

CABINET MEETING – 8th February 2024

STATEMENTS FROM PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

1. Chad Allen – English Ivy
2. Kari Erickson – Liveable Neighbourhoods
3. Roanne Wootten (Strategic Partnerships Director Julian House) – Budget Cuts
4. Becki Sarll – Budget Cuts
5. Becky Brooks – 3SG – Council Budget
6. Kate Morton – Bath Mind/3SG – Council Budget
7. David Redgewell – Public Transport Network
8. Cllr Shaun Hughes – Council Budget
9. Cllr Michael Auton – Council Budget for 2024-25 – Proposed Parking Charges in Midsomer Norton
10. Cllr Eleanor Jackson – Budget Impact on the poorest in our community

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - COUNCILLORS

M	01	Question from:	Cllr Eleanor Jackson
<p>How has any figure been calculated with regard to the potential revenue generated by imposing parking charges in Radstock and Midsomer Norton? Are officers and the administration aware that when charges were introduced in Radstock some ten years or more ago, footfall at RADCO dropped by a third, and those customers never returned. So have they calculated a similar drop in what might be paid in charges. Secondly, will this not impact on the 'levelling up' projects in Midsomer Norton High Street, as the South Road car park will provide parking for the Old Town Hall, not to mention the fact that charges in Waterloo Road will mean the death of Radstock Museum?</p> <p>Finally, what is the point of reducing car use in Radstock and Midsomer Norton if there are no buses, or only a very erratic and unreliable service, as in the case of the 172?</p>			
Answer from:			Cllr Manda Rigby
<p><i>Council managed car parks in Radstock and Midsomer Norton are currently free of charge. In 2015, time restrictions were introduced in Radstock car parks at Waterloo Road and Church Street at the request of local members and the Town Council following changes that occurred within the town because of the Radstock regeneration project. These restrictions prevented the use of the car parks by all day commuters and encouraged turnover of the spaces for visitors helping to support the economic viability and vitality of the town. The operation or parking capacity of the private car park operated by RadCo remained unaffected by these changes and motorists continued to be able to enter in private commercial agreements with RadCo for the purchase of long stay parking.</i></p> <p><i>Proposals to introduce parking charges in Radstock and Midsomer Norton within the draft spending plans for 2024/25 are based on calculations that broadly apply car park capacity at the affected locations and income per space data from similar market towns in the local area. This will include allowances for price elasticity.</i></p> <p><i>Surplus income generated from parking charges is reinvested back into parking locations to the wider benefit of the user experience and</i></p>			

therefore the local community itself. A public consultation on the draft spending plans for 2024/25, which include this proposal to introduce charges in Radstock and Midsomer Norton, closed on 15 January and the council will consider all feedback and issues raised for consideration by councillors at Cabinet on 8th February and full council on 20 February.

The initiative to reduce car use aligns with B&NES' commitment to addressing the Climate Emergency, declared in March 2019. The overarching goal is to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. This commitment is part of the comprehensive Journey to Net Zero Plan, aiming to enhance air quality, health, well-being, and community life in Bath and North East Somerset.

The rationale behind reducing car use is rooted in the vision for better-connected, healthier, and more sustainable communities. Efficient road space utilisation is a key component of this vision, emphasising the need for a transformative approach to vehicle use.

Public transport plays a pivotal role in achieving this vision by providing a realistic alternative to private cars. For this alternative to be effective, it is imperative that the West of England Combined Authority (WECA), the region's transport authority, ensures a public transport network that is frequent, reliable, and competitive in terms of journey times.

In acknowledging the challenges posed by the 172 bus service, we are committed to working collaboratively with WECA to address these issues. Priority over general traffic and punctuality are crucial aspects that need attention to make public transport a more appealing option for residents.

M	02	Question from:	Cllr Gavin Heathcote
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I witnessed the dreadful failure of the electronic bollards on cheap street over the Christmas period.

I was horrified that there appeared to be no manual override on this system (not electronic reset which also failed). We all know that this is not the first time these have failed.

The PCC Mark Shelford has clearly stated that there should be NO areas of the city that are inaccessible to blue lighted vehicles.

Could the Cabinet please answer the following questions.

1. Is there any manual override facility attached to these bollard systems? (Not an electronic reset)
2. If there is why are people not suitably trained to use this override?
3. If not, will cabinet make sure such a manual override system is installed and clarify a purposed time scale for this to be carried out?

We cannot allow anymore members of the public to be put at risk by any further catastrophic failings of this system.

Answer from:

Cllr Manda Rigby

Yes, a manual process does exist in the event of a power failure, complete depletion of battery packs or other problem.

Whilst there is a process within the Operation Manual, and often only requires a reset, which can be undertaken by Council staff, on this particular occasion, a specialist contractor was required to attend due to the technical electrical reset required. At no time have blue light services been unable to access the city centre.

It is unlikely all bollards will fail at the same time, and for a power outage all bollards work on battery power for up to 40 hours use. Therefore, the Council is drawing up a process for access to be provided from other points e.g. emergency access to Cheap Street could be provided from Upper Borough Walls (in the wrong direction) for emergency vehicles. On the occasion of this failure, as ambulance crews often do during events or when accessing pedestrianised areas like SouthGate shopping centre, they chose to go by foot as the best option in their response.

M

03

Question from:

Cllr Eleanor Jackson

Faced with a large budget deficit, would it not be a good idea to get rid of such vanity projects as the cycle hangar in the middle of conservation area in Radstock which is only benefitting one Midsomer Norton resident, who from his address must be using it as 'cycle and ride'?

Answer from:

Cllr Sarah Warren

This is not a vanity project. The cycle hangars recently installed in B&NES have been financed through the Transforming Cities fund and

Clean Air Zone revenue which are specifically for transport projects rather than general council budget. Although the cycle hangar on the Street, Radstock has one user at present, the council are planning several other complementary transport schemes in the area. These include the Active Way and Somer Valley Links which aim to increase cycling over the coming years. Across B&NES the cycle hangars have proved very popular with an average of 86% of the total space occupied. We are planning to increase the use of the hangar at the Street through promotion with the Active Way project.

