

CABINET MEETING 10th July 2019

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.

Public:

1. David Redgewell – Western Gateway & WECA Joint Local Transport Plan
2. Neill Young or Gemma Killick representing MOCA (Moorland and Oldfield Clean Air) - Residents parking and safety on the B3111

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - COUNCILLORS

M 01	Question from:	Councillor Karen Walker
On the 8 November 2018 this Council resolved to support the document 'Thriving in uncertain times' asking the Government to help us to help ourselves by enabling us to introduce <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A levy on short-term lettings• A local tourism levy Also by introducing a series of technical changes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amending the current Business Rate retention systems• Allowing us to levy fees for listed building applications Could we please be given an update as to where we are now with these discussions and how the new administration plans to deliver what was agreed?		
Answer from: Councillor Richard Samuel		
<p><i>Council in November 2018 adopted the "Thriving in Uncertain Times" document which sets out proposals to influence central government policy in ways designed to benefit our area. As well as those highlighted in the question itself, there were requests for further engagement with central government on other proposals such as the power to charge business rates for purpose built student accommodation. I am aware that the previous leader of the council worked hard to press these matters with central government, including meeting with ministers and circulating the document to partners. I understand however that none of the main policy requests set out in the document, including the powers to raise a levy on tourism and short-term lettings, have been agreed by ministers.</i></p> <p><i>On the technical proposal relating to business rates retention, the council was invited to take part in its consultation on Business Rate Retention Reform, and this the council has done. On the proposal to allow us to "levy fees for listed building applications", it is important to note that council amended this proposal to read "we will be engaging further on how best to compensate Bath & North East Somerset for these costs".</i></p> <p><i>With all of these financial matters, then, and as with all local authorities, we now await the detailed outcomes of the Fair Funding Review. We will of course continue to press for changes in government policy that benefit our area, whether that is to restore money directly to us through the Revenue Support Grant or identifying new sources of income where appropriate.</i></p> <p><i>We will of course continue to press for changes in government policy that benefit our area, whether that is to restore money directly to us through the Revenue Support Grant, identifying new sources of income where appropriate, or addressing the serious and systemic ongoing failure by national government to recognise and tackle the crisis</i></p>		

in social care funding.

Supplementary Question:

Can you please advise that you are driving these discussions through the Central Government, and in particular what is important and relevant for Bath and North East Somerset?

Answer from:

Councillor Richard Samuel

It is an extremely volatile political environment that we are faced with in relation to the stability of the Central Government. Decisions on Adult Social Care suggested changes are still in waiting, 10 years and counting. There is a high likelihood that majority of the Government will change in the next few months, which will not be helpful in terms of the position where Local Governments are. Central Government has passed some of their responsibilities to Local Governments but failed to fund the same, and this is what is causing our deep underlining problem.

We will continue to voice our case via local MPs, but I am not overly optimistic to see the light at the end of the tunnel in this financial year, or even in year after.

M 02

Question from:

Councillor Karen Walker

Would you agree to release the answers to Cabinet Questions from Councillors say 3 hours before the start of a Cabinet meeting?

This would allow Councillors to decide whether they want to attend the Cabinet meeting to ask a supplementary question and time to prepare a supplementary question.

The present system gives insufficient time for Councillors to read and digest the information given in the responses. Because of this they are often unable to ask a considered supplementary question.

Answer from:

Councillor Dine Romero

I agree that it would be helpful to have sight of Cabinet responses to questions in advance of the actual meeting. Whenever possible we will seek to release these at least an hour prior to the meeting. However, it is important to recognise that answers may be further amended if additional information or advice is received.

Supplementary Question:

Would you consider reviewing your response in 2 months, and consider benefits of releasing answers at least 3 hours before the meeting?

Answer from:

Councillor Dine Romero

I have moved meetings of the Cabinet to 6.30pm, and I believe that release of answers at least an hour before the meeting will give enough time for those asking questions to consider the answers, and prepare a supplementary question if they wish.

M 03	Question from:	Councillor Paul May
1. Can you confirm whether the Realising Talent scheme, approved last week by WECA, will be implemented in time for the next year 10 cohort in the Autumn?		
2. When the Youth Service CiC is implemented will their service be commissioned to include any learning role for NEETs? Will we be commissioning outcomes for the parishes that are contributing for their own local services?		
3. Will the Council education arrangements moving forward be retained at Director level?		
Answer from:	Councillor Kevin Guy	
<p>1. <i>Work is underway to plan the implementation of the scheme with Bath College and other partners and whilst the timing of the approval means the scheme may not be fully operational by the start of the autumn term, it will be in place during the autumn and will be able to target the new year 10 cohort.</i></p> <p>2. <i>The existing specification for the service commissioned from Youth Connect will continue and does include statutory tracking and reporting on the education, training and employment status of young people. This information is used locally to inform targeted work to support young people not in education employment or training, to enable them to engage. The targeted services provided by Youth Connect through Council funding are available to vulnerable young people across the whole area. Where Parish Councils and others commission additional services, that will be for them to specify the outcomes they are seeking.</i></p> <p>3. <i>We value our remaining maintained schools and we will continue to support them to the highest standard possible. The Council's role in education has been changing over the last decade and 80% of local schools are now academies. Our services and our management arrangements will continue to evolve to ensure that the Council can deliver its statutory duties and seek to maintain our existing positive working relationships with multi-academy trusts, Teaching Schools and other partners in the education world, in order to promote educational excellence and the safeguarding of all of our children and young people. Unless government policy changes, the resources available for the Council to dedicate to this area of work will be limited, but there will continue to be a Director accountable for our education responsibilities. Any changes to management structures would be subject to appropriate engagement and formal staff consultation in line with Council policies.</i></p>		
M 04	Question from:	Councillor Paul May
Can you confirm that given the potential for a Bath post-14 Skills academy on the BCA site, the council will ring fence adequate property to allow such a scheme to emerge?		
Answer from:	Councillor Dine Romero	
<i>There are a number of distinct issues behind this question:-</i>		

- Does Bath and North East Somerset require a post-14 skills academy?
- How might that be established, funded and operated?
- Where is the most appropriate venue for such an academy?
- Is this the best use of the BCA site and/or what type of educational provision would be most appropriate for that site?

