

COUNTY COUNCIL – 15 May 2019

Members' Questions

1. Questioner's name: Cllr Andrew Miller	Respondent's name: Cllr Vernon Smith
<p>Could the cabinet member inform the Council of the measures or strategies to promote safe cycling throughout the County?</p>	<p>Physical Measures This year we are delivering a number of strategic and local cycle infrastructure schemes across the county, working with partners including the Canals and Rivers Trust and Highways England. These include further works to enhance the canal towpath from the city centre to Quedgeley and designing a safe route between Gloucester and Cheltenham.</p> <p>Our newly established ThinkTravel team have become closely involved in supporting new capital projects and are a consultee on new residential and business developments which can include travel plans and new infrastructure. Where we have road safety concerns the team has assisted local highways managers in reviewing potential solutions and auditing schemes from safety and usability perspectives.</p> <p>Behaviour Change We have joined Modeshift, a nationally accredited travel planning scheme, to enable schools to introduce their own measures and events to promote cycling with staff, students and their families. This year around 5500 pupils will receive Bikeability training from the council, significantly more than we are funded to train. In parallel we are working closely with the Police road safety campaigns officer on an annual programme of events including revisiting Operation Close Pass. This highlights measures drivers can take to give cyclists more space.</p> <p>At a strategic level, cycling is promoted through our Local transport Plan which is currently under review and it features in the active travel elements in the draft Gloucestershire Air Quality Strategy.</p>

<p>2. Questioner's name: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Vernon Smith</p>
<p>To: Cllr Vernon Smith</p> <p>In Bourton on the Water, De La Haye's fish and chip shop has installed tables and chairs onto the public pavement for the last year, leaving little room for people and wheelchairs/prams to get by. Residents are rightly angry as to why these obstructions are still in place a year later. Highways want them removed but the Council's legal team is still in talks with the owner. Can you explain why something as basic as removing tables and chairs from the public pavement has already taken a year of talking with no satisfactory outcome?</p>	<p>The Council have been in regular contact with the owners and their Solicitor for over a year regarding this issue. Although the Council considers that the land is part of the public highway, the Company hold title to the land and consider it private, and so contend they have the right to place around 20 tables/seating on the area. We acknowledge, however, that the Member, a number of residents, and the Parish Council are frustrated by the apparent lack of action.</p> <p>In general, it should be noted that where a landowner dismisses requests to voluntarily remove obstructions from the highway, the Highway Authority can use certain legal mechanisms under the Highways Act 1980 to get those obstructions removed. However, if the landowner wishes to, he may counter-serve an injunction against any such issued Order, which can then result in the court determining the matter. Therefore, the Council is duty bound to explore all options ahead of such enforcement action to see whether a resolution can be achieved without entering into a lengthy and costly court case, and those discussions do take time.</p>
<p>3. Questioner's name: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Vernon Smith</p>
<p>To: Cllr Vernon Smith</p> <p>Regarding the previous question can you give me a precise date as to when the Council will be robust and demand removal of the street furniture and what the consequence will be for the owner if he doesn't? The tourist season has already started again and residents have completely lost all confidence in the Council to take action.</p>	<p>The overall timetable for resolving the issue would ultimately be determined by the court if the Company continues to assert the area is not public highway. This means we cannot give a precise date for the resolution of the matter at this stage.</p>

<p>4. Questioner's name: Cllr Colin Hay</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Richard Boyles</p>
<p>To Richard Boyles:</p> <p>I was very pleased that our motion, looking at the devastating impact cuts was having on Gloucestershire's schools, received unanimous support at the previous Full Council, and I thank the cabinet member for his role in this. However, at the Cabinet meeting on 30 January, you stated that from your conversations with head teachers, you did not believe the cuts to SEND funding "would lead [schools] to be less welcoming to students with special needs."</p> <p>In light of the recent announcement from Thomas Keble – that they will be reducing the number of SEND places from 35 children to between 25 and 22 over the next four years; a "heart-breaking" decision which the head teacher has made as a last resort to "preserve the quality of our SEN provision, and our overall outcomes" – does the cabinet member want to revisit his earlier statement and more importantly can he advise what financial changes he will look at to avoid other schools being forced to make similarly devastating decisions?</p>	<p>No. It is unlawful for any school to place a limit on the number of children with SEND. Schools are required to accept any child with an Education Health and Care Plan where they are able to meet their needs and they remain committed to supporting children in their community - regardless of their level of need or vulnerability.</p> <p>Funding for schools and high needs is an on-going concern. Cllr Stowe and I have been in regular communication with county MPs and last week the Education Secretary announced a national review of high needs funding. This is very welcome and exactly what we've been calling for.</p>
<p>5. Questioner's name: Cllr Colin Hay</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Dave Norman</p>
<p>Further to my question on 24 April with regards to sprinkler systems in schools, can the cabinet member confirm what is the advice of the new Chief Fire Officer and whether this differs to the advice given by the Fire Brigades Union?</p>	<p>The new Chief Fire Officer fully supports and endorses the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) position on sprinklers in schools which recommends that sprinklers should be fitted in all new and refurbished schools. This will be monitored and updated as the findings of the Dame Judith Hackitt review are developed. The Chief Fire Officer believes this NFCC position is supported by that of the Fire Brigades Union.</p> <p>NFCC position statement excerpt (available from their website</p>

