

CABINET MEETING 12th October 2011

The following Statements and Questions had been registered by the time of publication.

REGISTERED SPEAKERS

There was one notice of intention to make a statement.

Re: Statutory Notice to Revoke the Closure of Culverhay School (Item 16)

- Councillor Gerry Curran

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - COUNCILLORS

M 01	Question from:	Councillor Malcolm Lees
<p>Some residents in Weston have expressed concern over an apparent lack of progress in implementing a Residents Parking scheme which was consulted upon earlier this year. The roads concerned are Manor Road, Manor Villas and Weston Lane and part of Penn Hill Road. Can the Cabinet Member please confirm when this will be implemented?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Roger Symonds
<p><i>There is always demand for new waiting and parking restrictions from individuals and communities as well as for changes to existing arrangements and I appreciate that each is important to our local communities. The Council regularly receives representations demanding, for example, waiting restrictions to control or regulate inappropriate parking which may cause safety problems, obstruct the free flow of traffic or to reserve the highway for parking by a particular group such as residents.</i></p> <p><i>All waiting and parking restrictions are controlled by Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). The TRO process can take many months, sometimes years, to complete and the costs of developing proposals, consultation, advertising and legal process, can be substantial. For this reason, I believe that schemes requiring a TRO should not be undertaken in isolation as experience has shown that the introduction of ad hoc restrictions can result in shifting the problem elsewhere.</i></p> <p><i>I have therefore decided that there should be no further work carried out on changes to parking restrictions and the introduction of Residents Parking Zones whilst we take stock of what has been promised, what the current demands are and what our priorities should be across the whole of Bath & North East Somerset. This is in order that we can establish how best to plan and use the limited resource at our disposal for this work and ensure that any changes made are consistent with the authority's transportation priorities. It is also vital that any TROs we promote are legally valid and must be</i></p>		

introduced for a traffic related reason. As the responsible Cabinet Member, I shall be seeking reassurance on this legal requirement before committing valuable resources to developing schemes.

Once this information is received and analysed I will be in a position to further update all members on the forward plan. I envisage this review being completed swiftly so that I can share with you my proposals for our forward plan by the 18th November 2011.

I do apologise if this delay causes any difficulty locally but I hope that you will understand the need to take a rational and properly planned approach to this in order to make sure that we take a coherent approach to such applications and make the best use of the resources at our disposal.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you for the reply. Would the Cabinet member explain why residents were not consulted about the delay in the proposals?

Answer from:

Councillor Roger Symonds

The application is still on the table and is still being considered. The delay is so that the proposals can be reassessed to ensure we get it right, which I'm sure the local residents welcome.

M 02

Question from:

Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones

It was reported to a recent PD&S Panel meeting that it is understood that Kraft is due to announce its preferred developer for the Keynsham Somerdale site this Autumn, with consultation on a Planning Application expected to start in early 2012. Can the Cabinet Member please offer assurance that the Council has expressed to Kraft that any plans for the Somerdale site must include provision for significant employment use as well as housing, as well as a retention of the Fry Club, and that any proposals for the site will form an integral part of the Council's and residents' vision for the wider regeneration of the town?

Answer from:

Councillor Cherry Beath

Cllr Crossley and myself met with Trevor Routledge from Kraft and his development advisor John Bowles in August '11 to discuss progress of the redevelopment of Somerdale.

We explained the Council's vision for a balanced economy and its vision to see Keynsham become more sustainable. It was emphasised that Somerdale is a unique site which has an important role to play in achieving this vision. As well as an opportunity for new homes, the site would be expected to provide a significant number of jobs to help put Keynsham on the map as a commercial location complementing Bath and Bristol.

Kraft representatives explained that they are currently in the middle of a tender process which started in March 2011 when expressions of interest were invited from developers.

We understand they are still currently assessing the final bids and therefore not yet in a position to announce their preferred developer. Following their decision, the developer will be expected to work up proposals and submit a planning application in 2012.

We stressed to Kraft the importance of early local public engagement whilst the ideas for the site are emerging and we offered our support in these discussions with the community.

Kraft agreed to continue to work in partnership with the Council as this would be beneficial to bringing forward the redevelopment of the site in a timely manner, and confirmed that they are working with the Fry Club to ensure the club becomes a sustainable entity. New facilities will be provided for the Fry Club as part of the redevelopment of the site. In due course, the details of the proposed redevelopment scheme will in any event be publicised and subjected to public and Council scrutiny through the Planning application process.

