

Item 6 – Statements and Questions – Communities, Transport and Environment Panel 17th September 2018

Statements (3 minutes) to the Panel:

1. Caroline Ambrose – Bath Central Library
2. David Redgewell – Transport matters
3. Adam Reynolds – Transport
4. Paul Stansall – Bath Central Library

Question from Mr Hal Macfie (& answer shown below)

In response to my question at the January meeting of the CTE panel it was indicated that Council investigation of the need for a pedestrian crossing at Steel Mills on the Wellsway at Keynsham would take place in this financial year. Following requests from residents I would like to enquire when this has been scheduled to occur.

A feasibility study to investigate whether a formal crossing facility can be provided in Wellsway between Steel Mills and Hurn Lane will be started in the third quarter of 2018/19. That is, between October and December. The study will investigate if a crossing can be provided taking into account constraints such as the position of driveways and the width of pavements, and how much it will cost. If feasible, funding the construction of the crossing would then be considered for a future year's capital programme.

Questions from Dionne Pemberton (& answers shown below)

1. **Q.** Risk assessment. As you probably remember, a few months ago the OSS was evacuated when a member of the public turned violent. The evacuation was quick and successful. However, at the Podium, such an evacuation would occur from a 2nd story position with limited access points, and the amount of public would be at minimum 4 x greater than the current OSS sees. In other words, council staff may need to evacuate several hundred people at a conservative estimate through an escalator, two small lifts, and back staff access. There is the added consideration of strollers, elderly, small children and mobility scooters and wheelchairs. What risk assessments have been done to ensure the public would be safe in such an eventuality? I have asked council officers this question previously and not received a satisfactory response.

A. *The number of security incidences is extremely low in comparison with total visitor numbers. Also the footfall in the OSS continues to decline due to Universal Credit rollout. The public and voluntary organisations that offer*

a service from the current One Stop Shop continually change, depending on demand and the resources of the organisations. But it is anticipated that organisations such as Citizens Advice, Bristol Credit Union and Reach will continue to offer services in the new Bath Library and Information Centre space when it is complete, but Avon and Somerset Police will not have an Enquiry Desk or a presence in this location. The project has no impact on the current location of the Police Enquiry Desk. Nevertheless this has been discussed at length during the design process in order to mitigate and minimise any impact in the rare event of an incident. Detailed operational security plans are being formulated with the Emergency Planning and Health & Safety teams in line with our incident management procedures which include the use of security technology e.g. CCTV and direct link panic alarms to police and links to Bath City Marshals, as well as lock down procedures. Safety protocols for staff and customers which are also being developed further in a specific security working group.

2. **Q.** What efforts are being made to ensure that the essence of a library is maintained. Libraries are quiet spaces for study, reflection, reading and work. At present much of the library allows for this. The plans we have seen have a seamless integration between OSS and library, with only one front facing customer service desk to handle all OSS and library needs. On the same note, how will OSS users find privacy to express sensitive concerns? The plans we have seen do provide private rooms, but only 2 or 3.

A. The feedback from the consultation events has been incredibly positive – most participants agree that we’ve listened and included their suggestions and that the resulting design looks exciting whilst addressing their operational and integration concerns. The space has been designed based on user need and the types of enquiries. The design is accommodating 4 private meeting rooms, 4 small acoustic pods, 3 large semi-private pods, 6 small semi-private booths and 2 large semi-private booths in addition to general serving areas.

Questions from Sophie Hooper Lea (& answers shown below)

3. **Q.** Bevans Chartered Surveyors undertook an Access Appraisal of the Podium and Lewis House in March 2017. Section 5.2.1 of the reports that that: “We were unable to undertake detailed inspection of these premises and therefore have only had a cursory look at the site.” Section 2.6.1 states that: “Once a decision has been made as to which option is to be selected [the Podium or Lewis House] **we advise that a detailed access appraisal is conducted including public consultation to ensure the new proposals fully meet the reasonable needs of the Equality Act and also that the approach properly reflects the needs of all user groups not only those who use wheelchairs which only relate to**

approximately 6% of the disabled population protected by the legislation.” Please could you confirm that the detailed access appraisal has been undertaken and, if so, make the report publicly available and explain how the findings have been taken into account in the new library designs. If not, please confirm when it will be undertaken or explain why B&NES will not commission a detailed access appraisal for a project of this scale with such high visitor numbers.

A. The external Access Appraisal and engagement with user groups that may be affected by access requirements is an ongoing element of the design process to capture the issues currently apparent with the proposals and to advise the design team of their presence and suggest a way in which they can be addressed. Only when this is finally completed for the tender package of information will a final access statement on the completed design be available.

4. **Q.** Please could you clarify the timings of the upcoming library integration, including: when is work expected to start at the Podium, if and when will the library need to move to a temporary location, when is work expected to be complete and the new library open?, etc.

A. Following extensive engagement, the design work on the new space is complete with the aim of going out to tender in October. The preferred option is to secure a temporary location for the library for the duration of the works in order to minimise the construction period and therefore the disruption to the public. We are actively looking for a suitable central location. The current plan is that work will start on site early in the New Year and complete during July/August 2019.

Questions from Andy Halliday (& answers shown below)

5. **Q.** Please can you advise if a revised risk assessment has been prepared to accommodate the anticipated footfall increase in the event of the One Stop Shop moving to the Podium, and have areas of responsibility been identified as a result of the changes. What part has the site manager O+H, and Waitrose safety team, played in the consultation relating to this issue.

A. This is covered in question 3

6. **Q.** Please can you advise on the action being taken to improve the service reliability of the Mobile library service vehicle, and if there are any proposals to acquire a replacement vehicle by leasing or purchasing. Additionally are there plans in place to review the library visit stops in the light of Community library proposals in some rural areas.

A. We have looked at various options to improve the service reliability and have concluded that a like for like replacement is the best option. Therefore we are embarking on the procurement process for a new vehicle which will reduce the number of days lost due to breakdowns and service issues and ensuring more resilience is in place for day to day operational delivery. We will monitor and review the Mobile Library route in light of the changes to community libraries and community demand, but no significant route or service changes have been instigated to date.

Question from Paul Stansall (& answer shown below)

7. **Q.** My question concerns permissions obtained to date for the above refurbishment project to proceed. Specifically has the project team obtained permissions from the property company that owns the Podium site; from the immediate landlord Waitrose; and from BANES Council development control, including planning?

A. Regular dialogue has been undertaken with the immediate landlord and parent company and an application for a 'Certificate of Lawfulness' has been submitted to the Planners to confirm that the incorporation of the services is compatible with the existing planning use class of the Library. This application will be available for the public to view on the planning portal over the next week or so (depending on the registration process).