M

04

Question from:

Cllr Robin Moss

On Weds 24th January roads in Westfield & Radstock ground to a halt, as gridlock came to the area throughout the day and evening. Two major pieces of work had been planned, with road closures and restrictions in place, at Station Road, Midsomer Norton and also the pedestrian signal crossing Radstock Road, Radstock. Unfortunately, a gas leak in Radstock involved roads being restricted to trace a leak created a third traffic problem.

1. What consideration was given to having simultaneous closures/ restrictions in such a limited geographical area, as these works are important but not essential.?
2. What risk assessment was undertaken in case of a 'what if' emergency, which unfortunately came to pass?
3. What lessons have been learned for future planning of traffic works?

Answer from:

Cllr Manda Rigby

There was only one planned works scheme taking place. Those works were essential to ensure a functioning crossing remains in Radstock Road.

Officers cannot plan and coordinate road works based on 'what if scenarios' of emergency road works. An emergency can occur at any time on any road for multiple reasons, such as a gas leak, burst water mains, vehicle collision or building fire. The council receives over 15,000 applications for road works permits every year. We cannot avoid working on main roads. But our Street Works team do coordinate planned works to avoid there being disruptive works in close proximity to each other. If emergencies occur an assessment is made at that time as to whether any measures are possible to alleviate congestion.

When planning how to undertake works, such as maintenance schemes or working with utilities, we always set out to minimise disruption to the public as much as possible. But we have to ensure those works can be undertaken safely, both for those people undertaking the works and members of the public who will be passing it. In the case of the the recent emergency gas works in Radstock, the lesson learned is that we need to be quicker anticipating what inappropriate local routes drivers will try to take to avoid congestion and ask the utility company to provide suitable signage to deter this behaviour. We routinely do this as part of planned works but will look to do so where possible when emergencies occur on main routes that are likely to last more than a day.

Supplementary Question:

Would you agree that, considering how fragile traffic flow is in the Radstock and Westfield area that extra consideration should be given when there are more than one major traffic works taking place in the area?

Response: We did have one planned piece of work; however, we would never aim to have two major bits of work taking place, but we cannot predict when there is going to be an emergency. People worked through the night in order to complete the job as quickly as possible. You are right that having two pieces of work going on nearby is not optimal and is not something that we would ever plan to do.

M

05

Question from:

Cllr Saskia Heijltjes

Are all officers within the Placement Management and Highways teams trained in government statutory LTN 1/20 (Local Transport Note Cycle Infrastructure Design)?

Answer from:

Cllr Manda Rigby and Cllr Sarah Warren

Place Management undertakes a wide range of Services from bereavement management to cleansing. Highways are part of the Place Directorate they maintain and deliver schemes for all highway assets such as Street Lighting and Public Rights of Way. Officers designing walking and cycling infrastructure are competent in LTN 1/20 (Local Transport Note Cycle Infrastructure Design) and associated staff members have the right level competence commensurate with their roles.

M	06	Question from:	Cllr Saskia Heijltjes
<p>In the Transport Improvement Programme, a 'school street or pedestrian improvements' is planned for Swainswick Primary School for next year's budget. Officers stated that a school street would cost around £200,000 to implement. Is the budgeted £40,000 of funding for a School Street? Why is there a mention of a School Street in the Transport Improvement Programme?</p>			
Answer from:			Cllrs Manda Rigby and Sarah Warren
<p><i>The Draft Local Highway Improvement Programme for 2024/25 includes £40,000.00 for Swainswick Primary School, which would be used for pedestrian improvements. The concept of a School Street will be reviewed as part of the project. Any potential School Street would be delivered as a separated programme of works</i></p>			
M	07	Question from:	Cllr Saskia Heijltjes
<p>At the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel meeting on 9 November 2023, a 'trial a series of school streets' was listed in the Journey To Net Zero Update report. Which schools have been identified to have a School Street implemented in 2024/25? The only mention of a School Street in the budget papers is the 'school street or pedestrian improvements' for Swainswick Primary School in the Transport Improvement Programme for 2024/25. Where is the rest of the trial?</p>			
Answer from:			Cllr Manda Rigby and Cllr Sarah Warren
<p><i>We are currently undertaking a prioritisation process to help inform a programme of trial School Streets across B&NES, to be delivered during the 2024/25 financial year and beyond. As this process is ongoing it is not yet possible to provide a list of schools that have been selected for a scheme.</i></p>			
M	08	Question from:	Cllr Joanna Wright

As the sole shareholder at B&NES Council for Aequus can you explain why it has cost £3.02 million to buy 22 family homes but will cost £3.2 million to build 5 two bedroom and 3 one bedroom council flats on a level site on Lower Bristol Road?

Answer from:

Cllr Kevin Guy

The full purchase costs of the Ukrainian/Afghan LAHF properties is yet to be finalised but will be around £6m, depending upon final properties purchased. This will be funded by £3.04m of Government funding with the remainder being funded by rent supported borrowing and Council funding. The site on Lower Bristol Road, known as Argyle Works, is being used to construct 8 highly energy efficient new homes for social rent as part of the B&NES Homes Programme. To ensure value for money, the works contract was procured in compliance with contract standing orders via a tender process. The cost of the scheme has been influenced by a number of factors, including that the land requires decontamination and that the site was historically a gravel pit and therefore requires a very complex foundation design. The £3.2m scheme will be funded by £1m of Government grant with the remainder being funded by rent supported borrowing and Council funding.

M

09

Question from:

Cllr Joanna Wright

As the sole shareholder at B&NES Council for Aequus can you explain the £1.6 million paid in administration fees to Aequus?

Answer from:

Cllr Kevin Guy

The Council's Quarter 3 budget monitoring report has a forecast of £1.6m loan allocation to Aequus for 2023/24. The Council has successfully secured £3.04m of Government funding to help fund the purchase of 22 homes for Ukrainian/Afghan residents which is being undertaken in partnership with Aequus. This funding is being supplemented by a Council loan to Aequus to enable the purchase of the 22 homes, the Council loan element will be repaid using rental income. It will take time to complete all 22 purchases hence it is expected that a proportion of the Council loan will only be spent in 2024/25.

