

COUNCIL MEETING – 13 APRIL 2011

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

AGENDA ITEM 6 – EXECUTIVE BUSINESS TIME**6(i) Questions with notice to the Leader and Members of the Executive****1. Councillor John Fox asked the Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning:**

Would the Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning please reassure the residents of Werrington that Officers will seriously consider putting speed activated signs at both ends of David's Lane as both areas are regular black spots for Road Traffic Accidents and although Highway statistics may not reflect this, as most are damage only non-recordable accidents, you can be rest assured that the level of accidents does make it a serious black spot for local residents and it will not be much longer before we have a serious fatality at either end of this stretch of road?

Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning responded:

Officers have investigated the recorded personal injury collisions on the bends at either end of David's Lane. In total 6 personal injury collisions have occurred over the past 5 years and Cambridgeshire Constabulary has attended 4 recorded damage only incidents on David's Lane since 2009.

Casualty data revealed that one of the factors involved in a number of the collisions was a slippery road surface in the wet. I have instructed the Highway Maintenance Team to add David's Lane to its programme of carriageway skid resistance testing that is undertaken between May and September of each year.

A 24 hour seven day speed survey will be undertaken on this road. In the meantime, various agencies will meet to discuss enforcement/education activities which can be undertaken in the area.

Currently the location does not feature on the accident cluster site list and is therefore not included in the 2011/12 approved safety engineering programme of works which has been approved. However the results of the speed survey will be discussed in more detail to see what and if further action is required and needs to be brought forward including Vehicle Activated Signs.

Councillor John Fox asked the following supplementary question:

I thank the Cabinet Member for his immediate response to my request for action to be taken. Within a week there were the relevant cameras put in situ and hopefully that will result in a positive outcome. But, can he reassure me that he will be listening to all Members of this area, Councillors Lane, Burton and Over live in this area and they will, i'm sure, 100% back me that this is definitely a black spot and there is not a week that goes by where there is not an accident. The sad thing is that they are non-recordable. So if he could reassure me that he will take further action.

	<p>Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning responded:</p> <p>Yes Councillor Fox, you do have my reassurance.</p>
2.	<p>Councillor Adrian Miners asked the Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Community Development:</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member please help to clarify a concern I have, that may not be justified, namely is it true to state that private sector landlords no longer need to apply for planning permission for Houses in Multiple Occupation, meaning that the public has no protection from houses being converted into hostels next door to them without any opportunity to inspect plans or consider what support arrangements are in hand for residents?</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning responded:</p> <p>There have been a number of changes in planning law relating to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) since April 2010. However, where the HMO is occupied by more than 6 persons (not living as a family) there has been <u>no change</u> as planning permission is still required.</p> <p>In April 2010, Government introduced a new planning Use Class, 'C4 - small scale HMOs this was defined as a dwelling occupied by between 3 & 6 people who are unrelated. In doing this Government also made changes so that planning permission was required if the owner of a normal family dwelling wanted to change it in to a C4 small scale HMO.</p> <p>However, in October 2010 the Coalition Government revised this decision so the change from a normal family dwelling to a C4, small scale HMO is now permitted development. This effectively takes us back to the position prior to April 2010. Councillors will be aware of our officer's pursuit of illegal HMOs and this will continue to be a very high priority for the protection of vulnerable people and neighbourhood amenity. If this Council wishes to remove permitted development rights for the change of a normal family home to a small scale HMO then this may be done through the designation of an area to be controlled under an article four direction. I do emphasise that such a direction would need to have evidence based support and if it was designated it means that permission would have to be applied for in accordance with the relevant Local Development Framework Policy against which such applications are considered. It doesn't mean that there would be a ban on small scale HMOs per say.</p> <p>Councillor Adrian Miners asked the following supplementary question:</p> <p>What was the rationality or the reasoning behind the Coalition Government in reversing this decision to control the C4 small scale HMOs when some local communities do suffer acutely from rogue landlords?</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Planning responded:</p> <p>I will find out why the policy has changed and I will let you know.</p>
3.	<p>Councillor Adrian Miners asked the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Strategic Commissioning:</p> <p>Noting the concerns about fly tipping and the decision made by this Local Authority to remove the free bulky waste collection service, isn't it about time to consider re-instating the Local Community Skip Service as other local authorities still operate such</p>

