

CABINET MEETING 9th September 2021

STATEMENTS FROM PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

1. Helen Dudden – Supply of accessible homes
2. Susan Charles – Blue Badge spaces (City Centre Security)
3. Ceris Humphreys – Cleveland Bridge and Clean Air Zone
4. Martin Grixoni - Recycling and traffic challenges
5. Councillor Vic Pritchard – Clean Air Zone and City Centre Access for disabled people

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - COUNCILLORS

M	01	Question from:	Councillor Shaun Hughes
<p>I asked the question below to the Cabinet Member at the 20 July Cabinet Meeting.</p> <p><i>Recently I have seen an increase in residents raising concerns over feeling unable to object to planning applications through fear of intimidation and repercussion, particularly elderly residents and people within small communities. The result of is they don't raise objections in fear of creating fall out or backlash. We understand from our officers that present legislation does not offer an informal way to comment on applications. I am not sure what the solution is but is this something that the Cabinet could review?</i></p> <p>The response I received was:</p> <p><i>Local Planning Authorities cannot take anonymous comments on planning applications because the planning legislation and process is designed to be deliberately open and transparent. Officers can only take into account comments that are made by real and traceable people allowing the officer to contact contributors to find out more about their views. We publish the contributor name on the website so it is possible to see who is making multiple or follow-on comments, which becomes relevant when proposals are updated as the views of contributors may change too. There are data protection considerations as well which we are careful to comply with.</i></p> <p>Therefore, my question is - I understand that the current legislation requires contributors to be traceable, however I also understand that North Somerset allow names and addresses to be withheld from public view. Are there any valid reasons why</p>			

B&NES cannot offer the same?

Answer from:

Councillor Tim Ball

Anonymous comments are not permitted within the legislation. We collect contributor details so that we can contact them about their views and advise of updates to applications. When we publish the comment, we only publish the name of the contributor alongside the comment so that the planning process is transparent and open and multiple comments from the same person can easily be identified. We also hope that this approach discourages inappropriate or inflammatory statements of which there are very few. Our approach is agreed with the Info Governance team and published in the Planning privacy statement. Whilst publication of comments is common practice among councils, the legislation does not require us to do so, therefore we could choose not to and therefore we could also choose not to publish the name of the contributor as in NSC. The risk of doing this would be that the process may appear less transparent to the public, more confusing where multiple comments cannot be identified, or more inappropriate comments are made which we have to remove.

I am checking with IT whether there are any technical implications to removing the name from publication

M 02

Question from:

Councillor Shaun Hughes

I asked the question below to the Cabinet Member at the 20 July Cabinet Meeting:

We understand that as a result of the clean air zone ALL taxis in the B&NES area are required to meet the omissions standard regardless of whether the taxi operates within the clean air zone. However, it appears that only those taxis permitted to use the clean air zone have access to the grant system to upgrade their vehicles. The current scheme appears to give the Bath based businesses an unfair advantage. If we are imposing the same regulations on all vehicles in B&NES surely all should equally have access to the grant system?

The response I received was:

The revised taxi licensing policy agreed in 2018 required all taxi vehicles licensed by the Council to be compliant with the terms of any future Clean Air Zone to ensure consistent enforcement across all sectors of the local trade and that all areas of the authority could benefit from improved air quality from cleaner engine technology.

Any licensed taxi owner, irrespective of where they are based, is able to access help from the CAZ financial assistance scheme if they meet the relevant eligibility criteria which includes travelling into the CAZ on an average of two or more times a week over a minimum 60 day period. This also applies to owners of taxi hackney carriage vehicles, which although not licensed to ply for hire from ranks within the CAZ, may still be travelling within it to fulfil customer journeys. Taxi owners who fit these circumstances have benefited with assistance from the scheme.

Therefore, my question is - I'm not sure if you've understood the question so I'll try again. The taxi licensing scheme places the same financial burden on taxis in both Bath and Midsomer Norton regardless of whether their business model includes regular access to CAZ.

If we expect ALL these businesses to comply with these additional levels of costs, then I am unsure why ALL vehicles are not eligible for the same grants. There needs to be equal opportunities for ALL Taxi companies.

I'm also unsure why vehicles should have to come to Bath to qualify? Surely this criteria is in conflict with our climate emergency declaration?

Therefore, do you agree that to ensure a level playing field all taxi firms should have access to the same level of financial support?

Answer from:

Councillor Sarah Warren

Taxi licensing, and therefore taxi policy, is a Council function not a Cabinet function. The taxi licensing policy was reviewed in 2018 because of the Clean Air Zones which are being introduced locally and to support the climate emergency by upgrading the local taxi fleet with cleaner engine technology.

The policy review was subject to a 12-week public consultation, the outcome of which was reported to both the Licensing

Committee and Cabinet respectively. No adverse comments were received about the requirement to upgrade engines in line with the requirements of the CAZ and the policy was adopted.