(This response was sent within five working days of the meeting).

M	10	Question from: Cllr Joanna Wright
<p>In the November 2023 questions to Cabinet, a question was asked about the length of time councillors are given to read papers to ask Cabinet questions on, which was approx. 30 hours. You answered the question with the following statement: <i>“The time limits are set in the Constitution and the Cabinet is not responsible for the determining the Constitution. The Constitution is determined by the Council.”</i></p> <p>As the Leader of Council who is committed to collaborative and transparent working and wants to make sure that there is a wide representation of councillors on the council working full-time, who and/or may have caring responsibilities. Do you think the time frame should be amended or a committee system put in place so that questions and due diligence on how the council is run using tax money is properly scrutinised?</p>		
Answer from:		Cllr Kevin Guy
<p><i>The deadlines set out in the Constitution are those agreed by the full Council. The scheme is not necessarily intended only for questions related to the agenda items (except for a Special meeting) and more often they will touch on all aspects of the Cabinet’s programme. The B&NES scheme enables detailed and informative responses to questions. The option of shortening the time between the deadline and the meeting is not a realistic option, as significant officer resource is usually needed to research and formulate answers for the Cabinet Member’s consideration and approval. As you’ll be aware, the number of questions received is high, and the complexity and detail of those questions usually requires significant officer time. This is done on top of officers’ and Cabinet Members’ busy workloads. Giving officers and members even less time to prepare complex responses would possibly result in more responses not being ready in time for the meeting and provided within 5 working days of the meeting (thereby removing the option of a supplementary question at the meeting.)</i></p> <p><i>B&NES is not out of step with practice across nearby Councils regarding deadlines, which mostly vary between 4 and 2 days, or some with no notice; however, it’s worth pointing out that, for those that accept questions at the meeting with no advance notice, the response will by nature be a lot less detailed without the benefit of research and officer input. This is not the arrangement that B&NES has adopted within its Constitution.</i></p> <p><i>I do not share your view that a committee system would increase scrutiny or have any particular bearing on this process, as detailed</i></p>		

responses will always need time for preparation, regardless of the forum in which they are raised.

M	11	Question from:	Cllr Robin Moss
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In light of recent tragic knife killings & an upsurge in knife crime, what actions are being taken by BaNES to support preventative youth services?

Answer from:	Cllr Paul May
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B&NES Local Authority is working closely with Police Colleagues, Schools and the third sector to support children at risk of knife crime. Both Youth Connect South West (YCSW) and Project 28 have received serious youth violence funding from B&NES Violence Reduction Partnership to support education around the area of weapons / knife crime. This involves detached youth work, schools work and professional support around the area of knife crime. The Local Authority's Willow Project also support young people who might be at risk of exploitation. They are also doing school interventions around both healthy relationships, online and community safety, general exploitation and explicitly knife crime awareness. The Local Authority's Compass team are also working closely with the early intervention team in the police and youth settings to offer additional support directly to young people with regards to knife awareness and knife crime.

From a Community Safety standpoint, we strongly rely on both YCSW and Project 28 to provide community confidence through their work with young people and supporting policing and other interventions. Clearly any additional resource would be welcome as calls for their assistance continue to increase. Under Safer Streets (SS) 4 and 5 we prioritised interventions with young people and worked with them to successfully bid for additional resources to work primarily with young people in Bath City Centre as a specific crime analysis audit showed that this is a priority location, which was the only location in B&NES to meet the SS criteria. However, they continue to be stretched.

The Local Authority, Police and third sector partners hosted a Knife Crime Awareness Community event on November 2023. The next Knife Crime Awareness Community event is planned for February 22nd 2024. For more information, please contact Sophia McKenzie Violence Reduction Partnership Coordinator, Sophia Mckenzie Sophia_McKenzie@bathnes.gov.uk

(The response was sent within 5 working days of the meeting).

M	12	Question from:	Cllr Robin Moss
<p>On 24th January Michael Gove announced an 'extra £500 million earmarked to enable councils to provide crucial social care services' (gov.uk press release)</p> <p>In light of this, by how much will BaNES benefit & will this be included in the 20th Feb budget setting meeting.</p>			
Answer from:			Cllr Mark Elliot
<p><i>The grant awarded to the Council for 2024/25 was published through the local government settlement on 5th February 2024, the value is £1,520,318. An amendment will be made to the Council's 2024/25 budget proposal to incorporate this grant.</i></p>			
M	13	Question from:	Cllr Liz Hardman
<p>As well as the cuts to community services groups, of £802,000, cuts will also be made to Early Help Services. We believe these could be in the region of £300,000. Many of these services are essential and any reduction will impact on an already weakened service. We are talking about groups like Youth Connect and Connecting Families. There is not enough detail in the proposed budget to explain exactly what will be happening. Has consultation taken place? Do we know which groups will be affected? Are we clear what the impact will be on these groups given that we are told in the proposals that there will be no negative impact on the delivery of these cuts.</p>			
Answer from:			Cllr Mark Elliott
<p><i>We do not intend to dictate to 3rd sector providers where and how savings will be made on Community Contracts. We will work in partnership with them on a formal review of all contracts. Whilst the council needs to make savings in this area there will be no "cliff-edge" drop in funding. The focus of the review will be identifying those activities which prevent increased pressure on statutory social care services provided by the council and make sure those services are maintained.</i></p>			

M	14	Question from:	Cllr Eleanor Jackson
Why can't BANES work more closely with Wiltshire and Somerset/North Somerset to achieve more integrated and effectively subsidised public transport services?			
Answer from:			Cllr Sarah Warren
<p><i>Transport is not limited by the administrative boundaries of local government and, ensuring connections to areas outside of our district as well as within it, is essential to provide effective networks for our communities.</i></p> <p><i>The West of England Combined Authority is our Transport Authority, and the majority of public transport decisions are taken by the Mayor. As his decisions frequently fail to meet the needs of our residents, we are working increasingly closely with our surrounding councils to influence him and have, for example, been working closely with Wiltshire to jointly lobby for additional funding to support the 94 bus route.</i></p> <p><i>(This response was sent within 5 working days of the meeting).</i></p>			