	<p>a service, with one local authority that I am aware of providing community skips at a ratio of 1-skip per 100/150 households and a rotation system around its Wards each month?.</p> <p>Councillor Lee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Strategic Commissioning responded:</p> <p>Let me firstly assure you of our commitment to keeping our environment as clean as possible. Our new strategic partners, Enterprise Peterborough, are in their second month with us and i'm very pleased about the way things have gone so far and i'm very positive about the future benefits.</p> <p>For me, the acid test is whether flytipping has increased since we began charging for bulky waste collections. The answer is that it has remained broadly consistent year on year while the numbers of incidences have gone up very slightly, 29; the tonnes of flytipping which have been collected has reduced by 182 tonnes. That said, no flytipping is acceptable and we would like to see none at all.</p> <p>We have re-examined starting a community skip scheme but for the reasons it stopped in the first place a decade ago they remain just the same and are relevant today if not more so. Skips do not encourage residents to be more responsible about their waste, quite the opposite, skips need to be manned in order to avoid hazardous or industrial waste being tipped and because the waste is mixed all of it ends up in landfill and the costs of that are rising.</p> <p>With the bulky waste collection, we recycle as much as we can. This has a financial benefit for the Council in the value received for these recycled materials and in the reduced fee that we have to pay for landfill.</p> <p>For these reasons I do not think that community skips are consistent with our ambitions to be the environment capital. Responsible residents are willing to pay a small charge for this service. Whether the service is free or not makes little difference to the amount of flytipping in our city. We suspect some of the flytipping that is created in the city comes from people that live outside of the area. So no Mr Mayor, I do not believe that we should re-introduce a local community skip scheme.</p> <p>Councillor Adrian Miners asked the following supplementary question:</p> <p>Noting the localism agenda of this Coalition Government, should not our own local Neighbourhood Committees decide for themselves whether a local community skip service be introduced in their local areas and not left to the Cabinet Central Committee to decide?</p> <p>Councillor Lee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Strategic Commissioning responded:</p> <p>I do not agree with that question Mr Mayor for the reasons that I outlined in my first answer.</p>
4.	<p>Councillor Stephen Goldspink asked the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Strategic Commissioning:</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member let me know if there has been any change in policy regarding the level or frequency of services provided by Enterprise, following the loss of some temporary staff, and explain how services are being maintained with fewer staff and also advise if other departments and contractors providing services in the community for the Council continue to do so even though they have reduced resources?</p>