The CAZ Project team has been engaging with the taxi trade over the last 3 years since the new policy was introduced, to ensure drivers are aware of the need to be compliant, so that they can effectively plan for the replacement of any non-compliant vehicles. The CAZ Financial Assistance scheme is one way to assist drivers upgrade their vehicle if they can demonstrate regular travel into the CAZ. All drivers have been made aware of this scheme as one way of assisting them to upgrade their vehicles and we are aware of taxi companies, which are based outside of Bath but entering the city, taking advantage of this opportunity.

B&NES is not alone in wishing to ensure that its licensed taxi fleet upgrade to cleaner engine technology. South Gloucestershire Council is currently consulting on a requirement for all licensed vehicles to meet the Euro 6 engine standard as a minimum requirement.

Ideally all B&NES taxi firms should have access to the same level of support, however we are constrained by the availability of government funding for the CAZ.

M	03	Question from:	Councillor Vic Pritchard
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The September Cabinet report states that the Council must fulfil its statutory duty to achieve compliance with air quality standards by the end of 2021 at the latest. As this deadline is fast approaching and NO2 levels, although reduced, are still above legally required levels, what is the administration planning to do to ensure the Council is compliant in all locations by the end of this year? Please confirm what penalties, if any, the Council will incur if compliance is not reached by the end of the year.

Answer from:	Councillor Sarah Warren
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The Council, in collaboration with the Joint Air Quality Unit, is actively monitoring all locations to understand how nitrogen dioxide levels are improving. Focus is being given to those locations which could potentially exceed NO2 limit values at the end of 2021, and consideration is being given to measures which could be deployed to bring about extra improvements in these areas if needed.

The Council is under a legal direction to achieve compliance in the shortest time possible and by 2021 at the latest. Officers are awaiting confirmation from the Joint Air Quality Unit to understand the specific detail of 'compliance' in this context. As it was the government that was taken to court by Client Earth, any penalties incurred if compliance is not achieved in the agreed timescale would be a matter for central government in the first instance.

M 04

Question from:

Councillor Vic Pritchard

Before the official launch of the Bath Clean Air Zone in March 2021, the Council was given a statutory duty to achieve compliance with air quality standards by 2021 at the latest. It may be said that nine months is not sufficient time for the CAZ to lower pollution levels effectively. Please clarify why the official launch of the CAZ could not take place before 15 March 2021 ?

Answer from:

Councillor Sarah Warren

The Council was instructed by the Joint Air Quality Unit to delay the implementation of the CAZ in Bath from the intended date of 4 November 2020 in recognition of the impact of the pandemic on residents and businesses. Taking into account also the time needed to 'onboard' the local authority software systems into the central government software systems to enable the scheme to be launched, and the timing of the pre-election period for the WECA election in March 2021, the launch date of 15 March 2021 was agreed as a suitable date between all parties.

M 05

Question from:

Councillor Vic Pritchard

Please publish the 2021 average NO2 readings from all of the 64 monitoring sites within the CAZ and provide the comparison with 2019 where applicable?

Answer from:

Councillor Sarah Warren

This information will be published on the Council's website.

Supplementary Question:

When exactly the information will be published on Council's website?

Answer from:

Councillor Sarah Warren

It was published on Council's website at 5pm today (9th September 2021).

M 06

Question from:

Councillor Karen Warrington

Following the recent publication of the IPCC report into global warming, the Cabinet Member for Climate Change said in a press release that "further and faster" action is needed at a local level to tackle climate change. Can you provide specific examples of policies you intend to pursue as part of the "further and faster" drive and what work has been undertaken to date to ensure future policies do not come at the expense of those on low incomes?

Answer from:

Councillor Sarah Warren

Some recent examples are:

We're tackling this directly through the Council's Green Affordable Warmth Grant which specifically targets low income households living in low energy efficient homes in Bath and North East Somerset. This is funded by £1m of grant awarded to us by central government. We are also applying to the government's latest Sustainable Warmth initiative for which Bath and North East Somerset Council have bid for further funding in a consortium with Bristol City Council and North Somerset Council.

The Local Plan Partial Update (LPPU) and Supplementary Planning Document revisions have been progressed quickly by the

Council in order to address urgent issues, in particular the climate and ecological emergencies. The draft policies are out to consultation at the moment (until 8th October) – the Council has taken a robust, evidence based and ambitious approach and it is really important that people comment on our proposed policies. [Have your say here](#).

Some of the key proposed policy changes include:

- requiring all new residential (including affordable housing) and non-residential development to be zero carbon*
- enhanced green infrastructure provision to help ensure all (no matter of their income level) have access to high quality nature which is also vital for mental health and wellbeing*
- transport policies focussed on sustainable modes of travel to ensure that in planning for new development the requirements of walking, cycling and public transport are considered as the first priority*

In addition to this, the Retrofitting Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – revised draft includes updated, clear and positive advice for all householders on the various types of energy efficiency measures that can be fitted to different types of homes. This includes a new section on affordable warmth, setting out simple and cost-effective measures that can be taken to keep properties warm and more energy efficient.

We continue to lobby government directly and through our work with organisations including UK100 and Ashden to ensure that we have the necessary local powers and funding.