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - PUBLIC

P	01	Question from:	Chad Allen
When are the Council or the Government going to tell the people about the release of CBDC centralised banking currency?			
Answer from:			Cllr Mark Elliott
<i>Central Bank Digital Currencies does not come under the responsibility of Local Government.</i>			

P	02	Question from:	Chad Allen
Why is the Council not really doing anything and where is the money being spent?			
Answer from:		Cllr Mark Elliott	
<i>The Council provides a wide range of services to B&NES residents that enable the delivery of its Corporate Strategy, detail on where money is allocated can be found here: https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/your-council-tax-2023-24</i>			
P	03	Question from:	Chad Allen
A Cabinet Member has acknowledged that they are aware of the damage that English Ivy is doing to the Pavilion in Bath. If the Council is aware of the problem of damage to buildings, why is it not addressing the problem and why am I being penalised for trying to bring up the subject?			
Answer from:		Cllr Tim Ball	
<i>The Council considers that English Ivy provides a suitable habitat for many wildlife species and pollinators. It has arranged an inspection of Bath Pavilion, when the outcome of the inspection is known the Council will then determine whether there is an issue to address.</i>			
P	04	Question from:	Rosie Phillips – Developing Health & Independence
HCRG were commissioned by the council to provide services on their behalf. This included many preventative services which HCRG subcontracted to VCSE. How do the council hold HCRG accountable for these contracts?			
Answer from:		Cllr Alison Born	

Through contract governance arrangements, commissioners hold HCRG Care Group accountable for the performance of services within the community services contract. At regular Service Level Performance Meetings HCRG Care Group commissioners report on the performance of services delivered by sub-contractors and sub-contractor performance updates are also given at Contract Quality Performance Meetings including feedback from providers.

P 05

Question from:

Rosie Phillips – Developing Health & Independence

Is it the council or HCRG who will decide on where cuts should be made? Or both (council officers and the HCRG commissioners)?

Answer from:

Cllr Alison Born

Council commissioners developed proposals for a reduction in funding for community support services as part of the budget consultation. The council is aware of the risk that a decrease in funding for preventative services may create an increase in costs for the statutory services we provide in the future. In order to address this, this council's 2024/25 budget proposal has been amended to take into account the feedback we have received, and we are now proposing to make any changes carefully over two years, avoiding a sudden cliff edge in funding.

P 06

Question from:

Rosie Phillips – Developing Health & Independence

If it is the council, are cabinet satisfied they have the information they need to assess value for money and thus make rational decisions around cuts to minimise both short and long term costs to the council and community?

Answer from:

Cllrs Alison Born and Mark Elliott

Through the budget consultation process the council has listened carefully to the concerns raised by community partners. The council is under significant financial pressure and will review the savings proposals to the third sector. However, we are acutely aware of the risk that a decrease in funding for preventative services may create an increase in costs for the statutory services we provide in the future. In order to

address this, the council's 2024/25 budget proposal has been amended to take into account the feedback we have received. We do not intend the council to work in isolation when assessing these contracts. We intend to work with commissioners and our third sector partners to make sure we have the necessary information to assess the value for money these contracts provide.

Central government recently announced that extra, one-off, funding will be available for social services for the next financial year, once we have received notification of grant allocation and guidance, we will make decisions on how this is applied in a budget context. We want to reassure our community partners that we will work closely with them to maintain contracts that help improve the lives of our residents and are cost effective in preventing pressures on statutory services. These specific community support service contracts have not been looked at for some time, so it is reasonable that they are considered as part of the budget process.

P	07	Question from:	Tina Madelin
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Why is it only today Wednesday 31st January that I have been made aware of an update on the future of Charlton House and given the opportunity to raise my questions which must be submitted by 5pm tomorrow Thursday 1st Feb 2024?

Answer from:	Cllr Alison Born
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Notice of the question must be sent in no later than 4 clear working days before the day of the meeting (e.g. 5pm on a Thursday for a meeting on the following Thursday). The cabinet paper was published on 31 January 2024 and the deadline for receipt of questions to be submitted is 1 February 2024 for the cabinet meeting on 8 February 2024.

P	08	Question from:	Tina Madelin
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Have the opinions of the staff currently caring for the residents been taken into consideration?

Answer from:	Cllr Alison Born
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Yes, staff were asked to contribute to the consultation. Staff have also been informed of the recommendations proposed following the outcome of the consultation. Following a decision by cabinet further engagement sessions are planned with staff.

P	09	Question from:	Tina Madelin
What advice has been sought from medical professionals about the impact of such a move both physically and mentally?			
Answer from:			Cllr Alison Born
<i>Should an individual need to move from one our care settings a full risk assessment will be undertaken by clinical staff in consultation with the GP and other specialists to ensure that any move is undertaken safely and in the person's best interest.</i>			
P	10	Question from:	Lynda Stride
I should like to know why, after including a persuasive argument in the initial consultation documentation for 'a new facility which would provide cost effective, complex (dementia) nursing care', the nursing element will no longer be included in the proposals on which a decision is to be made on 8 February, and how this change will affect the opportunity for enhanced service which was to be offered?			
Answer from:			Cllr Alison Born
<i>Our recommendation to continue to develop Cleeve Court for complex dementia care without nursing was made by taking into consideration the consultation responses from the public and our staff. We will continue to work closely with our specialist Mental Health team and our Clinical Lead to ensure that people with dementia live in an environment that is dementia friendly supported by staff who are trained in complex dementia care. Evidence shows people cared for in specialist dementia care settings are less likely to need to move on to nursing care than those cared for in non-specialist residential care.</i>			
P	11	Question from:	Lyn Harvey
As a close relative of one of the 10 residents of Charlton House, I have previously given feedback on the proposals put forward. The information provided to me, and others, at that time gave no reference to the fact the Cleeve Court could not accommodate 'nursing care' .			

