

**Fiona Powell 3 minute speech to B&NES Cabinet of Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February**

**Subject: Item 12. ADOPTION OF A PARKING STRATEGY AND ASSOCIATED CHARGES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ODD DOWN COACH PARK**

Good evening. I haven't felt the need to register to speak for over 6 months. My speeches usually focus on the lack of a transport evidence base when decisions are taken on this topic – both volumes and reasons for travel. But the 'urgent item' here before you today has me back in utter frustration.

Transport policy had seemed to be moving towards having an evidence base that has been sorely lacking to date. Defra's intervention and funding for an ANPR camera study would at least give a genuine, recent, snapshot insight into the volumes of car movements, the times of day at which these happen and the cordons crossed in the process. No it wouldn't be a study over time, no it wouldn't properly cover the change brought about by the school run and holidays and no it wouldn't give people's reasons for travel or motivations for being in their car, but at least it would be a good starting point.

But here today you are being asked to take a decision about how much parking charges should go up to in the absence of having this evidence base back. These events must be days apart but they should be so fundamentally linked that should be impossible to decouple them. This data will triangulate information you have from car parks about usage, it will give you an up to date universe of car movements that parking usage sits within and most importantly, it will help you understand how much you might need to decrease parking trips to be replaced with other modes by in order to support the air quality improvement mandate from Defra.

Incredibly, car volumes and movements get not a single mention in your paper today. As a result there is no quantification in the public domain that would give the public any confidence about what these proposals might deliver. There is no quantification of the context in which parking and especially long-term parking sits within car movements, nor the forecast impact these proposed increases will have on car movements. There is no discussion about the role that season tickets play in volumes of users, which would make it transparent as to whether these charges would likely impact long-term parking in the city as is the policy intent. For all the Cabinet knows, given the current publicity surrounding this topic, there might be a further switch to season tickets (and city-centre parking) that only bring in less than half of the pay-by-the-day rate.

Along with other Bathampton Meadows Alliance members, I have documented concerns that the parking strategy will increase car movements, not decrease them. Indeed the official consultation response document acknowledges that this may happen unless other alternatives are put in place. Yet there is no sense in the paper today that you are seeing these parking charges as a temporary measure until ANPR data is available and a proper, broader, plan is agreed with Defra support. To do this would certainly reduce my frustration. It just seems to be about revenue generation in isolation including a sop to the loud-shouting sections of the community who show scant regard for the health and wellbeing of local residents impacted by high volumes of car trips and who aren't even having a sensible debate about what improving the vitality of the city of Bath should really be about. Surely we are agreed that clogging our streets with cars isn't optimal vitality.

The council's desire to generate income in the next budget year without annoying the electorate too much is not a good enough reason for this paper given the public health issues at stake. You already know from Census analysis that it is we residents who do most to block up our streets in our cars. For example, the last census told us that 8,297 Bath residents drive within the City limits to work, of which 1,978 into the City centre itself. As Adam Reynolds aptly puts in 'we are the problem'. It is your duty as Cabinet members to adhere to the Nolan Principles of public life including Objectivity, *Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias*. It is my opinion that you are now knowingly taking a decision in the knowledge that better, objective data exists. Should you pass this item and move to consultation, it should only be as a clearly-stated temporary measure until an evidence-based plan is agreed with Defra.