

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 1 DECEMBER 2021

a) Question from Elizabeth Honeybell to Councillor N Hoy, Cabinet Member for Adult Care (not attending)

Why is the council not allowing more residents at Goyt Valley House, New Mills when there are so many people waiting in hospital and blocking much needed hospital beds?

Response:

The Director for Adult Social Care has made the decision that no new long- term residents move in because of the deteriorating condition of the electrical wiring.

b) Question from David Ingham to Councillor S Spencer, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Budget

In response to a recent Freedom of Information Request (4-21) and following an Internal Review it was communicated that data relating to complaints made against senior officers may not be shared with the Advice and Support Team within HR and in turn not reported under any Freedom of Information Requests.

The Internal Review was requested following 3 known complaints made against senior officers within CCP not being reported within the data provided under this particular Freedom of Information Request.

A report relating to complaints and compliments presented to the Governance, Ethics and Standards Committee on 20-10-21 included metric information associated with complaints made against council employees associated with behaviour and the use and storage of data – these were the grounds upon which the complaints had been made against the 3 senior officers.

On the basis of the response contained within the Internal Review the simple question I would like answering, as officers have not answered to date, is whether or not the 3 complaints associated with the Internal Review response to FOI 4/21 were included within the data and report presented to the Governance, Ethics and Standards Committee – a report which is available to the public.

Response:

Thank you, Mr Ingham, for your question. I know this has been an ongoing issue for some months. In answer to the specific request, in the final part of your question those figures were not included in the overall figures that were

presented at that particular meeting and I would also say that those three particular instances were part of an employment process. Thank you.

Supplementary question:

I thank Councillor Spencer for actually responding. I am appreciative of the fact you have done that and taken on board the response. My request is obviously a question with regards to what the Council now proposes to do around that because that situation has resulted in an incorrect report being presented to the Governance Committee and it has under-represented the number of complaints.

The Council also has an issue in relation to the Freedom of Information request because currently at this moment in time the situation is that complaints regarding senior officers is unlikely to be included within any FOI. FOIs are initiated by members of the public to get reassurance as such of what is actually happening within Authorities. At the moment figures which would be provided for a Freedom of Information request would not reflect the true situation so I would ask what is it the intention of the Council to do with regard to that, the action? Who will be involved? Timescales?

Response:

Thank you, Mr Ingham. I note your point. I can't give you a specific answer to the full detailed question you have put before me today. What I can say to you is I don't believe the figures were incorrect because the issues you have raised were dealt with in another process which is external to the figures.

Mr Ingham: I am sorry, Councillor Spencer, that is incorrect. This is a Freedom of Information request.

Cllr Spencer: I am going from the information in front of me, Mr Ingham.

Mr Ingham: We have taken advice. It is a totally separate discrete situation this.

Cllr Spencer: Yes, I accept your point, Mr Ingham. What I will say to you is this: I am fully aware there are a number of FOIs with regard to this particular case in the system. You have made your point with regard to those FOIs. Officers are present and taking notes and I assume you will receive a response in due course through the normal mechanisms available to you.

c) Question from Catherine Swainson on behalf of her mother, Dorothy Bleakley to Councillor N Hoy, Cabinet Member for Adult Care (not attending)

Re Simon Steven's recent letter, how can you justify the *big drop in demand for care home places* when:

- The pandemic is a singular event and will have distorted the demand figures
- You have deliberately suppressed demand by not allowing care homes to admit long-term residents
- You have disregarded future demand when Baby Boomers, a large demographic, will pass away
- You have disregarded the fact that people are living longer and the very elderly are not able to live independently even with support
- Care in the community is under resourced and not able to meet the needs of the elderly living independently - especially those which arise during the night, the failure of which causes the greatest injury, distress and discomfort when accidents occur

The Council is deliberately massaging the demand figures to produce the outcome they require to pursue their objective of homes closures despite their previous agreement *not to close any of its homes unless a local care home or alternative suitable provision was available.*

Response:

We understand this may be a difficult time for some of those directly impacted by these proposals. On numbers, the issue is that there is an over-supply of residential places in Derbyshire and this was the case even prior to the pandemic.

We appreciate there are workforce issues in the sector but at the moment there is still an over-supply of residential places. In line with her statutory duty of care, the Director for Adult Care has made the decision that no long-term residents move in because of the deteriorating condition of the electrical wiring.