My question is why?		
Answer from:		Cllr Alison Born
<i>Our recommendation to continue to develop Cleeve Court for complex dementia care without nursing was made by taking into consideration the consultation responses from the public and our staff. We will continue to work closely with our specialist Mental Health team and our Clinical Lead to ensure that people with dementia live in an environment that is dementia friendly supported by staff who are trained in complex dementia care.</i>		
P	12	Question from: Lyn Harvey
I have a letter in front of me dated 24-1-24 which states that Cleeve Court be developed into a centre of excellence for dementia care without nursing . Bold print was used in the letter. Was the bold print because there was a failure to provide accurate information previously?		
Answer from:		Cllr Alison Born
<i>The bold print in the letter was used to highlight the change in the recommendation to Cabinet following the outcome of the consultation.</i>		
P	13	Question from: Lyn Harvey
When you provide the 30 days' notice of the intended closure of Charlton House to the CQC, will you also be sharing with them the arrangements made for each of the 10 residents from Charlton House?		
Answer from:		Cllr Alison Born

The proposals for Charlton House are still subject to Cabinet approval. Should the proposals be agreed by cabinet the information required by the CQC will be provided in line with the process as stipulated by the CQC.

P **14** **Question from:** Liam Kirby

Recent changes have been made to Weston High Street; the new road layout was instigated with the aim to make the high street safer “for all users”. However, this new layout has not improved the situation for cyclists. Why is BANES prioritising the safety of people parking their cars and not of people cycling?

Answer from: Cllr Manda Rigby

The echelon parking bays have been modified to discourage motorists from parking with their vehicles partly on the footway adjacent to the shops. To achieve this, the centre line in the High Street was moved over slightly, and a hatched area was introduced behind the echelon parking bays so that motorists are given a greater degree of comfort that the rear of their vehicles will not be damaged by passing vehicles if they park correctly. The benefit for cyclists using the High Street is two-fold. Firstly, north-west bound cyclists have a hatched ‘buffer zone’ between the rear of parked vehicles and the carriageway running lane and, secondly, the south-west bound traffic lane is now narrower (3m), which discourages motorists from attempting to overtake cyclists. The previous lane was of a width (between 3.2m and 3.9m) where motorists may have been tempted to overtake a cyclist when there was insufficient room to do so.

P **15** **Question from:** Liam Kirby

The percentage of households with no cars or vans has decreased from 22% in 2011 to 19.9% in 2022. However, households who own or have availability to use 2, 3 or more cars or vans has increased from 35.7% to 38.4%. What are BANES doing to stop this growth which impacts the health and wellbeing of residents? (See page 76 of Strategic Evidence Base Nov 2023).

Answer from: Cllr Sarah Warren

The latest Census for 2021 for B&NES indicates that levels of car ownership have increased since the previous Census undertaken in 2011.

This trend is in line with national data that has seen a 17% increase in the number of households in England with access to 2, 3 or more cars and a drop of 3% in households that don't have access to a car between 2011 and 2021. The growth in households having access to 2 or more cars in B&NES is less than the national figure at 16% between 2011 and 2021, growing from 26,284 to 30,460. Equally the decline in the number of households with no access to a car in B&NES is less than the national figure at -2.2%. Whilst this overall growth in car ownership is a continuation of a previous trend, the rate of car ownership has accelerated in large part due to the effects of the Covid pandemic. During the pandemic people were unable to use public transport and consequently many families who didn't own a car were forced to purchase one in order to make journeys that they otherwise previously would have undertaken on bus or rail.

As part of our commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030, B&NES has a target to achieve a 25% reduction in kilometres travelled per person by car each year. Reducing levels of car ownership is key to delivering this target through the provision of more sustainable travel options for those living and working across the district. We plan to do this through large scale investment in active travel and public transport schemes in order to make walking, wheeling, cycling as well as travel by bus and train much more attractive and a viable travel choice for more people.

P	16	Question from:	Liam Kirby
Last mile delivery by cycle is thriving in many cities, including neighbouring Bristol with Freight Consolidation centres being put in place to enable this transition. What is B&NES doing to progress Freight Consolidation centres in this authority?			
Answer from:			Cllr Sarah Warren
<p><i>As part of a wider package of transport measures, B&NES has put in place a number of last mile transport service improvements. Last mile delivery refers to the very last step of the delivery process when a parcel is moved from a transportation hub to its final destination.</i></p> <p><i>B&NES future plans for freight consolidation are included in the Journey to Net Zero Transport Plan that was adopted in May 2022. Further Journey to Net Zero Plans are in the process of being developed for many of our other towns and communities across B&NES. These will include references to any further freight consolidation schemes planned across the district.</i></p>			
P	17	Question from:	Erica Davies

In a recent email from a Senior Case Officer in the B&NES Planning team, they stated that the legal obligations were fulfilled regarding the application, whilst also stating “I agree the drawings do not show the full impact on your property”.

Please can you explain why the council can accept and approve planning applications without mandatory documents?

Answer from:

Cllr Matt McCabe

The Council as local planning authority requires submitted applications to be accompanied by information (plans, drawings, accompanying reports) that meets both national and local standards. Applications that do not meet these standards do not get validated and so the statutory time period for deciding the application would not even begin until these standards are met.

The standards are published on the planning pages of the Council’s website, along with best practice guidance for plans and drawings. When assessing the application, it is for the planning case officer to satisfy themselves that the submitted information is adequate, along with information gathered during any site visit. The quote provided is not accompanied by any information about the application that it refers to and the context of the quote is also not known. I cannot, therefore, speculate as to what is meant by the quote, however I wish to provide reassurance that applications are not decided without the required information being submitted and are often supplemented by information gathered from a visit to the application site.

P 18

Question from:

Erica Davies

In the November 2023 questions to Cabinet, a question was asked about costs of the Kate Raworth event. The answer given stated that:

The total cost of the event was £2,362.25. This includes both the costs of preparing and delivering the event itself and follow up work to collate and analyse workshop outputs, including an independent report and collation of mapping to produce a legacy resource for wider community.”

When will this wider resource for the community be put in place?

Answer from:

Cllr Sarah Warren

The independent report from the workshop has been shared directly with participants and will be published on the Council's website shortly so that key insights can be viewed more widely. Mapping of local organisations actively working on social and environmental challenges is available on request, and we are looking for a partner organisation that can host and manage this resource in future. We will be using this mapping as an input for our own future conversations with communities across the district.

