conduct their own credit checks as part of their own due diligence through this activity.</i></p> <p><i>The Council does not carry out this function nor permit Curo access to the Homesearch register to carry out credit checks either now or in the past.</i></p> <p><i>The Council will continue to work positively with Curo in helping citizens get access to the right information and support from a range of agencies to enable them to obtain adequate housing provision</i></p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Tim Ball
<p><i>I am assuming that the question is referring to the joint Curo & CAB pilot, known as "Passport to Housing", that aims to provide free and optional advice and assistance to prospective social tenants on the Homesearch register, particularly around maximising income & management of debt. In these challenging times of welfare reform and rising living costs growing numbers of households are suffering financial hardship and experiencing problematic debt. In extreme cases this can impact on a household's ability to secure or sustain a tenancy, particularly given that universal credit is paid directly to tenants. Hence this pilot, initially suggested by the CAB to Curo, provides each applicant with a bespoke success plan, which addresses financial planning & "jam-jar" accounts, grants for furniture, benefit maximisation, cheapest utility tariffs and the</i></p>		

developing Curo offer around help accessing employment, education and training. The pilot is currently restricted to just existing Curo tenants on the Homesearch scheme, however, given the clear benefits of the scheme I am indeed looking at ways in which the Council could assist in the pilot being rolled out to other applicants who may wish to take up the offer. Clearly any such assistance would need to be compatible with the data protection legislation.

P 08	Question from:	William Hobhouse
<p>As a campaigner for renewable energy and energy efficiency in BathNES, I ask: (a) What reduction in CO2 emissions is expected to be achieved by the installation of solar panels on the roof of Lewis House? (b) What energy saving features have been incorporated into the design of the new civic centre and Council offices in Keynsham, and what reduction in CO2 emissions is expected to be achieved by the Council as it moves into its new offices in Keynsham?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Ben Stevens
<p><i>Solar panels on Council offices</i> <i>Lewis House</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38kW system • This will reduce annual CO2 emissions by 16 tonnes of CO2 per year. <p><i>Keynsham Civic Centre</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 244kW system • 750 solar panels on the main office roof, covering an area equivalent to more than 4 tennis courts • Generate over 230,000 units of electricity each year, equivalent to the annual energy use of almost 70 homes. • This will reduce annual CO2 emissions by 125 tonnes <p><i>Energy efficiency of the Keynsham Civic centre offices</i> <i>The whole design of Keynsham Civic Centre Offices, Library and One Stop Shop was determined by the energy performance target that the Council set in the brief for the development, for it to achieve a Display Energy Certificate (DEC) "A" rating. Up to Feb 2010 only 13 out of 3,230 offices certified achieved a rating of A (0.4% of offices certified).</i></p> <p><i>The development features the following:</i></p> <p><i>Passive Design</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building orientation to maximise daylight and minimise solar gain • Glazing on North and South elevation, shading on East and West • Building height and floor layout designed to allow fresh air to move freely essential for natural ventilation • Airtightness and levels of insulation <p><i>Ventilation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural ventilation avoids large fans and ductwork • Healthier internal environment • 50% of the energy of an Air Conditioned building <p><i>Lighting (30% of the building's energy use)</i></p>		

- Maximise daylight so this is adequate for 70% of normal working day
- Low energy light fittings
- Simple local control

Heating / Cooling

- High levels of air tightness (Use of cross laminated timber (CLT) frame solution)
- High levels of insulation
- Use recovered heat from IT servers
- Building orientation, solar controlled glazing and thermal mass

ICT Strategy

- ICT currently accounts for an estimated 59% of the building CO2 emissions.
- Reducing this load is the top priority in order to achieve a DEC "A" Rating.
- Moving to a Thin Client solution to reduce power consumption of work stations by 90% compared to a PC. Software, data, and CPU power resides on a network server rather than on the client computer. Studies have shown a 50% decrease in power consumption.
- Opportunity to recover heat from main servers to act as a heating source for the building

P 09	Question from:	Bleddyn Phillips
<p>There is a perceived imbalance in the level of funding attributed to BNES Dial -a-Ride (DAR) charities which needs to be addressed and scrutinised, e.g. Norton Radstock approx 500 clients, daily support up to 5 hours; Keynsham and District over 1100 clients 8 hours daily support.</p> <p>Given the Department of Health and Social Care Act 2012, should DARs be funded from the Health and Well Being budget rather than Transport so that v.f.m of each DAR can be assessed against Department of Health Unit Cost of Health and Social Care with funding distributed accordingly.</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Caroline Roberts
<p><i>Community transport meets many social needs and it is not be appropriate to rely on one measure to determine funding levels.</i></p> <p><i>The levels of funding for dial-a-ride (DaR) schemes are considered as part of the process of reviewing their service level agreements. The Midsomer Norton & Radstock scheme covers a wide rural area across the south of Bath & North East Somerset with a low density of population. Its operating costs are therefore proportionately high because passenger journeys are longer and fewer journeys are possible across the operating day. Such operations are inevitably less cost efficient than those focussed on more compact urban areas.</i></p> <p><i>The statistics of passengers carried in 2013-14 show that Keynsham DaR's 1,100 clients made a total of 24,465 journeys – an average of 22.2 per user – whereas Midsomer Norton & Radstock DaR's 450 clients made 15,578 journeys – an average of 34.6 per user. This demonstrates a greater reliance on DaR provision in Midsomer Norton, Radstock and the rural area.</i></p> <p><i>The Council is strongly committed to supporting community transport and assisting communities to develop schemes in their areas. The level of financial assistance for community transport has been maintained for several years, despite huge pressure on</i></p>		

our budgets. Nationally, the role that community transport can play in the wellbeing agenda is being increasingly recognised.