M 03	Question from:	Councillor John Bull
What is the cost of redecorating the Council Chamber and when was the decision made to undertake the work?		
Answer from:	Councillor David Bellotti	
<p><i>The redecoration was only part of a project of refurbishment of the council chamber which included upgrading the lighting; improving the power provision; renewing the heating installation; bringing the air handling system back into use; provision of new desk top audio units and audio system; improved access for disabled and removal of trip hazards; conservation work to furniture and columns; carpeting and decorations The lighting, heating, ventilation and audio system have all been subjects of complaints from members and other users over the years. The cost of the work was £166,000. The project was part of the councils capital planned maintenance programme for 2011/12 which was approved by Council on 15th February 2011".</i></p> <p><i>I'm sure we will all be pleased with the resulting work and it will be a big improvement. It will greatly restore that part of the Guildhall. However this spending could not be identified publicly and separately and at a time when we are making reductions in front line council services I can understand if there are concerns about this spending. I know that at least the former Cabinet Member for Resources in the previous administration was aware of the proposals.</i></p> <p><i>As Cabinet Member for Resources in this administration I have decided that in future a list of planned maintenance items over £10k will be reported publicly before the works are undertaken unless they are an emergency.</i></p>		
Supplementary Question:		
Thank you for your reply. In view of the successful use of the Banqueting Room for the recent Council and Cabinet meetings, would the Cabinet member say that this Council Chamber is any more fit for purpose?		

Answer from:	Councillor David Bellotti
<p><i>Some will like it, some not – it is a matter of personal preference. There should have been a consultation before the Chamber was refurbished, although as Councillor Bull will be aware, I was not at that time the responsible Cabinet member. I agree that the Banqueting Room did prove to be a convenient place in which to meet. I would like to repeat that in future, all planned maintenance items over £10k will be reported publicly before the works are undertaken unless they are an emergency.</i></p>	

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - PUBLIC

P 01	Question from:	Amanda Leon
<p>1. Given how important the independent assessment of the feasibility of re-opening the Radstock-Frome railway line is for planning the future town centre of Radstock, when is this study, promised in May 2011, going to be progressed?</p> <p>2. On his last visit to Radstock, Cllr Crossley promised to investigate alternative road schemes for Radstock, and in particular the one involving moving the old sub-station and having a single roundabout at the A367/362 junction. Has anything been done about this, especially given the fact that there appears to have been no communication with Western Power, the company who would have to be involved in any such changes? Additionally given the fact that informed experts appear to think the costs might be less than the amounts quoted by B&NES and half of what appears to have been committed to the current NRR scheme, we would like to know why proper costings have apparently not been obtained and published.</p>		
Answer from:	Councillor Roger Symonds	
<p><i>1. The Study to review and update the existing study on the feasibility of re-opening the Radstock-Frome railway line is being commissioned. The study will take around four months to complete and the outcome is expected in February next year. (Background – at that time of the original consent there was no intention to maintain or protect the line for rail use. The Local Plan policy T9 protects the route for ‘Sustainable Transport Purposes’. The committee report to the original application stated that “If the development goes ahead it will not be possible to re-open the railway line to Frome...” It use as a tourist heritage railway in line with the Policy of Somerset County Council is still possible.)</i></p> <p><i>2. The Cabinet at their meeting on 14th September decided to postpone their decision on the TROs for the proposed highway improvement associated with the Norton Radstock Regeneration Scheme. Cabinet asked officers to review the objections to the TROs, look again at the traffic data and, in the light of this information and the many changes that have been suggested to the current proposal, see if the scheme can be further amended to maintain traffic flows and pedestrian movements through the town. We remain of the view that the location of the sub-station constrains the nature of any</i></p>		

improvements to the roads at the junction of the A367 & A362. Council Officers have made contact with Western Power in relation to the costs of relocation of the substation. However in addition to the direct costs associated with the provision of a relocated substation, the costs associated with the following other factors would also need to be included:-

- The cost of designing a totally new highway scheme, detailed design to confirm the technical design geometry and land take needs.*
- The cost of purchasing land outside the Council's ownership once this land take had been established.*
- The establishment of the legal right to procure the land needed to deliver the scheme. As the scheme would require land beyond Council's control, land transfer would be needed and negotiation/CPO required to procure this process would require funding.*
- A larger roundabout would have impacts upon an adjacent river corridor in particular the need to widen an existing river bridge.*
- The costs of relocating other utility company assets. This may also require additional land to be purchased.*
- The suggested single roundabout proposal may also impact upon plans designed to address flooding issues and as such a suitable alternative location/scheme may need to be provided to facilitate that requirement.*

These costs are likely to be significant and not be cost effective in terms of the overall scheme.

(Background – The relocation of the existing electricity sub-station and diversion of the high-voltage oil-cooled cabling/ducting etc., would be at an excessive cost and severe disruption both to traffic and electricity supply over an extended period, and potentially over a wider area than the centre of Radstock. At that time it was said that the cost could not be estimated with any certainty because of the age (and unknown condition) of the equipment. Our current review of the proposed traffic arrangements have not included a single roundabout.)