P	19	Question from:	Erica Davies
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The Milsom Quarter Masterplan proposes reversing the entrance/exit of the Waitrose car park.
(See https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/5MQMP_85_100_Movement_Strategy.pdf from <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/milsom-quarter/view-masterplan-documents>)

On a regular basis, frequent disruptions occur on Walcot Street, causing significant delays and issues for passengers commuting to and from the city centre, leading to substantial congestion in the east of Bath. Will you take prompt action and implement necessary measures to ensure smooth bus operations in the east of Bath?

Answer from:	Cllr Paul Roper and Cllr Manda Rigby
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As part of a Milsom Quarter public realm design project, further work is being done to look at options to improve this area together with the area in front of St Michael's Church, Green Street and New Bond Street. All designs will be consulted on publicly before being progressed for funding bids.

It should be noted that the Podium car park is privately owned land. While it is not possible for the Council to deliver all elements of the Masterplan, as they are not in our direct control, we have sought to identify areas for improvement beyond our landownership across the area. Our Highways team have advised there are unfortunately no quick measures that can be brought in to ease the congestion in Walcot Street.

P	20	Question from:	Barbara Gordon
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The Report as recommended in Citizens Panel presented to Cabinet in November 2022 stated that the Council 'revisit all options for through

traffic reduction on the route from the valley floor to Claverton Down' and 'recommence the Transport Improvement Programme in the Claverton down Area'. As a new Liveable neighbourhood/road closure in New Sydney Place/Sydney Road by the side of the Holburne has recently been proposed by the Cabinet Member and Ward Member for Bathwick, how will the "Revisit" of a safe active travel route connecting many residents from the city of Bath to Claverton Down be taken forward?

Answer from:

Cllrs Manda Rigby and Sarah Warren

The proposed through traffic restriction on Sydney Place is as part of the Council's Liveable Neighbourhood programme. It will provide improved links throughout the local area and support more people to travel by active modes of transport. As part of the Active Travel Masterplan, which is currently in development, it is the Council's ambition to improve walking and cycling links between all major educational and employment destinations within the district.

P 21

Question from:

Barbara Gordon

The stepped access from the canal towpath into Sydney Gardens was planned to be improved by creating a step-free accessible ramp into the park as part of the £3.4 million Heritage Lottery Funded major refurbishment. The ramp was scrapped from the project due to lack of budget. What are the current plans to put this accessible entrance in place to allow for everyone to access the park, including people with walking aids, in wheelchairs and with pushchairs?

Answer from:

Cllrs Sarah Warren and Manda Rigby

Step free access to the canal towpath from Sydney Gardens is available from Beckford Road. Further access improvements may be considered in future if a suitable funding source becomes available.

P 22

Question from:

Barbara Gordon

The exit from the canal towpath at Beckford Road is a well-used entry and exit connecting to Sydney Gardens. As active travel is one of the main priorities in the Council's strategic plans to enable residents to have healthier lives, when will a formal crossing be put in place on what is now a 20mph road to ensure that everyone is safe on a major A road?

Answer from:		Cllr Sarah Warren
<i>Work is underway to obtain funding for and design for a crossing at this location.</i>		
P	23	Question from: John Christian
<p>At a recent public meeting on Housing Development and the Local Plan held by Councillors in Salford Cllr Matt McCabe said that “although the West Of England Combined Authority under the Metro Mayor should have been responsible for developing the Local Plan together with the Local Transport strategy, the Metro Mayor had stepped back from this responsibility and handed the Local Plan back to B&NES and other unitary authorities and now the West of England Mayor is only handling local transport including the A4 consultation.”</p> <p>When and how did the Metro Mayor notify B&NES that they were handing back responsibility for the Local Plan?</p>		
Answer from:		Cllr Matt McCabe
<p><i>The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) was preparing a Mayoral Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) that would have addressed strategic planning issues across the WECA area. The WECA Mayor wrote to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in May 2022 to advise that work on the Spatial Development Strategy had been halted. The three unitary authorities’ Local Plans therefore, will address both strategic and non-strategic issues. This position was confirmed on the B&NES Council website in summer 2022.</i></p> <p><i>The Metro Mayor is responsible for producing and delivering the sub regional Transport Plan (Joint Local Transport Plan), details of the current JLTP4 can be found here. WECA has started work on JLTP5.</i></p>		
P	24	Question from: John Christian
<p>Are B&NES happy with the local transport proposals being advocated by Metro Mayor and do they see any problems of coordination between the Local Plan and Transport Plan proposals?</p>		

Answer from:		Cllr Matt McCabe
<p><i>B&NES are part of the project team for all transport projects being led by WECA. On behalf of our residents and businesses we seek to steer, influence and advocate for the best outcomes. We are listening closely to representations on the recent consultations, this will inform any decisions we make.</i></p> <p><i>The B&NES Local Plan includes a local transport assessment and will include mitigation for the growth proposals. If any strategic sub regional mitigation is required this will be addressed through the JLTP5 project.</i></p>		
P	25	Question from: John Christian
<p>Can the Cabinet Member for Built Environment and Sustainable Development guarantee residents that there is a regular dialogue between the Metro Mayor and B&NES to ensure that public money is well spent?</p>		
Answer from:		Cllr Matt McCabe
<p><i>Ensuring that public money is spent in the most effective way possible is of paramount importance to B&NES and the Combined Authority. Close working between the officers of the Combined Authority and B&NES officers is fundamental in bringing forward significant investment for our district that aligns with our Corporate Priorities. All the projects are subject to assessment ensuring value for money, with opportunities for public scrutiny through the WECA Committee system.</i></p>		
P	26	Question from: Christopher Wright
<p>In the Transport Improvement Programme, a 'school street or pedestrian improvements' is planned for Swainswick Primary School for next year's budget. Officers stated that a school street would cost around £200,000 to implement. Is the budgeted £40,000 of funding for a School Street? Why is there a mention of a School Street in the Transport Improvement Programme?</p>		
Answer from:		Cllrs Manda Rigby and Sarah Warren

The Draft Local Highway Improvement Programme for 2024/25 includes £40,000.00 for Swainswick Primary School, which would be used for pedestrian improvements. The concept of a School Street will be reviewed as part of the project. Any potential School Street would be delivered as a separated programme of works.