M	07	Question from:	Councillor Karen Warrington
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I note the plans to build solar farms in various locations in North East Somerset, and welcome investment in renewable energy . However, what plans are in place to ensure solar panels can be placed in other locations throughout the district – such as on commercial buildings, for example – rather than merely concentrating on green agricultural fields?

Answer from:	Councillor Sarah Warren		
<p><i>With regard to agricultural land, national policy requires that development should avoid the best and most versatile agricultural land, in order that it is protected for food production. This policy is relevant in determining planning applications for renewable energy schemes. This national policy is also amplified in the Council's proposed planning policy set out in the Local Plan Partial Update. This is open to consultation until 8th October.</i></p> <p><i>Commercial renewable energy schemes will require planning permission before they can proceed, and the planning application will be determined in accordance with policies in the Local Development Plan and national policy. In some instances, a planning application may be preceded by a request for pre-application advice, at which point the applicant will be advised of the relevant policy considerations and impacts that will need to be carefully assessed and addressed. The Council's proposed policy approach is set out in the Local Plan Partial Update – it seeks to focus applications for free standing renewable energy installations to the most appropriate locations principally in terms of their landscape potential (minimising impact on sensitive landscapes) and avoiding harmful impacts to biodiversity.</i></p> <p><i>There are number of ways that the Council is supporting solar panels being mounted on building roofs.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• The draft Local Plan Partial Update (LPPU) proposed policy includes requiring all new residential and non-residential development is zero carbon. Roof mounted solar panels are one of the ways developers can achieve this target.</i> <i>• We are supporting the promotion of the Community Solar project, which is Bath & West Community Energy's search for commercial building roof space. They recently announced that they are working with Lansdown Golf Club to look at installing community-own solar panels on their building. Contact BWCE if you know of others who's would like to do similar.</i> <i>• And on a domestic scale, we're promoting the West of England's Solar Together scheme that is open to registrations until 28th September, helping homeowners buy and install solar panels through a group buying system.</i> 			
M	08	Question from:	Councillor Vic Pritchard

The September Cabinet report states that the Council will continue to make representations to Government about the need to improve the traffic situation at Cleveland Bridge. Please provide details of the representations to Government that the present administration has made to date.

Answer from:

Councillor Manda Rigby

The administration works closely with Wera Hobhouse Member of Parliament for Bath who has raised with government the need to improve the traffic situation at Cleveland Bridge, this includes a debate Westminster Hall and writing to Minister, Baroness Vere and further lobbying her on the matter. The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Transport have met with or are about to meet various Wiltshire MPs and council members on Cleveland bridge to highlight the issues. The administration has worked with the Sub-Regional Transport Board (STB) Western Gateway to promote to Government the north-south connectivity study between the M4 and the Dorset Coast with an aim of making the A350 the strategic route and limiting HGV use of Cleveland Bridge, and have sought the support of the WECA mayor in this aim.

M 09

Question from:

Councillor Vic Pritchard

The September Cabinet report on Cleveland Bridge highlights the difficulty the Council faces in changing the Primary Route Network due to opposition from neighbouring authorities. What actions has the current administration undertaken to attempt to overcome such opposition in order to find a mutually agreeable solution?

Answer from:

Councillor Manda Rigby

Following the DfT 2012 decision, and in line with the Statutory Guidance, the Council has worked with Wiltshire Council and the Sub-Regional Transport Board (STB) Western Gateway to promote a strategic study into north-south connectivity between the M4 and the Dorset Coast with an aim of making the A350 the strategic route. The Joint Local Transport Plan includes the need for a study. The strategic study has been included in the Highways England Road Investment Strategy. The study commenced in early 2021 and Highways England are aiming to report the recommendations from the work to the Department of Transport and stakeholders in late summer 2022. The Council in conjunction with the MP for Bath is hosting Wiltshire councillors and the

MP for Chippenham in a visit to the bridge and talks in early October.

M 10

Question from:

Councillor Vic Pritchard

Please provide a breakdown of how much money the Council has spent since 2015 fighting planning appeals that were initially refused by the Planning Committee?

Answer from:

Councillor Tim Ball

A total of £83,807 has been awarded against the Council as a result of Planning Committee overturns since 2015. In addition, the other costs associated in dealing with the resultant appeals (such as barristers, other specialist consultants fees) have amounted to c.£513,000 since 2015. However, the proportion of this arising from Planning Committee overturns is not recorded separately and is part of this figure.

M 11

Question from:

Councillor Vic Pritchard

You have previously confirmed that the Liveable Neighbourhoods programme is being funded from the Council's own resources and from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding. How much CIL money has been earmarked for the Liveable Neighbourhoods programme and which developments has this CIL money come from?

Answer from:

Councillor Sarah Warren

£100k of CIL funding has been allocated to liveable neighbourhoods in 2021/22. These funds have been collected from a wide variety of developments across the district, so it is not possible to link the funding to individual schemes.

