

Christine Boyd statement to Council 22.3,2018

Just when you thought the beast from the East had passed, here I am again with another chilling story of being frozen out by this council despite its warm words.

First of all let me say that being directed by government to improve air quality is not a gold star to be celebrated, it's a punishment for failure. Lets begin by being honest about that.

By the 31st of March the council must have submitted an initial local plan to Defra shortlisting measures to bring nitrogen dioxide levels within legal limits. But how many of you have seen this short list?

The public hasn't and the CTE scrutiny committee hasn't, and yet there is no good reason why secrecy should surround a matter of such great public concern.

I had hoped we had moved on from the days of having to drag information out of this council with FOIs, but apparently not, a new veil of secrecy has fallen over everything concerned with air quality;

- Scrutiny has been denied its constitutional role, apparently this is an 'urgent item' even though the council has known of the Defra deadline since last summer.
- Community groups have been told they cant have the annual air quality data that is normally made available
- And the results of the automatic number plate recognition study are apparently too sensitive to be shared – so maybe we will never find out who drives where in Bath.

It you think I am just being difficult, consider the situation in Bristol where they also have to comply with the same Defra directions in the same timescale.

- They shared their initial air quality plans with scrutiny weeks ago.
- They asked their Cabinet to approve them on the 6th of March with every detail of their approach and their recommendations set out in a 28 page public report.
- Meanwhile Banes officers have asked just two Cabinet members to approve the plans for this city, based on a shoddy two page report that explains nothing

Apparently scrutiny can see this after Easter, but there's not much point in checking stable door once the horse has bolted is there? And with no disrespect to you, Cllrs Goodman and Shelford, this places far too much responsibility on your shoulders alone. I would not want to be in your place if Defra reject Banes plans and impose their own on the city or if someone decides to JR your decision.

Cabinet, it may not feel like it, but you are meant to be in charge – stand up to this, refuse to sign off on plans that have not had proper scrutiny, change the constitution if necessary. If you don't hold officers to account, then expect people to conclude that these are your actions not theirs, and to hold you to account for poor governance and for any poor decisions that result.