	<p><u>www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk</u>): <i>NFCC strongly recommends that sprinklers should be fitted in all new and refurbished schools. Government should regulate or provide improved guidance which should be unequivocal and clear in this respect. Such clarity would be in line with the initial findings of the Dame Judith Hackitt review which states ‘Regulations and guidance must be simplified and unambiguous’.</i></p> <p><i>The solution would be to standardise the risk assessment process and ensure that designers of all new schools must use the fire risk assessment tools provided in BB100, to determine if sprinklers are appropriate based on risk. Where this indicates that sprinklers are required, an alternative solution which doesn’t provide automatic sprinkler protection, should not be permitted.</i></p> <p><i>NFCC believes that this is necessary to prevent unnecessary disruption to our children’s education and damage to what can be years of children’s hard work. Eliminate the impact of loss and disruption to the community, and of community facilities and drastically reduce the cost to the tax payer of repairs and rebuilds of schools lost to fire.</i></p> <p><i>NFCC is clear that this is not a matter of life safety. There is no evidence that there is an issue with fire-related life safety in our schools. NFCC believes that this is a critical matter of fitting sprinklers for property protection and that an opportunity to eliminate the impact of fire in our schools is being missed.</i></p>
<p>6. Questioner’s name: Cllr Eva Ward</p>	<p>Respondent’s name: Cllr Andrew Gravells</p>
<p>The Council wishes to express its thanks to the Highways Department and it’s suppliers for its achievement in delivering resurfacing work successfully’</p> <p>This congratulatory motion was debated for 68 minutes despite several calls to move that the matter be brought to a vote.</p> <p>Given this Council allows a total of only 10 hours per annum to</p>	<p>All members are entitled to propose motions to meetings of County Council and motions are put forward on a variety of subjects over the course of the year. The Council Constitution does not prescribe a time limit for individual motions within the overall time of two hours for motions.</p> <p>At the Chairman’s briefing prior to Council, the Group Leaders agreed indicative timings for each motion to make the best use of</p>

<p>debate member's motions (plus two dedicated to the annual budget) does Councillor Gravells believe that this was good use of valuable Council time?</p> <p>Does he recognise that this denied members the opportunity to hear and debate the other important motions listed for the day?</p> <p>Could Councillor Gravells suggest ways in which he, and any subsequent Chairpersons, might avoid similar situations arising?</p>	<p>the two hours. When the highways debate exceeded the time, Members were asked if they wanted to conclude the debate but decided not to.</p> <p>I don't think any Chairman would wish to curtail discussion and debate when members are indicating they wish to speak about a particular issue, but members may want to be mindful of the indicative timings agreed beforehand.</p>
<p>7. Questioner's name: Cllr Rachel Smith</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Vernon Smith</p>
<p>To: Cllr Vernon Smith</p> <p>In late 2017 it was agreed between Chalford Parish Council, Christchurch Primary School and GCC Highways to fund the installation of a school safety zone at the bottom of Old Neighbourhood on the busy A419, close to the school. The pace of the project moved slowly with a design being agreed in spring 2018, but then the date for installation was continuously pushed back. We were told the work would be completed in March this year, before the departure of Amey, but this did not happen, and now, whilst I gather it is at the top of Ringway's priority list, I have been told that Atkins now need to take another look at the designs. Please can you tell me what the original cost of the scheme was going to be, did Amey get paid for doing this work, and what the total cost of the scheme will be once this has finally been completed.</p>	<p>There is some further design works needed to complete the design to enable Ringway to build the scheme. This is not a duplication of the work Amey did, but moving the scheme forward to be site ready. Amey were only paid for the work they have done to date. The budget for the scheme remains as it did at the outset, we do not foresee any change in budget, that being £12,700.</p>
<p>8. Questioner's name: Cllr Rachel Smith</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Nigel Moor</p>
<p>To: Cllr Nigel Moor</p> <p>I notice from Gloucestershire County Council's twitter feed that members of the public are being advised that a visit to the household recycling centre may take longer than they expect, and this is backed up by reports from members of the public and parish</p>	<p>The council's HRC sites are very popular with residents and can become congested at peak times, such as bank holidays and during periods of fine weather. The council is using social media to inform residents that waiting times might be longer than usual during such periods. Generally, the feedback from our site operator has been positive regarding the change to opening hours and the switch has</p>

<p>councillors who have all experienced delays and scenes of chaos when visiting the HRC at Horsley. Please can you let me know, as per your suggestion at Environment and communities committee last year, when a review will take place on the reduced opening hours of the household recycling centres?</p>	<p>helped to realise a considerable saving. We will continue to monitor site usage and performance and will aim to provide more detail next winter (when a full year's data of the service change is available).</p>
<p>9. Questioner's name: Cllr Lesley Williams</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Mark Hawthorne</p>
<p>To: Cllr Mark Hawthorne</p> <p>It is now a year since the Peer Review and it is customary for the Peers to have a follow up visit one year on. Is there a date for their return visit?</p>	<p>The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge process does include a follow up visit. Their expectation is that it will occur within two years.</p> <p>One of the main development areas following the Peer Challenge was scrutiny. As the Council has only recently agreed to make changes following the review of scrutiny, it would make sense for those changes to take effect before inviting the LGA back.</p>