P	27	Question from:	Christopher Wright
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At the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel meeting on 9 November 2023, a 'trial series of school streets' was listed in the Journey To Net Zero Update report. Which schools have been identified to have a School Street implemented in 2024/25? The only mention of a School Street in the budget papers is the 'school street or pedestrian improvements' for Swainswick Primary School in the Transport Improvement Programme for 2024/25. Where are the rest of the School Streets being trialled?

Answer from:	Cllr Manda Rigby and Cllr Sarah Warren
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We are currently undertaking a prioritisation process to help inform a programme of School Streets to be delivered from the next financial year onwards. Therefore, it is not yet possible to provide details of which school(s) have been selected as initial trials.

P	28	Question from:	Anne Coghlan
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The important active travel link between North East Somerset and Bath, the Devonshire Tunnel, one of the Two Tunnels, has been shut since the flooding mid-January 2024 and it is suggested this tunnel could be closed for months. Sustrans has passed the work to repair this tunnel to B&NES. As it is not possible to get around the tunnel unless you can push your bike over muddy paths, when will the blocked pipe be fixed? Will a diversion route be signposted?

Answer from:	Cllr Manda Rigby and Cllr Sarah Warren
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Sustrans are responsible for the management of Devonshire Tunnel and have not passed this across to the Council. However, Officers have engaged with Sustrans throughout the recent flooding issues and have provided assistance where this has been possible, but we are unable to provide a timeframe in which the tunnel will be reopened. There is currently no appropriate signed diversion that can safely be put in place. However, utilising funding from Active Travel England's Capability and Ambition Fund, we are working on the feasibility and design of

a permanent improved active travel link between Lyncombe Vale and the Two Tunnels.

P **29** **Question from:** Anne Coghlan

A recent BBC investigation found councils which have a statutory responsibility for footpaths had 4,000 more access issues on public rights of way in 2023 than in 2022. What is the number of public rights of way that are blocked in B&NES? <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-67937253>

Answer from: Cllr Manda Rigby

At the time we received the FOI request (which is presumably the source for the original story), there were 283 obstructions on the rights of way network in B&NES. However, it's important to note that only a very small number of these obstructions actually prevent the public from using a path and many of those obstructions, while still requiring resolution, are far more minor. For example, included within this number would be paths where something such as maybe a planter or a log pile has been placed within the legal width of the right of way but not on the section of path which the public regularly use.

Overall, there was a 6% reduction in the number of obstructions in B&NES compared with the same period in 2022.

P **30** **Question from:** Anne Coghlan

Cabinet Project Lead for Highways mentioned there was no time to implement a school street in Lyme Rd/Charmouth Rd area, Bath. A key piece of the co-design in Lyme Rd is the school street element, but this could not be brought forward into the ETRO because as stated by the Cabinet Project Lead for Highways, the necessary time required to work that part of the proposal was not in place. When will the necessary time be put in place for this key co-design element and what is in the budget for school streets?

Answer from: Cllr Manda Rigby and Cllr Sarah Warren

While a School Street was not included in the forthcoming trial Liveable Neighbourhood for the Lyme Road/Charmouth Road area, further interventions in all of the current and forthcoming trial Liveable Neighbourhoods will be considered for inclusion in the Full Business Case

that will be submitted to the Combined Authority. If a School Street is not included in the Full Business Case, the school would still be considered for such a scheme as part of the separate School Streets programme which is currently under development.

P **31**

Question from:

Grace Wiltshire

B&NES Council has hired a local company, Cool Ventures, to run a workshop on how to sell on Etsy for business owners and charities. The date of this workshop was 22 November 2023. Please explain how this is a good use of taxpayer's money in the present climate when funding to vital services is being cut?

Answer from:

Cllr Paul Roper

The workshop delivered by Cool Ventures is part of our Universal Business Support Project, which is 100% funded by the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Investment Fund. No local council spending was incurred on this workshop, or any aspect of the project.

The project is targeting a minimum of 900 residents, businesses and third sector representatives through one-to-one support, mentoring, coaching and thematic workshops over the course of three years, with the target of at least 450 clients being able to demonstrate productivity gains as a result of the support received. New business starts and job creation are two other targets of the project, which along with productivity gains are key aspects of our new Economic Strategy. Economic growth and job creation in Bath & North East Somerset will help improve local government finances and help us fund vital services. Thanks to the 100% UK Government funding, the project is free at the point of delivery to ensure that income is not a barrier to anyone wishing to receive support in order to start or grow their enterprise.

The workshop in question (and in fact every workshop delivered on the project) is in response to demand. Etsy and similar sales platforms have become increasingly popular to new start-up and part-time enterprises as a route to market, hence digital skills using such platforms are very much in demand. Digital skills workshops and webinars tend to be very popular in terms of numbers attended – we are simply responding to demand. As well as requests for help with Etsy, the cost-of-living crisis is driving more and more individuals to find alternative ways to generate additional income. Etsy provides a platform for creative hobbyists and artisans to market their products in a wider setting and a cost-effective way (they don't need a website and fees are very reasonable). So this is highly accessible for anyone regardless of their level of technical ability, and enable users to generate an additional income which may not be available to them otherwise.

The workshop is run in the evening to enable those working during the day to attend. It is highly practical and is aimed at entry level sellers /

entrepreneurs and covers:

- How to set up the 1st shop*
- Advice on pricing and profitability*
- How to market effectively and be visible in front of the right audience without the need for expensive equipment and investment.*

The workshop is delivered by a local expert, who has successfully been selling on Etsy for 12 years and also supports Etsy sellers independently for 5 years (this is outside of the Universal Business Support Programme).

Attendees leave with a workbook and are able to access further 121 support if needed.

Attendees can attend other workshops to enhance their business knowledge.