M 12

Question from:

Councillor Vic Pritchard

To fund this year's Bath Christmas Market, £48,570 has been taken from the Council's Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), a pot of money given to the Council by the Government to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to tackle local outbreaks. Please explain the justification for spending this COMF money on this year's Christmas Market rather than its intended use of managing COVID-19 outbreaks?

Answer from:

Councillor Kevin Guy

The Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) provides funding to local authorities in England for public health purposes to tackle COVID-19, working to break the chain of transmission and protecting the most vulnerable.

The COMF remains ring-fenced for public health purposes to tackle COVID-19, working to break the chain of transmission and protecting the most vulnerable. The specific public health activities which can be funded from the COMF are left to the judgement of local authorities, following the grant conditions. The £48,570 identified in the Bath Christmas Market budget, is to provide additional resource to reduce the risk of transmission, by ensuring compliance with, and enforcement of, restrictions and good practice.

M 13

Question from:

Councillor Vic Pritchard

Please provide an update on the administration's attempts to find an alternative location to house Bath's Fashion Museum?

Answer from:

Councillor Richard Samuel

The Council has been looking for a new site for the Fashion Museum for several years. It has carried out a site options study to test the viability of alternative locations for the Museum. These options are now being reviewed and assessed on the basis of suitability and affordability.

M 14

Question from:

Councillor Paul May

I note the positive report about the solar panels arising from the Bath Quays regeneration. On looking at Google Earth, however, I cannot see that the planning proposals for solar panels/renewal energy for Keynsham Leisure Centre have yet to be installed on the office block regeneration scheme carried out by the Council-owned company ACL/ADL? If that is the case, is this an officer or member decision not to implement this important RE scheme?

Answer from:

Councillor Richard Samuel

The Council has retained ownership of the Keynsham Riverside roof and will install solar PV panels to supply the leisure centre below. The project has been delayed due to staff vacancies, but officers will work with Keynsham Community Energy to find a way to progress this more quickly in advance of recruitment into key posts in the authority.

M 15

Question from:

Councillor Paul May

Having supported the Council's Ecological Emergency policy, will it now become a requirement that all new developments must include an ecological appraisal before approvals are granted?

Answer from:

Councillor Tim Ball

In order to determine planning applications, the Council currently requires ecological surveys and assessment are undertaken for many different types of application where a protected species or habitat is likely to be affected. Information on the development thresholds and the surveys/assessment required is set out on the Council's website at: https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-01/bnes_local_validation_criteria_ecology_table1_v1.2_lcsept19.pdf

Through the Local Plan Partial Update the Council is proposing to strengthen its currently adopted planning policy on protecting existing sites, species and habitats (Policy NE3) and adding a new policy requiring that development proposed through relevant major and minor planning applications delivers at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain. This policy is also proposed to be supported through a Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The requirements for ecological surveys and assessment will be reviewed and updated (as necessary) in support of the strengthened Policy NE3 and in addition all relevant

major and minor planning applications will have to submit Biodiversity Net Gain appraisals (with guidance to be set out in the SPD). The programme for preparing the SPD is set out in the Council's approved Local Development Scheme

M 16

Question from:

Councillor Paul May

The Council has fully consulted my area as the Local Plan update has been prepared. WECA are producing their strategic plan for the three unitary authorities but are still not responding to requests to consult with local communities. Are they consulting effectively with the Council and is there any public information available to avoid major surprises when they publish their draft strategy later this year?

Answer from:

Councillor Tim Ball

Effective engagement with local communities is a key priority of B&NES and I consider that WECA should be taking additional steps to ensure that this takes place as part of the preparation of the SDS. This has been raised directly with WECA and we are awaiting their response.

M 17

Question from:

Councillor Paul May

The recently published notice re. procurement practices adhering to climate change makes no mention of value for money or EU procurement competitive legislation regulations. In future are you deciding all contracts on the basis of climate impact as opposed to public value/accountability?

Answer from:

Councillor Richard Samuel

Section 3.3 of the Cabinet report on the Procurement Strategy states:

'We must not lose sight of the overarching objectives within the Procurement Framework/Operating Model:

To ensure procurement best practice delivers value for money and underpins the delivery of all the Council's Strategic ambitions and statutory obligations.

To deliver the ambitions in a compliant manner within relevant legislation and best practice as well as providing evidence that goods and services demonstrate value for money.'

The approach is in line with the recent "Transforming Public Procurement" Green Paper which will be adopted by government in late 2021 and replaces current public procurement legislation. As such the strategy will be fully compliant with legislation and best practice

M 18

Question from:

Councillor Paul May

The Liveable Neighbourhood schemes have come under some criticism recently. Can you confirm that for the first phase schemes that the design and budgets have been progressed and local parish council members will be consulted before any work is undertaken?

Answer from:

Councillor Sarah Warren

A brief was issued through the professional services framework on 3/8/21 and tenders were returned on 30/8/21. Aecom has been selected for this commission. Initial consultation will commence in early October. Details of the consultation will be circulated to Ward Members and Parish Council's in advance of wider publicity.

