

COUNCIL MEETING 16th FEBRUARY 2022

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS

Councillor questions (item 13)

Question M01 from Councillor Joanna Wright to Councillor Kevin Guy:

On the 17th November 2021, Cllr Joanna Wright of the Green Party proposed the Carbon Tax motion. At this Council meeting it was made clear that the Liberal Democrats would not support this simple and effective method to hold large corporations to account for profits made from emissions. This is particularly relevant with regards to profits made by BP when many are having to choose between heating and eating. The Liberal Democrats, instead changed the motion to Carbon Pricing, with an apparent preference for an emission trading scheme, which climate assemblies and leading economists are repeatedly calling to be scrapped because they have singularly failed. The one area that the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party can agree, is that this Council would write to our Leaders, including Boris Johnson and Alok Sharma in his role as President of COP26 asking for support to make emission changes. Has the Leader of Council written to the Government and if so has a response been sent and all Councillors been alerted to this exchange of letters?

Response from Councillor Kevin Guy

Yes, I sent letters to the Prime Minister, the President of COP 26, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and both our MPs on 2 December 2021, calling for a comprehensive and effective UK carbon pricing framework by the end of 2025, which could cover either a carbon tax or an enhanced emissions trading scheme, and, very importantly, including a mechanism to ensure social justice and a fair transition to a cleaner economy.

These letters and the replies from our local MPs and the Cabinet Office are attached as Annex 1 to this document.

Question M02 from Councillor Joanna Wright to Councillor Kevin Guy:

The promise to protect Bath Central Library as a Library by the Liberal Democrats was clear in their 2019 manifesto promises. The Liberal Democrats made a promise outside of elected office, that should they be in charge of the council's budgets, that the Liberal Democrats would protect Bath Central Library at all costs. It is not clear to the general public what actions you are about to take with regard to the change of use in Bath Central Library. In the recent 2017 public consultation that asked residents their views on the use of this facility it was made clear that between 73% and 83 % of respondents did not want the Library to become a one stop shop or be a space for other council services. Can you confirm that Bath Central Library will only stay as a library without any service cuts or changes in function?

Response from Councillor Kevin Guy

We are wholly committed to a flourishing library service and to a thriving Bath Central Library which is a key enabler for improving the lives of our residents.

While the council's budget proposals include a reduction in customer services spending of £126,000 over the next two years, we'll deliver this through vacancy management efficiencies and this will not have a negative impact on library provision at Bath Central Library. In fact, we're improving the library. We've already refreshed the paintwork, installed new ceiling tiles, new lighting and laid new carpet. In addition, a fuller refurbishment will take place in 2022/23.

We are considering offering some additional services to residents using the library to enhance their experience, where this makes sense and complements the core library provision. The advice we've received indicates that the proposals are not a material change to library use and would therefore not require planning consent. We want to work with our users and Friends of Bath Library on ongoing improvements and will be undertaking a user survey soon to find out people's views.