P

32

Question from:

Grace Wiltshire

According to the Strategic Evidence Base from November 2023, over 600,000 kms were travelled by Council staff for business travel (decreased from over a million kms in 2015/16). Why do staff travel so many kms by car for business travel and what analysis has been undertaken to suggest that some of these journeys could be taken by public transport, scooter or cycle instead, potentially saving money and improving staff health?

Answer from:

Cllr Sarah Warren

The strong trend in business mileage reduction has continued from the baseline and 2019/20 (pre-covid) with consequent reduction in Co2e and cost.

2022/23 has seen an increase of 37% from 2021-22. This was predictable as both B&NES Council and the wider district recovered post Covid and returned to a significant level of increased activity and council services responded to greater in person demand across the district. The swift organisational adoption of both blended working and enhanced virtual technology has enabled this to be better managed reducing travel for internal/ partnership meetings.

For 2022/23 75% of staff business travel was by staff delivering services in Adult Social Care, Adult Health Care & Housing, Children's Services & Education. Demand for these services has risen and therefore staff have been required to travel to manager authorised home & school visits, children's safeguarding visits, some of which involved significant out of district travel, and education support visits.

For the financial year 2022/23, 72k miles were transferred from grey fleet to managed emission free or energy efficient pool cars delivering a reduction of 6.9 tonnes of CO2e.

The council continues to promote sustainable travel to staff including salary sacrifice bikes through staff benefits, access to pool bikes and business train travel, see attached Existing Measures, and requires all mileage claims to be reviewed against the Travel Decision Guide.

The corporate [Travel Policy](#) has been updated to reflect the Corporate Strategy Climate Emergency priority and includes maximum limits for car mileage for travel between office hubs, with incentives for using private (non-salary sacrifice) bicycles with a locally agreed rate payable at 40p per mile and council staff sharing cars as vehicle passengers on official duties at 5p per mile.

P **33**

Question from:

Grace Wiltshire

According to the Strategic Evidence Base from November 2023, the percentage of EVs registered to a BANES address increased from 0.2% in September 2018 to 1.2% in September 2022. What is the council doing to enable more people to switch to an EV including many residents who live in terraced housing with no ability to charge electric vehicles and the only other option being to charge at the higher rate on the council's limited EV points?

Answer from:

Cllr Sarah Warren

B&NES will be rolling out on-street public residential EV charge points through the central governments [Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure \(LEVI\) project](#). LEVI is a £400 million capital project from central government with the main aim of building on-street public residential charging to address the EV charging needs of those residents who do not have off-street parking. The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) are leading a bid for LEVI funds, which includes provision for B&NES. The LEVI project will be delivered with a commercial Charge Point Operator (CPO) to benefit from sector expertise in delivering at scale. Final applications are currently being assessed by the Department for Transport and with the current schedule we could see charge points on-street from early 2025.

The council is acutely aware of the challenges facing residents with no off-street parking. Following a WECA review into on-street home charging technologies, systems providing cable channels sunk into the footway were identified as the favoured option. To this end we will be trialing cable channel products on public footways in B&NES. A [public report on the cable channel trial](#) proposal provides more details. The trial is awaiting funding confirmation from WECA, with an expected public launch July 2024.

P 34

Question from:

Dominic Tristram

It has been reported that Bath Rugby at the Rec in central Bath will be creating a huge balloon made up of hundreds of metres of plastic sheeting to enable hot air to be blown across the pitch for 24 hours; it is presumed that this is needed because Bath Rugby have embedded plastic filaments all over the pitch. Did Bath Rugby request consent for embedding plastic filaments and was it accompanied by a pitch management plan?

Answer from:

Cllr Matt McCabe and Cllr Sarah Warren

We believe that there is some confusion about this. These are two separate things.

The “plastic filaments” that have been “stitched” into the pitch is a tried-and-tested system used throughout the sporting world to improve the stability of the pitch. This was recently installed, initially to goal areas and subsequently across the rest of the pitch. The 20cm deep artificial fibres intertwine with the grass roots to form a stable pitch that can take three times as much playing as a normal grass pitch. This did not require any additional consent. We can confirm that a pitch management plan was not required for this work.

The “huge balloon made up of hundreds of metres of plastic sheeting to enable hot air to be blown across the pitch for 24 hours” we believe refers to the frost covers that are routinely spread over the pitch during prolonged periods of cold and icy conditions to protect the pitch to prevent freezing and allow safe use of the pitch. The use of these covers is triggered by the Premiership, when there is a televised game that may be affected by frost. These covers have been used in previous years.

P 35

Question from:

Dominic Tristram

In a recent B&NES Press Release on Broad Street (<https://newsroom.bathnes.gov.uk/news/broad-street-place-community-garden-begins->

[take-shape](#)) it states:

"Councillor Paul Roper, cabinet member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development, said: "Broad Street Place is an unusual example of public space in Bath that is central yet traffic-free. It has huge potential to benefit residents, visitors and businesses by being regenerated into a peaceful green space that people want to spend time in. I'm pleased that Bath Neighbourhood CIL Funding is supporting this vision to become a reality and look forward to seeing the space being enjoyed as a fantastic asset for the community."

This space is not accessible due to steps from Walcot Streets and a step from the access point from Broad Street. What is B&NES doing to make this an inclusive space and allow access for people in wheelchairs and mobility scooters?

Answer from:

Cllr Paul Roper and Cllr Sarah Warren

This Neighbourhood CIL funded project will provide new seating, playable space, new planting, public art, lighting and will provide improved surface materials around the trees.

There is currently stepped access into the site from Walcot Street and a single step on the access from Broad Street. Re-profiling the step-access from Broad Street is not in scope of the current funding, however, the Council has done design work to facilitate this in future. Subject to funding being secured to deliver it, it is anticipated this will be a future phase.

P 36

Question from:

Dominic Tristram

What can be done by B&NES to hold Bath Rugby to account for failures to exercise due care towards the wider public when there are flood incidents? A similar failing occurred in mid-January of last year when the river flooded.

Answer from:

Cllrs Matt McCabe and Tim Ball

If a flooding incident causes wider issues for the public, debriefs and enquiries are held which look into the actions of statutory bodies and organisations in respect of decisions and outcomes.