M 19

Question from:

Councillor Paul May

Considerable national, regional and local publicity has been given to lack of HGV drivers and the impact on local services such as refuse collection. Your officers always inform councillors when problems occur and work hard to pick up as quickly as

possible. Bearing in mind many services have had to be continued during the pandemic, can you please pass back to our refuse collection staff the Council's support for keeping this key service going despite such difficult circumstances?

Answer from:

Councillor David Wood

Thank you for your appreciation of the hard work of our waste services team. There are many people in the team who have been working above and beyond to keep the services as reliable as possible. The Council has been putting in measures to invest in the teams for example we have significantly increased the number of loaders in our recycling service to cope with additional pressures of increased waste tonnages and have increased our investment in driver training. We thank our communities for their patience and understanding for any disruption to their service that they may experience as we continue to manage with a shortage of drivers. We welcome applications from any qualified HGV drivers looking for new opportunities to help with this rewarding work.

M 20

Question from:

Councillor Paul May

The essential repairs to Cleveland Bridge have highlighted the need to continue to plan for traffic congestion within the city. When will the works be completed and can you assess how much extra pollution the works have generated in the city?

Answer from:

Councillor Manda Rigby

WSP, the consultant appointed by the Council, continue to undertake the work needed to repair the bridge. As part of the work programme, they have completed further detailed inspections of the structure of the bridge and this confirmed the extent of the defectives were worse than identified when engineers, using ropes to access the trusses, carried out a survey last year. Accordingly, WSP have needed to continually update the repair information and have re-analysed each repair to establish which require full closure of the bridge. Dyer and Butler continue with the concrete repairs and are assessing repairs options with an aim of reopening the bridge while the repairs continue. At this stage while the concrete repair assessment is ongoing it is not possible to provide a completion date for the project, it is anticipated that the assessment will be completed by late September when an updated programme will be produced.

Traffic levels have increased on some routes and reduced on others while the bridge has been closed. Nitrogen dioxide levels continue to be monitored at key locations around the city, however as these can be impacted by many factors including meteorological conditions, it is not possible to assess the impact of the bridge closure on air quality at such an early stage.

M 21

Question from:

Councillor Paul May

When considering support for renewable energy schemes, will the council look at the total carbon footprint of any proposals as well as the ecological impact? Will the Council insist that any energy savings are re-invested back into local communities as opposed to the national grid for money generation?

Answer from:

Councillor Sarah Warren

I shall respond to the separate parts of your question in order.

1) The carbon footprint from the manufacture of equipment to generate energy from solar or wind sources is insignificant when compared to the savings from avoiding fossil fuels.

2) Through the Local Plan Partial Update (LPPU) the Council is setting out its planning policy approach in respect of renewable energy development. The approach seeks to focus renewable energy proposals on the most appropriate locations in the District, based on landscape potential and minimising adverse impacts on biodiversity. Specifically, for wind energy this means ensuring proposals do not adversely affect flight paths or habitats of mobile species and for ground mounted solar arrays it means avoiding areas of protected or priority habitats, plus not siting them on land which is functionally linked to nationally protected ecological sites. Additionally, there are policy requirements to ensure proposals avoid the loss of hedgerows and woodland connectivity and maintain grazing regimes within protected bat sustenance zones. It should also be noted that as well as avoiding harmful impacts ground-mounted solar arrays can provide benefits to biodiversity and protect soils (healthy soil is a significant carbon sink in itself) by providing an undisturbed area that can host a rich variety of species and rest core soil nutrients and this good practice is encouraged.

3) The Council has a long history of supporting and enabling community energy to develop here, providing local people with ownership, control and financial benefits from renewables. Our planning policies favour community energy schemes and we

have also introduced a specific pre-application process for community energy. Since 2010 we have had a Cooperation Agreement with the award-winning Bath & West Community Energy (BWCE). We have provided BWCE with roofs for projects, loans for their larger schemes. As a result, 40% of the district's renewable energy capacity is community owned and the BWCE Community Fund has reinvested over £250,000 back into community projects.

M 22

Question from:

Councillor Karen Warrington

With reductions in the frequency of bus services across North East Somerset – for example, cuts to the 672 from Blagdon to Bristol – it is becoming more and more difficult for B&NES residents to commute into Bristol or Bath by bus. What plans does the administration have to improve public transport services in the rural parts of our district?

Answer from:

Councillor Sarah Warren

The West of England Combined Authority is the Transport Authority for the region and as such oversees the provision of supported bus services. I have this week written to Metro Mayor Dan Norris to object to the current round of cuts to rural bus services, specifically mentioning the 672 amongst many others. Our officers are working closely with the Combined Authority to undertake public transport, cycling, walking and wheeling corridor studies across the district, including on the A4, A37 and A367 corridors, which are key commuting routes through rural areas within our district and to Bristol. The government has indicated that funding will be available through the City Region Sustainable Transport Fund over the next 5 years to fund transport improvements and the Combined Authority is proposing to prioritise works along the key transport corridors, such as bus priority, bus stop infrastructure and links to bus stops, in tandem with improvements for cycling, walking and wheeling.

