

CABINET MEETING 5th November 2020

**STATEMENTS FROM PUBLIC
AND COUNCILLORS**

1. David Redgewell - statement on Public Transport and The Emergency Active Travel Fund

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - COUNCILLORS

M	01	Question from:	Councillor Karen Warrington
<p>Why is this Administration pursuing a policy of leaving their Bath Residents without a waste recycling depot resulting in them having to make a 10 mile round trip to Keynsham - wasting their time and money, increasing the use of car journeys, polluting the areas of North East Somerset they drive through and increasing the traffic/congestion burden on the residents of Keynsham?</p>			
Answer from:			Councillor David Wood
<p><i>This administration is absolutely not doing this. We are committed to providing at least one site for the residents of Bath and are working on options to reduce car journeys to minimum levels possible.</i></p>			
M	02	Question from:	Councillor Karen Warrington
<p>I attended your Liveable Neighbourhoods Webinar and the focus was pretty much completely on Bath, backed by Cllr Wright and there were no pictures outside Bath on the presentation. Rural communities are used as rat runs so what is this Administration going to do to expand 'Liveable Neighbourhoods' outside Bath, how much money will be invested and what are the timescales for including our rural areas?</p>			
Answer from:			Councillor Joanna Wright
<p><i>The Rural Areas are included in the Liveable Neighbourhoods. The outcome of the Public consultation is due to be reported to Cabinet in December 2020. The Council has allocated £200k this year and is committed to funding the project going forward.</i></p>			

M	03	Question from:	Councillor Karen Warrington
<p>Following on from my question to Cabinet last month regarding Licencing of Temporary Event Notices (TEN's) and protection of our ecology and habitats, what steps is the Council going to take to ensure that the Ecology Emergency is robustly reflected within our Local Plan and will the Council ensure that any policies are properly and appropriately enforced?</p>			
Answer from:			Councillor Tim Ball
<p><i>The Council is currently progressing a partial update of its Local Plan (Core Strategy and Placemaking Plan). Through this partial update the ecology, green infrastructure and trees & woodland policies will be reviewed in order to ensure that they address the ecological emergency e.g. including the requirement for future development to deliver biodiversity net gain. In terms of enforcing the policies the Planning Service make recommendations and decisions in accordance with policies and if planning permission is approved and there was a subsequent breach of control, the Planning Service would need to assess the breach and based on the facts take the appropriate action .</i></p>			
M	04	Question from:	Councillor Paul May
<p>Has the government responded to B&NES Council concerns with regards to the proposed unrealistic future housing numbers for this Authority?</p>			
Answer from:			Councillor Tim Ball
<p><i>The government consultation on changes to the current planning system (including the proposed introduction of the new standard method housing numbers) closed on 1st October 2020. The responses received (including from B&NES Council) are currently being considered by the government. Further information is still awaited from the government on the proposed next steps.</i></p>			

M	05	Question from:	Councillor Paul May
How will the Council refine the Local Plan to take into account the Ecological Emergency?			
Answer from:		Councillors Tim Ball	
<p><i>The Council is currently progressing a partial update of its Local Plan (Core Strategy and Placemaking Plan). Through this partial update the ecology, green infrastructure and trees & woodland policies will be reviewed in order to ensure that they address the ecological emergency e.g. including the requirement for future development to deliver biodiversity net gain. In addition, it is proposed that a Supplementary Planning Document is prepared setting out further guidance on how biodiversity net gain can be delivered.</i></p>			
M	06	Question from:	Councillor Paul May
With further senior experienced staff resigning without their posts being re-advertised, can you please give a timescale for completing the restructure previously promised?			
Answer from:		Councillor Dine Romero	
<p><i>As detailed in the Senior Management Structure Update report to Council on 12 November 2020 appointing the Chief Operating Officer, the new structure will take effect from 1 April 2021. Details of the new structure will be shared with members at the appropriate time once consultation with affected staff has been undertaken.</i></p>			
M	07	Question from:	Councillor Paul May
With one of the impacts of the COVID19 being more officers working from home and the permanent closure of office space the issue of staff mental health and well-being is a key issue of concern. What additional steps will the Council take to protect its staff?			

Answer from:	Councillor Dine Romero	
<p><i>The Council take its responsibility for the health and wellbeing of its staff extremely seriously. The Council's Health, Safety & Wellbeing Steering Group meets quarterly and has recently signed off a comprehensive wellbeing strategy and detailed mental health action plan covering all staff. Since July, over 1,680 individual risk assessment conversations have taken place between individuals and their line managers in order to identify those staff at increased risk due to the current pandemic; this includes those staff who are struggling with their mental health. Whilst we are continuing to follow the government guidelines around all staff working from home if they are able to, through the risk assessment process we have identified a small number of staff for whom we have made arrangements to return into Council offices on a limited part-time basis to help support their mental health.</i></p> <p><i>We are promoting resources such as the Wellness Action Plan toolkit from Bath Mind to all staff and line managers as part of our Working Well From Home suite of guidance and information, and we continue to promote our Employee Assistance Programme with its Health e-Hub app to employees on a regular basis. Through our @mybest development programme, we are offering a number of virtual learning and development sessions; we held a Wellbeing in the Workplace Webinar in August and we have more in the pipeline over the next few months. We have also just updated some of our "best bits" to include tips on handling virtual meeting fatigue. In September we trained our first cohort of 16 Mental Health First Aiders and we have a second cohort due to be trained in December. This is to complement our departmental health champion programme alongside our peer support/buddy scheme.</i></p> <p><i>Teams are meeting on a regular basis and we share a news briefing with staff once a week on a Thursday. We are also just about to launch our third wellbeing survey for staff in mid-November.</i></p>		
M	08	Question from: Councillor Paul May
<p>Bristol City Council are progressing significant housing in the south of the city which will have knock on transport impact on the A37. What plans are jointly being considered to mitigate this impact?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillors Joanna Wright and Neil Butters
<p><i>The Joint Local Transport Plan 4 was adopted in March 2020, it sets out how we aim to achieve a well-connected sustainable</i></p>		