The primary reason for this proposal is that the buildings have deteriorating electrical wiring. We have been advised that nobody can live in these homes beyond September 2022 for safety reasons.

d) Question from Frank Lane to Councillor K Athwal, Cabinet Member for Highways, Assets and Transport

I am a resident of Matlock Green and I regularly walk alongside and cross the A615, often with two toddlers; I also see many pedestrians attempting to cross this road, many of them young children on their way to and from school. I often fear for their safety due to the excessive speed of many vehicles through Matlock Green.

I note that in your response to a question from Olivia Ramsbottom on 14th July 2001 that you rightly prioritise areas for speed mitigation in areas “where there is the greatest need and where most benefits can be achieved” with “the use of identifiable known hard facts and figures provides robust and transparent justification for the investment”.

I also note that in Derbyshire Highways response to a planning application to DDDC (21/00547/OUT) it was stated that “the A615 Matlock Green is not considered to be a slow speed situation” (even though it is supposed to be a 30mph zone) and the results of a speed survey showing that many vehicles were exceeding the speed limit were accepted.

Given this, what plans are there are to reduce speed of traffic through Matlock Green and provide crossing facilities to ensure the safety of pedestrians?

Response:

Thank you for your question.

In most built-up urban areas that are divided by a main road with substantial levels of traffic there will always be public demand for facilities to make it easier to cross the road. Unfortunately it is not practical to locate facilities frequently through the entire length of any road so they are targeted where there is the most pedestrian footfall. This is usually close to local shopping facilities, bus stops, or perhaps where another popular route intersects the road. This is indeed the case at Matlock Green with a signal crossing already present close to the junction with Lime Tree Road and Church Street.

The comments that Mr Lane makes are in a reference provided by a Highways team in a recent planning application in response to the size of visual displays needed for traffic merging on to the main road. These simply state that this is not a speed situation which is simply in the context of it being a through-route in comparison with for example a cul-de-sac. There is no inference that there are casualty or speed concerns that are disproportionately high compared with other similar A Class routes in Derbyshire.

Question from Kath Mulligan to Councillor N Hoy, Cabinet Member for Adult Care (not attending)

Once again DCC is claiming that a vast amount of money needs to be spent on rewiring Goyt Valley House, even though we proved last year that the premises were fully rewired in 2008.

I believe it is also claimed that a new boiler is needed. This also is untrue. Shortly before the first lockdown in March 2020, staff were frantically buying up large numbers of space heaters for bedrooms and lounges when the old boiler

failed. I was a tally visiting my mother on the day when a replacement boiler was being fitted

It is very disturbing to see the same misleading claims being touted again.

If you claim the fabric of the building cannot be economically renovated, can you give a cast iron guarantee that, should the existing building be demolished, a replacement residential home will be built on the same site or elsewhere in New Mills? Moving residents away from their local area is simply not acceptable for all the same reasons we gave you last year.

Response:

The building was part rewired around 2008. There is a requirement following Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) testing, to undertake rewiring to areas not previously rewired, such as the kitchen and external areas. The main boilers have been replaced at the site following a breakdown. However, there are works required to mechanical systems.

e) Question from John Geddes to Councillor K Athwal, Cabinet Member for Highways, Assets and Transport

I want to ask for a promise about the four trials that the council is proposing for Demand Responsive Transport, or DRT.

Your Derbyshire Connect trial should have told you whether the minibuses were good value because they were typically carrying several people to similar destinations, or running around like very expensive taxis. However, you didn't collect the right data to allow anyone to work this out. (But it looks like bad news from the data that you did collect).

So I agree that we do need more trials, but this time the trials need to be done properly.

That means being clear about what it is you aim to find out, and how you will decide what the answer is. And doing that before you start, in consultation with interested parties. It means collecting, keeping and sharing comprehensive data. And it means committing to publish a review of the outcome of the trials, with a chance for sceptics or critics to check what they think the data shows, before any decisions are made about the future use of DRT by the council.

Will the Council promise to do that, please?

Response:

Thank you, Mr Geddes, for your question. It is good to meet you in person.

Derbyshire Connect Demand Responsive Transport, a trial undertaken in the Ashbourne and Wirksworth area since 2017, has shown this type of service can generate more passenger journeys than conventional supported scheduled routes in certain circumstances. However, we do recognise that this trial service has operated in a very rural area with particular characteristics. We are also aware that things have changed significantly since the trial began as a result of the pandemic with demand for bus travel currently standing at approximately 65%-75% of pre-Covid levels.

