

Ann Perry statement

My views and opinions are non-partisan. They are from the perspective of a Bathonian, who has lived and worked in the city their entire life.

I have decided to speak at today's meeting because I am passionate about the city, its local people and local business. I have a sustainable and environmentally focused retail business based on Chelsea Road, so I am also very aware of environmental issues.

The United Nations define sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

There is no doubt in my mind that we must all change our habits to protect the environment and the planet for future generations, however the definition also highlights the necessity to meet the needs of the present.

Who can be better placed to decide on matters that are important for the present, than the present themselves.

And it is essential that these views are allowed to be heard in equal measure in a fair and democratic process.

In the matter relating to the Residents' Parking Zones (RPZ) [Chelsea Road] it is my belief that this process was ignored and it was decided that the the opinions of the local residents did not matter, that their views were insignificant and that this policy was to be implemented regardless.

By taking such a dismissive and frankly authoritarian approach, you have demonstrated a total disregard for our long-standing democratic principles and acted as though you are above them.

The consultation reports are inaccurate and the data manipulated in order support a predetermined objective.

The LibDem group claims those that who partially supported the RPZ proposals did so as though they fully supported the proposals. This is delusional. I suggest that those that partially supported the proposals were saying "something needs to be done but we don't agree with what you want to do". It is equally valid to say that this group partially objected to the proposals.

If the aim of the proposals was to reduce the traffic flow caused by local residents driving around the neighbourhood in order to find a parking space near their homes, then other solutions could have been explored and trialed.

It is fact that the Chelsea Road area had previously asked for better enforcement of what were the existing parking restrictions, however this didn't happen. Had this action been taken, then local traffic flows would have been reduced.

Similarly, if the aim was just about stopping commuters, then why was a simple 3 hour restriction not implemented, without the need for introducing a mandatory parking permit?

The truth I fear is that the proposals are aimed less at reducing the environmental impact, but are more designed to increase local authority revenue. Yes, local authorities need revenue to provide valuable services, however these revenues shouldn't be generated in this manner.

In pursuing this agenda you failed to acknowledge the democratic wishes of the area and you have failed to consider the human cost of your decisions and actions.

So what has the human costs been. The process has been lengthy, which has meant months of uncertainty for small high street businesses and the mental impact on the owners of these businesses has been very real.

Business owners have spent months campaigning for dual use, attending meetings and consultations, and staff representing the council have rarely been able to answer the questions being asked of them due to a lack of knowledge or understanding, which has led to conflicting advice that has fuelled anxieties further.

This has all come on the back of the covid pandemic. While we should have been rebuilding our businesses following the pandemic, we have been hit with fighting another threat to our livelihoods and the struggle to have our voices heard. The timing of the consultations were ill-timed, perhaps it was strategic? They came at a time when business and the economy needed to rebuild, but you as a group failed to consider this. It questions your total lack of understanding of small business, small local business and the impact your actions on it.

This has been further demonstrated with the implementation of super fast broadband in the area. In an article from the Local Government Association; "The role of councils in driving the rollout of super fast broadband infrastructure is derived from their general duty to promote wellbeing as well as their role to lead local communities". I challenge you to demonstrate how you have fulfilled your responsibilities in either of the regards [wellbeing and leading local communities] from our perspective.

On top of the pandemic and the RPZ, we also had to endure Chelsea Road being closed for 3 weeks in order for City Fibre to install super fast broadband. I ask you to imagine yourself having no income while still having to pay all of your bills for 3 weeks, all because a group of people decided to dig your road up. And it's not as if we can be guaranteed all our customers would return or any token of compensation offered.

You have repeatedly demonstrated a fundamental lack of your responsibilities of a local authority. The same Local Authority Association (as mentioned above) states; "Councillors work with local people and partners, such as local businesses and other organisations, to agree and deliver on local priorities".

For our part, we small business owners, are prepared to embrace change. We understand change is a constant and it is essential if we are to meet the objectives to achieve a truly sustainable existence. As of the 20th the dual use RPZ which we worked so hard for came into force and time will tell if this compromise is the answer.

Sustainability requires an integrated approach that takes into consideration environmental concerns along with the economic. If you are to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, you must understand these basic principles. You have to do better.