

Councillor Questions for Council 14th July 2011

(NOTE: The following questions and answers will be published on the Council's website as soon as possible after the meeting and linked to the published draft minutes of this meeting.)

1. Question from Councillor Nigel Roberts

How many requests have been made to the council for repairs to the road in Kingsway?

Answer from Cabinet Member for Transport

Requests for repairs are recorded by Council Connect and Highways on an electronic database. In the past two years only one request has been received for the road to be repaired in Kingsway. A number of roads in the Kingsway vicinity have been repaired recently and due to their current condition are being considered for the 2011/12 micro asphalt surfacing programme.

2. Question from Councillor Eleanor Jackson

In view of the constant stream of serious accidents on the A62 as it passes through Writhlington, Radstock between Mells Lane and Mill Road, can more appropriate traffic-calming measures be taken than those carried out by the previous administration such as proper signage, speed cameras that work, and what is most needed, a pedestrian crossing?

Could 20 mile limits be imposed where Radstock children cross the road to school, ie by Writhlington School, St Nicholas CE School, Radstock and Welton Primary School Midsomer Norton?

Answer from Cabinet Member for Transport

Accident records show that there have been 2 slight accidents at the junction of A362 Frome Road and Knobsbury Lane, and 2 accidents between Mells lane and Mill Lane, one slight and one fatal, in the last 3 years. The fatal accident involved a 57 year old pedestrian who walked into the road in front of a vehicle.

The accident record is insufficient to justify a permanent safety camera in this location, but subject to agreement with the police, it may be possible to deploy a mobile camera on Frome Road if a suitable site can be found. Speed limit signage on the Frome Road is in line with the Traffic Signs Regulations, and includes gateway signage, and a vehicle activated sign, at Writhlington.

A signalled pedestrian crossing exists in the vicinity of Writhlington School, and is a well used facility. Requests for another crossing near the junction with Mells Lane have previously been made, however counts have shown that the number of pedestrians crossing at this point fall well below the minimum required to justify a crossing. Requests have also been made recently, to look into the possibility of installing a crossing near Mill Lane, however the Radstock regeneration works, scheduled for Autumn of this year, include a signalled crossing near to the tight bend at the bottom of Frome Road, which would be only 140m west of the Mill Lane site.

School Safety Zones incorporating either statutory or time limited advisory 20mph speed limits outside of schools, may be appropriate in certain cases, such as the one at Welton Junior School. However the signing at this site appears to be sub-standard at present and will be reviewed to ensure it is effective. There is already a safe crossing facility of the A362 at Writhlington School, therefore a 20 mph speed limit here would not be a high priority. St Nicholas School Travel Plan indicates that vehicle speeds outside the school are a major concern for parents, and are seen as a barrier to children walking and cycling to school, therefore a School Safety Zone will be prioritised for possible inclusion in the future capital programme.

An officer will meet Councillor Jackson on site to discuss the issues if that has not already been done.

3. Question from Councillor John Bull

What is the source of funding for the £10 million reserve set aside for possible rebuilding of the Bath Leisure Centre?

Answer from Cabinet Member for Community Resources

This £10M capital scheme has not been approved and remains unapproved.

The Council budget report considered on 15th February 2011 referred to £10M for a potential capital scheme in 2012/13 for leisure re-provision. This scheme was shown in italics which meant that it was not fully approved, just approved in principle.

The previous administration was, I am aware, considering a scheme to replace the existing Bath Leisure Centre as part of a wider scheme for the Recreation Ground which involved Bath Rugby. Details were set out on p76 of the budget report. The Recreation Ground Trust consultation did not in the end include this scheme as it was deemed not to be needed.

4. Question from Councillor Robin Moss

What are the current/inherited plans for fortnightly waste collections?

Answer from Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods

There are no worked up plans for fortnightly waste collections. However, in common with all other local authorities, the Council is facing considerable challenges due to cuts in central government funding. In order to meet that challenge, officers are preparing lists of options for potential savings (which include considering a move to fortnightly residual waste collections) for approval by the new administration. The Cabinet will review the list of options and prioritise all of the Council's services as part of the budget setting process for 2012/13.

5. Question from Councillor Robin Moss

What are the current / inherited projections for borrowing levels over the short & medium term (1 - 4 yrs)?

What are the revenue implications of any interest repayments?

What assumptions have been made about council tax rises over the medium term?

Answer from Cabinet Member for Community Resources

The current Medium Term Financial Plan inherited from the previous administration assumes a Council Tax increase of 2.5% in 2012/2013 and a further 2.5% increase in 2013/2014. The Liberal Democrat/Conservative Coalition Government has funded this current year's freeze in Council Tax and I can confirm that the Liberal Democrat Cabinet will aspire to a budget next year (2012/13) which will include a Council Tax Freeze but will take into account the Government settlement.

The current level of Council borrowing is £90M although a further £35M is required to be taken at some point to cover capital commitments made up to the 31 March 2011. The current borrowing requirement is therefore £125M which will need to increase to £206M by 31 March 2014 in support of the current Approved Capital Programme.

The revenue implications of the Approved Capital Programme are factored into the approved Medium Term Financial Plan of the Council. These include implications for service budgets, invest to save funding and related change programme savings. The only area for which revenue provision was not made was in respect of the £10m identified for a potential capital scheme in 2012/13 for leisure re-provision. This scheme is shown in italics which means that it is not fully approved, just approved in principle. Any revenue funding implications would need to be identified and covered before the project could gain full approval.