	<p>Councillor Lee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Strategic Commissioning responded:</p> <p>Enterprise’s proposals to deliver the services align with the Council’s requirements. As part of ongoing service delivery, they will review the way services are carried out, looking for more efficient ways to do this, whilst ensuring that Peterborough’s streets are maintained to a high standard and providing value for money to local tax payers.</p> <p>Additional temporary staff were used to ensure that all areas of Peterborough were up to standard avoiding any disruption, while the predominantly permanent team were being briefed and trained during the hand over period.</p> <p>Temporary staff were only intended to be used for a fixed period and were released shortly after the partnership commenced.</p> <p>Enterprise has approximately fifty four street cleaners and seven temporary staff. This is broadly the same number that the Council had in September last year.</p> <p>Generally, Council departments and contractors have to consider improved ways of working as well as maintaining quality of services to the Council.</p> <p>The design concept behind Cathedral Square allows us flexibility in the way in which we use that space. Any greenery that is permanently planted in the space obviously significantly reduces that flexibility</p> <p>Councillor Stephen Goldspink asked the following supplementary question:</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member assure me that the level of hedge cutting and litter picking, gully emptying, foot path resurfacing, new speed limits and new bus services that i’ve seen as i’ve recently toured around Stanground and Fletton, will be maintained after the first week of May?</p> <p>The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Strategic Commissioning responded:</p> <p>Mr Mayor I’m not entirely sure that all of the items that the Councillor just read out there had anything to do with the first question which was about temporary staff and Enterprise Peterborough. Enterprise Peterborough though, for those Members that took an interest, and I did involve as many Members as possible, have a commitment to improve services whilst reducing costs and that is something we went into in great detail and I would have urged the Councillor to have taken part in those debates and those information sessions at the time if he had any concerns.</p>
5.	<p>Councillor Nick Sandford asked the Leader of the Council:</p> <p>Regardless of what you think of the fountains or how much they cost to maintain, could the Leader of the Council explain why as an aspiring environment capital we now have a main square in the city centre without a single tree or a single shrub or plant of any description?</p> <p>Councillor Cereste, Leader of the Council responded:</p> <p>City Operations are fully aware that the areas surrounding St John’s and Cathedral Square require some form of organic aesthetic displays to enhance the already visually appealing areas. Therefore City Operations are currently working in partnership with Enterprise Peterborough and the surrounding businesses to introduce floral</p>

	<p>arrangements and greenery.</p> <p>By the end of May, which is usual timing for Summer bedding plants to be bright and vibrant, there will indeed be planters and hanging baskets around the areas in question.</p> <p>I am also pleased to say that Pizza Express are investing in newly refurbished furnishings outside which does include planters, so they will take the opportunity to enhance our Cathedral Square at their expense.</p> <p>The design concept behind Cathedral Square allows us flexibility that we never had before in the way in which we use that space. Any greenery that is permanently planted in the space obviously significantly reduces that flexibility.</p> <p>Councillor Nick Sandford asked the following supplementary question:</p> <p>I'm pleased with the response up to a point, as when I asked a similar question to someone from Opportunity Peterborough I was told that it was their policy not to have any trees and shrubs or greenery. Will the Leader consider putting trees in Cathedral Square, as we are embarking on a forest of Peterborough project to try and dramatically increase the number of trees in Peterborough and a number of people have commented to me that it's slightly anomalous that our major square doesn't have a single tree?</p> <p>Councillor Cereste, Leader of the Council responded:</p> <p>The answer to the question is, that if the trees move, then yes but if you want them permanently planted then no. There was, in the original project, a row of trees in planters alongside St John's Square but the retailers objected because they thought it would interfere with their businesses and after listening to the consultation that was removed. However, I repeat, if they can go in planters and they can be moved so that we can maintain the flexibility of the square, absolutely I think it's the right thing to do.</p>
6.	<p>Councillor Darren Fower asked the Cabinet Member for Resources:</p> <p>Would the Cabinet Member please clarify whether the proposed plans to webcast Council meetings are still going ahead, and if so why has this not happened yet?</p> <p>Councillor Seaton, Cabinet Member for Resources responded:</p> <p>The subject of webcasting has been explored fully resulting in a briefing note being prepared in September 2010. The matter was due to be discussed at the next Leaders' meeting. However, no Leaders' meetings have taken place since September 2010 therefore this matter is still subject to discussion.</p> <p>Councillor Darren Fower asked the following supplementary question:</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member kindly give both myself and everyone in the Chamber the Cabinets position on whether they are in favour or not in favour of the webcasting?</p> <p>Councillor Seaton, Cabinet Member for Resources responded:</p> <p>This administration is very keen on improving communication to all residents, however clearly with a cost of around £60k a year, equivalent to council tax income from over 30 homes we do need to be cognisant of the cost. With technology becoming ever cheaper, this is something we will keep under regular review and consideration.</p>

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