transport network that works for residents, businesses and visitors across the region; a network that offers greater, realistic travel choices and makes walking, cycling and public transport the natural way to travel. The plan does include schemes for the South of Bristol and bus route improvement for the A37 from Bristol to Farrington Gurney. The West of England Combined Authority in consultation with the constituent authorities are currently developing a programme for the new JLTP5, which will provide an opportunity to review and amend the current plans.

M 09

Question from:

Councillor Paul May

With two major higher education and further education colleges in the B&NES area, are the financial implications of the impact of students within the business community being discussed?

Answer from:

Councillor Richard Samuel

The Pro Vice Chancellors of the two Universities and the Principal of Bath College are key members of the B&NES Economic Renewal and Recovery Board alongside members of our business community. Chaired by the Leader of the Council, the board meets every two weeks. A public webinar will be held towards the end of this year with the Board to highlight their work programme. In addition to this, the Council's leadership meets with the Universities on a regular basis to discuss matters of strategic importance to the area.

M 10

Question from:

Councillor Paul May

Clearly excellent progress is being made regarding the former Culverhay site. Can you confirm that the Council is committed to providing high quality education/skills training on the site subject to budgetary constraints?

Answer from:

Councillor Kevin Guy

The Council is committed to delivering purposeful education provision on the Culverhay site.

M	11	Question from:	Councillor Paul Myers
<p>Given that hardly a week now seems to go by without an announcement of another senior officer leaving the Council, quite apart from an alarming loss of corporate history and knowledge, does this accelerating trend indicate an issue with this administration or is there another cause that we need to be aware of?</p>			
Answer from:		Councillor Dine Romero	
<p><i>Recent or upcoming senior management departures are a combination of retirements and individuals leaving to take on new roles. This is quite normal in any organisation and the focus is now on ensuring the new senior management structure is put in place as soon as possible.</i></p>			
Supplementary Question:			
<p>Does the Council carry out exit interviews with staff when they leave?</p>			
Answer from:		Councillor Dine Romero	
<p><i>Thank you for your supplementary question. Exit interviews are offered where appropriate. For senior staff those exit interviews are with the Director of HR & OD.</i></p>			
M	12	Question from:	Councillor Liz Hardman
<p>Do you agree that it is not acceptable for children in B&NES to have to rely on charity to avoid hunger during the school holidays? What action are you and your Cabinet colleagues taking to implement a voucher scheme for all children entitled to Free School meals in time for the Christmas holidays?</p>			

Answer from:	Councillor Kevin Guy
<p><i>I, as the Lead Member for Children and Young People, am pleased to confirm that B&NES Local Authority has committed to funding Free School Meals (FSM) vouchers for Christmas 2020, February and Easter 2021 school holidays. I am actively lobbying central government for additional funding for FSM. The Local Authority can confirm that the Free School Meals crowd funding, a cross sector initiative to include the Local Authority has already raised £56,000. The Local Authority is working with St Johns Foundation to allocate this funding. In addition, the Children, Adult, Health and Wellbeing PDS panel on 03/11/2020 voted to make representation to Government on FSM as a statutory body.</i></p>	
Supplementary Question:	
<p>This is such welcome news. As I have always said, ultimately we need to address the underlying reasons for food poverty but in the meantime it is so important that we act now to ensure that children don't go hungry. Please could the Cabinet Member give us more details about how he anticipates the process of supplying vouchers/food to FSM children during the school holidays will work?</p>	
Answer from:	Councillor Kevin Guy
<p><i>Thank you for your supplementary question. I can confirm that the Council has identified the funding for the Free School Meals (FSM) vouchers and will work with partners to distribute the vouchers/funding to parents in the most efficient way. Schools and Children's Centres will be an integral part in the logistics of distribution of the vouchers and we need to discuss with them the most efficient way possible. I can also confirm that we have allocated £79k to fund this proposal, and children in Bath and North East Somerset will not go without food during the school holidays, especially at Christmas. We are looking to draw down additional funding to support free school meals and I am also working with the local food poverty steering group to look at how we can help tackle the wider issues surrounding this extremely important matter.</i></p>	
Supplementary Question:	
<p>Do you think you would have enough money for this project because I do believe you said that the Council would work with St Johns Foundation? Do you think that would be enough to make sure that if government doesn't come forth with any additional funding that</p>	

we would have enough money for Free School Meals?

Answer from:

Councillor Kevin Guy

The great work done by 3SG, Wera Hobhouse MP and St Johns Foundation with their crowdfunding appeal was a separate to free school meal. That money will be going directly to help organisations connected to children and poverty but will not be going towards free school meals. The Council will be funding this issue and the Cabinet has agreed already that the £270k will be required up until Easter will be set through Council funding alone.