M 23

Question from:

Councillor Robin Moss

How many applications were made to the 'Liveable Neighbourhood' initiative, broken down into NES as well as Bath locations? How many of these applications are likely to be successful, again broken down into NES as well as Bath?

Answer from:		Councillor Sarah Warren
<p><i>There have been a total of 76 applications made between February and August 2021, 59 (78%) from Bath Members and 17 (22%) from NE Somerset Members.</i></p> <p><i>The February and May 2021 applications were prioritised and reported to Cabinet in June 2021. 12 (80%) of the successful applications were within Bath and 3 (20%) from NE Somerset. It is not possible to predetermine which schemes will be prioritised for implementation in the next phase, as this decision will be taken by Cabinet.</i></p>		
M	24	Question from: Councillor Robin Moss
<p>How many applications have been received for stalls at the expended Bath Xmas market? Have these all been for the full expended period? How many vacancies still exist?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Kevin Guy
<p><i>We have received 261 applications for this year's Bath Christmas Market. We have offered a flexible application process for varying durations, i.e. 11, 14 and 25 day options, as well as opportunities for incubator businesses for a 3 or 4 day Victorian style cart. Those traders who meet the criteria and have requested 25 days have been given a stall, however, traditionally the Market has always offered short-term lets.</i></p>		
M	25	Question from: Councillor Joanna Wright
<p>In light of the August 2021 comment by the Former NATO Chief, Baron George Robertson stating the following with regard to a terrorist attack in the UK: "The longer term implications are going to be very worrying indeed. The rise of a terrorist threat that can affect us in the streets of this country, the humiliation in the eyes of the authoritarians in the world today - all of these are long term consequences which are certainly going to haunt us."</p>		

Even before Robertson's comment and recent events in Afghanistan the Government Anti-Terrorism guideline recommended to B&NES Council that all traffic was stopped from entering key areas in the city centre as the anti-terrorist squad recognised the key danger of motorised vehicles in public spaces. This newly appointed Cabinet under the Leadership of Cllr Kevin Guy has decided to not take this advice.

In light of Robertson's comments and the report from anti-terrorist squad naming Bath city centre as one of the most vulnerable spaces in the whole of the south west, will the Cabinet Member for Transport now reconsider her decision and the real threat to security for the many thousands of residents and visitors that access the city centre regularly and secure the city centre as detailed by the antiterrorist squad?

Answer from:

Councillor Manda Rigby

We carried out a comprehensive consultation in January 2021 and, following feedback on the initial proposals for vehicle restrictions to be in place 24 hours a day, we listened to views that said this was too restrictive. We carried out an independent accessibility study and asked people to comment on it. Following welcome feedback, we consulted with Avon & Somerset Police and the force's Counter-Terrorism Security Advisers to amend our proposals but without compromising security. This was agreed at Cabinet in July 2021. The next step is to consult on the Traffic Regulation Orders, which are due to be published in the next couple of weeks.

M 26

Question from:

Councillor Joanna Wright

Please can you give details of the total spend by B&NES Council on B&B accommodation in the last financial year compared with the B&B spend of 10 years ago?

Answer from:

Councillor Tom Davies

In 2020/21 the Council spent a total of £144,159 on B&B accommodation which after recovering eligible housing benefit resulted in a net expenditure of £57,747. In 2010/11 the same figures were £101,235 & £24,521. In 2020/21 the Council typically had 7

households in B&B at any one time whereas in 2010/11 this figure was typically around 4 households (which excludes those households in our temporary accommodation schemes).

M 27

Question from:

Councillor Joanna Wright

Please can the Cabinet Member give details of how many residents have been paid the Green Homes Grant in B&NES in the last 2 years?

Answer from:

Councillor Tom Davies

The Government's Universal Green Homes Grant scheme, which has now been withdrawn, was managed by Government appointed contractors and the Council has no information on payments made. However, last year the Council successfully bid for funding under the "Green Homes Grant – Local Authority Delivery" scheme securing a total of £1m of funding. The funding has strict eligibility and delivery timescales which have proved problematic in the current climate, not least due to a lack available installers. However, so far the project has delivered the following outcomes:

- 143 referrals to WeCare – the Council's appointed contractor for grant applications through B&NES energy-at-home service*
- 42 applicants approved for grants*
- 20 homes receiving grants and energy efficiency measures installed or about to be installed*

In addition the funding has also enabled Curo to purchase a Qbot – a robot that can insulate under floors – which has already installed underfloor insulation on 11 properties and more are being processed all the time.

M 28

Question from:

Councillor Joanna Wright

The Government Highways Challenge Fund was awarded to B&NES to fix Cleveland Bridge and the grant stated that the spend must be completed by September 2021. Please can the Cabinet Member let Council know how this grant's timeline will be dealt with in light of the works on Cleveland Bridge still taking place, including the Traffic Regulation orders?

Answer from:

Councillor Manda Rigby

The Challenge Fund grant conditions require the funding to be spent on the designated project and a declaration submitted by the end of September 2021. The Council are content that expenditure is being spent on the designated project and have request approval to submit the declaration in March 2022.