P 10	Question from:	Duncan Hounsell
A large majority of the Saltford residents who took part in the public consultation expressed the wish to have 20 mph limits on residential roads in Saltford off the A4. What progress is being made to implement these 20mph limits in Saltford?		
Answer from:		Councillor Caroline Roberts
<i>Traffic Regulation Orders for 20mph speed limits in Area 12 (including Saltford) are currently awaiting my decision which I intend to make this month. Implementation of any changes would be expected before March 2015.</i>		

P 11	Question from:	Duncan Hounsell
The re-opening of Saltford station is part of the vision for MetroWest to provide transport solutions and economic growth in the area. What support is this Council giving to the re-opening of Saltford station?		
Answer from:		Councillor Caroline Roberts
<i>The Council at its meeting in June 2012 agreed to provide £100,000 for the preparation of a High Level Option Assessment to consider the potential to re-open Saltford Station. Further funds will be required to take the project forward. A report will be considered at the December Cabinet on the work undertaken to date.</i>		

P 12	Question from:	Jay Risbridger
<p>Subject : Promoting Independent Businesses and Guildhall Banners</p> <p>As a director of a small business that has been trading from Walcot Street for 25 years, I am pleased with the support we have received in Bath over the past few years. Many independent businesses have been able to weather the economic downturn much better than in the nineties, when that recession caused so many small Bath businesses to close. We have benefited from business rate relief and from this year, national insurance reductions. Can the cabinet tell me what plans it has to continue this support and to promote Bath's independent sector in the future.</p> <p>I am specifically interested in the development of the guildhall market and Guild Hub which provide seed beds for future small businesses. I would also like to propose the sighting of temporary banners on the side of the guildhall to promote these businesses and other city events to the general public. See attached images and costs for guildhall</p>		

banners. I am well aware of the planning considerations for a grade 1 building but as long as these are not permanent this should not be an obstacle. Such banners have been used to great effect on council buildings in other historic cities and could enhance our city as well.

Answer from:

Councillor Ben Stevens

We are well aware that, although many businesses have weathered the storm of the recent recession, life continues to be challenging, and the Council and its partners will continue to do what we can to support small businesses and the independent sector, which is an important element of Bath's character and popularity as a destination.

We are soon to release a newsletter focused on small and independent businesses which will update businesses on Council projects which may affect the local physical environment (and therefore have an impact on trading conditions), and forthcoming events, meetings and promotional activities which businesses may wish to take part in. It will also contain an update from the Bath BID on activities that businesses can benefit from. [NB businesses situated within the BID area which have a rateable value of below £25,000 and which do not pay the levy can still benefit from BID promotional activities]. This newsletter will also help to promote current Government policy which might help businesses save money – for example small business rate relief or national insurance reductions. Information on small business rate relief can be found in the business section of the Council website. Small businesses can also get free support and advice on these matters and other business management issues from our free business advice service (see the Council website for more details).

The Guild Hub continues to be an important resource for businesses looking for desk space, or who wish to benefit from the many active business networks operating within the City. The Council and The Guild operators are currently investigating whether disused basement space within the Guildhall can be refurbished to extend The Guild's floorspace in order to offer more desk space or other facilities.

The planning authority has recently approved plans for promotional banner sites to be available across the City, so that events can be more effectively promoted. These sites include one site at TK Maxx (opposite the Guildhall), and one on the corner of the Guildhall. However the authority refused an application for a banner to be sighted at the entrance of the Guildhall due to the concerns about impact on a heritage building. Businesses can consider submitting planning and listed building consents for a temporary banner on the side of the Guildhall, which will be considered in the light of the potential benefits of the banner against the impact on a listed building. We will look to provide advice on this at a future meeting of the Independent Business Forum. The Council is also actively considering introducing advertising sites at parking locations in the City and will provide an update on this in due course.

P 13

Question from:

Joel Hirst

Is the Council meeting its targets for delivery of social and affordable housing? How can the Council increase more social and affordable housing for B&NES?

Answer from:

Councillor Tim Ball

The Council will comfortably meet, and exceed, the 4 year target to deliver 610 new affordable homes during the period 2011-2015. Indeed at this time we expect to exceed the target by in excess of 130 homes. This impressive performance has been achieved through a number of initiatives including: establishing a sub-regional partnership of unitary authorities and housing developers; the robust application of clear planning policies regarding the provision of affordable housing; encouraging innovation from housing providers; maximising the income available through government funding schemes and the effective use of the Council funding provided for affordable housing.

P 14	Question from:	Vicky Drew
Can the council please inform us when the works to improve the safety of our pavement directly outside the shops in Batheaston High St are scheduled to commence and be completed		
Answer from:		Councillor Caroline Roberts
<i>The works are being programmed for delivery in the final quarter of the financial year and will be completed before the 31 March 2015.</i>		