

MALCOLM BALDWIN – STATEMENT TO CABINET – 9TH MARCH 2023

As we and our city fast approach its next local elections, with purdah only a couple of weeks away, it's not a bad time to perhaps take some sort of stock.

In this context, I make no apologies for returning to the subject of Liveable Neighbourhoods (LNs), which should NOT be merely a discussion about Low Traffic Neighbourhoods much as parts of the media and some other organisations might like to attempt to over-simplify the dialogue. They are wrong in doing so!

Cabinet, implementation of LNs was always potentially going to be a bumpy ride so let's just re-fasten our seatbelts and get fully motivated and focused on the real advantages created by a fully-fledged and meaningful LN. Delivering overall improvements to the public realm and to the health and social well-being of a particular neighbourhood and its total and often diverse community are and remain essential elements.

There remains, in my view and as I have said before, sound logic in sensitively introducing a meaningful Liveable Neighbourhood where potentially linked public realm improvements already targeted to assist the well-being of a local community have commenced.....and again, as I have said before where advocates ('champions', if you like) of LNs already exist.

Councils, cabinets, chairs of residents' associations don't get everything right! Those who might have thought that traffic/parking 'interventions' were potential "low hanging fruit" perhaps don't have an in-depth knowledge of horticulture.

Cabinet, it's as important to have a good outcome to an idea, as to have the initial idea itself. Liveable Neighbourhoods ARE a good idea but in simple terms perhaps they also need to be made more 'loveable' as well as 'liveable'.....I have emphasised before; we need a realistic and substantive template to demonstrate their real value.

So, let's move forward positively, with not a change but maybe, just maybe, a 'tilt' of focus:

- Don't leave a void in explaining the case for LNs -- you risk others filling it!
- Recognise that the citizens of B&NES are suffering from serious, and I mean SERIOUS consultation fatigue recognise the implications of that on the nature and quality of ongoing responses to future consultations.
- Explain better that consultations are NOT referendums and equally importantly why they are not.
- Respond energetically to reasonable criticisms where and when they arise.
- Beware of and identify 'orchestrated' responses and input they have already commenced!
- Emphasise and re-emphasise that implementation trials, mean trials and are NOT imposed solutions.

and most importantly:

- Implement a meaningful Liveable Neighbourhood which brings added value to our city, our citizens in a more general sense as well as to our local and tourist/visitor economies.

Whatever the nature of our Council's structure following May's local elections, our city needs and deserves the benefits implicit within an effectively implemented and trialled LN scheme.

Later tonight, Cabinet, you will be considering how best to enhance and maximise the benefits of Bath's heritage assets. A focused, well managed implementation of a 'fully-fledged' Liveable Neighbourhood, within an appropriate heritage neighbourhood and with a combination of significant local and visitor footfall, would add real value to our city as a whole as well as to that particular local neighbourhood.

Let's get one significant implemented Liveable Neighbourhood right and demonstrate the value of your case.....remember:

"Less can often mean more!"