The bridge is currently closed and options for opening the bridge while works continue are being assessed, this is likely to require a staged approach. Initially access is likely to be restricted to cars, cyclist, pedestrians and emergency vehicles. The associated Traffic Regulation orders will need to be in place.

M 29

Question from:

Councillor Joanna Wright

Please can the Cabinet Member give full detail of how many B&NES residents are in Council tax arrears?

Answer from:

Councillor Richard Samuel

As at 1st September 2021, the total number of liability orders with debts owing to the Council is 8,858, with a total debt of £5.4m, covering all years including 2021/22 (3,872 LOs for the current year). This time of year the debt figures are at their peak, but will steadily decline as we go towards year end.

M 30

Question from:

Councillor Joanna Wright

Recently the Leader of Council used Rule 15 to make an extension of one week to the Christmas market in Bath. Historically,

the Planning Committee have refused to give an extension on the Christmas market, to protect the existing retail environment across the city of Bath. Please can the Leader explain his recent use of Rule 15 and how he used an emergency measure with other Cabinet Members to overrule due process in a local democratic council?

Answer from:

Councillor Kevin Guy

Monitoring Officer advice was taken by officers specifically about the use of Rule 15.

The 2021 Xmas market preparations had been delayed because of the Government's uncertainty around the lifting of the Covid Restrictions/Social Distancing measures. The Christmas market team were clear that any variation to the original date had to be implemented quickly to avoid the Market not being open at all. The lead in time to organise the market, publicise this, book traders and contract with them had to be completed by a 16 July 2021 deadline.

Rule 5 at Part 4D-1 of the Constitution provides an exception to call in if the effect of the call in alone would be to cause the Council to miss a deadline.

Irrespective of whether the Cabinet had made the decision to extend the Christmas Market (which could be called in but would have been subject to the exception under Rule 5) or as was the case a SMD under Rule 15 (an exception to call-in) the net effect would be the same. The 16 July 2021 deadline had to be met and therefore the democratic process has been followed.

M 31

Question from:

Councillor Joanna Wright

Please can you make available the consultation details made with the Christmas marketeers and Bath's existing retail community with regard to the extension of the Christmas Market?

Answer from:

Councillor Kevin Guy

Consultation was carried out through the Bath Business Improvement District, who represented their levy payers, and a decision to extend the Market was made under Rule 15 of the Council's Constitution.

M	32	Question from:	Councillor Joanna Wright
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In Gear Change: One year On; it states on page 21 with regard to the funding for Active Travel Schemes “we will discourage the weakening or removal of schemes without proper evidence”. How will both the removal of the bus gate and the watered down scheme on Upper Bristol Road now be able to pass DfT guidance for the Active Travel Schemes?

Answer from:	Councillor Sarah Warren
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We are confident that the schemes have been designed in accordance with government guidance.

M	33	Question from:	Councillor Joanna Wright
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Please confirm the exact amount of the additional funding, obtained via a grant from DfT/Defra, that B&NES has awarded to WeGo to expand the last mile delivery service?

Answer from:	Councillor Sarah Warren
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The funding provided to WeGo is on a cost reimbursable basis, with the maximum value of the additional funding being £70,000.

M	34	Question from:	Councillor Joanna Wright
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On 20 July 2021 Cllr Warren confirmed that the contract for last mile delivery services between B&NES and WeGo (March 2018 V3) had been extended by one year, and that additional funding had been sought to support WeGo's provision of the last mile

delivery service. B&NES obtained this additional funding from DfT/Defra and awarded it to WeGo.

On 3 August 2021 Cllr Warren advised that the additional funding from DfT/Defra (referred to as 'further payment') had been awarded to WeGo in accordance with the 'payment provisions' and 'contractual conditions' detailed in the original contract (March 2018 V3). Can Cllr Warren please reference the specific wording/clauses in the original contract that deal with the 'payment provisions' and 'contractual conditions' that cover the 'additional funding'. (For the avoidance of doubt, please note that Cllr Warren has previously confirmed that the 'Contract price' specified in the original contract (March 2018 V3) has not been increased by the additional funding from DfT/Defra.)

Answer from:

Councillor Sarah Warren

The payment provisions are contained within Clause C of the contract, including subsections C1 to C4 inclusive. The term 'additional funding' does not appear in the contract, however subsection C4.3 deals specifically with any revision to the contract price.

M 35

Question from:

Councillor Joanna Wright

Addressing the climate and ecological emergencies is one of B&NES Council's two core strategies, as described in the Corporate Strategy.

During the Covid crisis the Council wrote to all households in B&NES to inform them of the crisis. Please can the Deputy Leader explain what actions have been undertaken during the Climate and Ecological Emergency crisis so that all households in the area are aware of the Climate and Ecological crisis?