The Department for Transport's National Bus Strategy published in March this year means the end of the old model under which bus services have operated in England since the 1986 Transport Act. Bus Service Improvements Plan, the BSIP, and the associated announced partnerships offer a real opportunity to revitalise the bus industry which has been in decline nationally for at least a decade. However, these new arrangements mean we need to change as we cannot continue to do things in the same way we have over the last 35 years.

More Demand Responsive Transport is an example of the kind of change the Department for Transport want to see and we must therefore be willing to explore whether this kind of service could operate on a larger scale in Derbyshire. The precise nature of the trial proposed in the BSIP has yet to be finalised and will depend to a significant extent on how much funding is allocated by the Department for Transport.

However, subject to the proposal it is to undertake the trials in a variety of different markets and geographical areas including potentially a town service; feeder services linked to core schedule routes, and a service in a more mixed rural/urban area to understand if people will use DRT to a greater or lesser extent than the conventional scheduled bus services. A final decision on what happens following the trials will be made by this Council in conjunction with bus passengers who use the service and our bus operators. Thank you.

Supplementary question:

Satisfaction among those who use your service if you ask them that it is a little bit like asking National Lottery winners whether they think their ticket was good value. You are only asking the people who manage to use it and enjoy it. I think you are going to find the people who used it find it very satisfactory. The risk is that by making a service that is actually very expensive (because it will turn out to be a bit like a taxi but in an expensive vehicle) what you are going to see is a small number of people do really well and a lot of people unable to make rides because this vehicle has been scheduled for a number of other trips that their needs can't fit into, so can I ask for your promise that all your research will not be limited to the happy people on the bus but that you will extend it to make sure you are picking up the people who ought to be able to travel but perhaps can't?

Response:

Thank you, Mr Geddes, for that supplementary question.

I have to say, as I have said in my previous answer, that we are going through this Bus Improvement Partnership at this moment in time and we are in the process of our enhanced partnership working with Community Groups so at this point in time it is all up in the air. We are, as I said earlier, looking to consult far wider with both urban/rural areas to find a workable solution that works for all.

As to your point about a small number of vehicles going round the countryside etc, we as an Authority are here to try and meet the needs of all our residents and we need to look at the best way forward in order to do that. I assure you that when the consultation is completed from the findings of that we will know which way to go and how to plan. Thank you.

f) Question from Sue Rodrigues to Councillor N Hoy, Cabinet Member for Adult Care (not attending)

Please can you tell Council Tax Payers how much DCC spend on community care package for elderly in the catchment area and how many hours of human contact this provides? We all know how mental and cognitive health decreases when living in isolation and therefore residential care has far more to offer than just practical support. Explain why money going to care business profits could not be better spent building a care hub at Goyt Valley House. This could offer a range of supports including day care, respite and rehabilitation/earlier discharge from hospital. Why does this amazing resource have to be restricted to support for the elderly? I know of families in New Mills caring for younger people with complex physical needs, requiring the skills set of the amazing staff at GVH, who would greatly benefit from respite care. And once we are out of the current Covid restrictions there are so many ways that cross generational projects that could enhance the lives of those that live in and around New Mills. Why is DCC thinking about the future so narrow?

Response:

Please see the figures requested for this financial year up to 29/11/21:

	Before contributions	After Contributions	Provided units
Homecare	£728,698.09	£709,986.27	31,292.58 hours
Daycare	£15,612.30	£15,612.30	373.14 days
Residential	£766,755.25	£453,903.67	7245 Nights
Nursing	£88.75	£88.75	1 Night
Direct Payments	£469.43	£469.43	N/A
Other	£4,512.60	£4,124.89	N/A

Caveats and Explanatory notes:

This data is for Clients whose home address is in postcode SK22 and are all aged 65 and over.

Homecare – Please note that this includes both internal and external provision.

Daycare – Please note that daycare bathing services have been included as 0.2 of a day.

Residential – Please note that this includes both internal and external provision.

Direct Payments – Please note these funds can be used by the clients for any service.

Other – This includes Community Alarms and Stairlifts.

Contributions – These can include contributions from Clients, NHS and other funding bodies.