I can confirm that the administration is committed to education provision on the former BCA site and we will be assessing the options for the future use of the site, taking into account professional advice on how those options can benefit both the local community and wider education needs of the area. We will be keen to engage with the community and with a range of educational providers before any decisions are made about the future of the site. It would be premature to commit to any specific schemes until the options appraisal and engagement work has been carried out.

We will be happy to explore the concept of a skills academy and the need for that alongside other education needs of the area.

Supplementary Question:

I want to make sure that the BCA site is committed to education, but education in wider terms because it is important to do that and continue to engage with the community. Also, will you engage with me as a Councillor who was a previous Cabinet Member for Children Services and has experience in this matter?

Answer from:	Councillor Dine Romero
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I will always value your thoughts on this particular issue.

M 05	Question from:	Councillor Karen Warrington
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1. Following the Climate Change Emergency vote at the March Full Council Meeting in the previous Administration, and given that airplanes are a major contributor to pollution, what is the Cabinet going to do to work with North Somerset Council to stop the expansion of Bristol Airport, which will not only increase the number of planes over B&NES but increase the amount of traffic on our rural roads?
2. Can the Cabinet Member(s) confirm that, despite the potential impact on air quality, they have signed a contract to incinerate black bag waste rather than it being sent to landfill as has been the case in the past?

Answer from:	Councillors Sarah Warren and David Wood
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1. *We have written to North Somerset Council raising this Council's concern that the expansion of Bristol airport is incompatible with the Climate Emergency declaration made on 14 March, requesting a meeting and urging them to take the Climate Emergency issue into account as a matter of urgency. We have also submitted a Local Planning Authority response to North Somerset's planning consultation on the proposed airport expansion on local highways grounds, in particular the impact on*

rural roads and communities, as we could only object on current planning policies. We will soon be laying out the Council's approach to the Climate Emergency Declaration in more detail, including the commitment to oppose Bristol Airport expansion.

2. Following a competitive procurement process under EU regulations, the West of England Waste Partnership, of which B&NES is a partner, is now in a position to award the waste treatment contract which is to come into effect 1st April 2020 when the current contract expires. B&NES Council has agreed the award and published its decision to do so on 4th June 2018. There is a detailed report on our website.

<https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1254>

The proposed contract awards are the result of a legal tender process and represent the best available residual waste management treatment processes available to the Council from April 2020 in meeting its zero waste and climate change aspirations. The report details the benefits of Energy Recovery (generating electricity) from waste rather than landfill which is the least favoured legal option to treat waste due to its environmental impacts. (in accordance with the EU Waste Framework Directive).

The new contracts will use plants that are within the West of England, minimising the environmental impacts associated with the transportation of waste and ensure that waste is wholly treated within the UK, rather than being transported to Europe (as happens now). Additional value will be recovered from waste by recovering both recyclates and electricity (which will be exported to the national grid), contributing to reducing the UK's reliance on fossil fuel for electricity production.

M 06	Question from:	Councillor Paul Myers
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The growth in demand for children's services and SEND was underpinned by increasing the base budget by £2.3m last year; does the Cabinet Member support this approach should these pressures continue this year?

Answer from:	Councillor Richard Samuel
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This Council has an excellent track record in delivering good services for children and young people in need of help and protection and children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, as evidenced in our positive Ofsted/CQC inspections. Like other Councils up and down the country we are also facing massive demand pressures in both of these services. We are keen to identify further efficiencies and improvements that can help mitigate the financial pressures locally but we believe that ultimately this is a nationwide issue which requires a national solution. The new cabinet member for children's services has already written to the Secretary of State for Education asking him to urgently consider what further steps he can take to press for additional resources both for schools and the local authority and offering to meet with him to provide further evidence of these pressures. We would encourage the Conservative group to reinforce those messages and use any influence you might have with national government to ensure that appropriate priority is given to addressing the multiple financial pressures on local councils, including demand for children's services, SEND, and adult care as well as pressing for a long overdue overhaul of local government funding more generally to enable us to better meet the needs of our residents and deliver our wide-ranging statutory responsibilities.

The Council's budget report for 2019/20 did not commit the Council to this funding and outlined the following:-

For 2019-20 the DFE have consulted with Local Authorities and issued guidance on the recording of pressures and balances in the DSG grant regime. In line with this guidance the accounting treatment of the support to the High Needs Budget will be changed. For 2019-20 the £2.3m will now be placed in a contingency reserve that may be utilised to fund any overspends at year end once all other options including underspends within other DSG Blocks and the contribution from schools have been utilised. The Council can therefore plan over time to reduce the contribution from its General Fund.

As part of the plan to limit the draw on the council funding for the pressures on the high needs block efficiencies from other elements of the DSG are being considered. In particular the introduction of a new banding process for pupils with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) which will ensure that pupils entering the SEND system are assessed appropriately to ensure correct resources are allocated to schools and settings. In addition to this capital projects are planned to increase local provision to limit the funding that is paid to expensive independent providers and reduce the cost and travel time for children.