Answer from:

Councillor Sarah Warren

Cllr Wright is correct that the council wrote directly to all households in Bath & North East Somerset, with funds from central government, during the pandemic to provide immediate information on where to get help - for example in securing food supplies. However, research by organisations such as Climate Outreach shows that targeted messaging on the climate emergency is

more effective than blanket messaging such as mailings sent out to all households. For example, the work underway with parishes shows the power of engaging in two-way conversations and we are seeing significant engagement through these Fora, with 65 attending at Freshford, alone. This face-to-face engagement is backed up by a co-ordinated stream of updates about what the council is doing to support this emergency, which can be found under the Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency section of the council's Newsroom.

The council has made huge efforts not just to communicate the importance of the climate and ecological emergency but also what we can all do about it. During lockdown I organised a wide range of webinars under the theme of "climate conversations" and we have also held webinars on green businesses, green jobs, green homes, green skills and green renewal. We have used our extensive social media reach- not just on twitter but also other platforms such as Nextdoor- to get the message out. However, we are also acutely aware that not everyone has access to social media. As a result, we are currently publicising our Climate and Biodiversity Festival on bus stop posters and through local community radio and we will continue to review the methods we use to get our message across.

It is vital that we bring people with us in these conversations. To achieve this, nothing beats talking to people "face- to -face", as I previously mentioned. I myself have visited a wide number of community forums, and there have also been special meetings- most recently of the Chew Valley Forum- dedicated to the climate and ecological emergency. This particular event was followed up by myself and Jackie Head, who is the Co-Chair of the Chew Valley Forum, Climate and Nature Working Group, giving radio interviews with Radio Bristol. Finally, I should stress that the quickest and easiest way for people to find out what is going on locally is to follow us on our special twitter account @GreenBathNES.

M	36	Question from:	Councillor Joanna Wright
In light of the promised delivery by 2021, in the Climate Emergency Action Plan, please can the Deputy Leader outline in full how the Council's overall communications policy and resources have been aligned to the climate and nature emergencies?			
Answer from:			Councillor Sarah Warren

Supporting this core policy has been a key priority not just for the council's corporate communications team but also for how council's services work with our customers and communities. My response to Question 36 highlights many of the communications activities we have undertaken since declaring our climate emergency. It is important to note that this work has taken place at the same time as the need for effective and clear communications relating to the pandemic, as well as the delivery of other key campaigns such as Proud to Care which aims to increase recruitment of health and social care workers.

However, we have been able recently to strengthen the communications resource available to supporting the climate and ecological emergency and this is reflected for example in the upcoming Climate and Biodiversity Festival and in the amount of information we are making available on our Newsroom and other channels about what we are doing to tackle the climate and ecological emergency. I should also stress that our work on this is as much about engagement as it is about communications. Projects such as Bah Riverside and Liveable Neighbourhoods have to be developed through working with local people and so we are also ensuring that these projects have a strong and effective communications and engagement resource built in to their planning.

M 37

Question from:

Councillor Joanna Wright

In the Renewal Programme and Vision Workstream, it is stated that the policy and resource alignment will be accelerated. The Community Engagement Programme, also indicates that there will be a developed public communications campaign.

Can the Deputy Leader give details of the previous communications spend at the Council compared with the present communications budget for the Climate and Ecological Emergency?

Answer from:

Councillor Sarah Warren

An additional £45,000 has been made available in 2021/2 to support communication of the council's Corporate Strategy, including its core policy of tackling the climate and ecological emergency. A new digital communications and community engagement officer has also been recruited, to start on 20th September.

M 38	Question from:	Councillor Joanna Wright
<p>Please can the Deputy Leader explain how have the Council's strategic communications objectives, key measures of success and performance indicators, plan, and resources supporting core priority delivery of the Climate and Ecological Emergency changed?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Sarah Warren
<p><i>I think that the best way of answering this is to highlight number of announcements from just the last month or so which reflect the priority that the council is giving to our core policy and how it is being built into our plans, processes, performance, and budgets:-</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>✓ We have ensured that our Bath Quays South flagship office development boasts the biggest array of solar panels in the city</i> <i>✓ The cabinet today is considering a brand-new procurement strategy built around our climate emergency core policy</i> <i>✓ Also, today we are receiving a report on how the council will measure its own performance, which builds in data to measure our climate emergency commitment including the number of new trees planted and percentage of waste being recycled</i> <i>✓ A report also before us shows how air quality is improving following our introduction of the first charging Clean Air Zone outside of London</i> <p><i>We are currently in the middle of consulting on the Local Plan Partial Update and associated SPDs which are designed to create the planning frameworks to help us address our climate and ecological emergency declarations, including improving energy efficiency in homes and buildings</i></p>		

In terms of the council's strategic communications, as well as referring to the answer given on this to Question 36, the council's "Newsroom" website is organised by our Corporate Strategy themes, and with one click it is possible to see everything at the council has been doing recently to tackle the climate and ecological emergency.

As part of its review of corporate performance monitoring, the Council is undertaking a review of service areas delivery against the Climate and Ecological Emergency. The first phase of this project is now complete and covers services largely within the Place Management and Sustainable Places Directorates. An initial collection of measures has been identified and an initial report of these measures is due to be taken to a future PDS panel and an Annual Progress report is also due to be published.