

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 29 November 2023 (afternoon)

a) Question from Mark Allen to Councillor C Renwick, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Environment (not attending)

“Once we had provided the LLFA with evidence that they had been misled with false information on the Woodhall Homes Orchard development in Clay Cross, they raised concerns regarding the existing properties on Windermere Road being at risk of flooding. Why was the development allowed to continue when it could have been halted at that time, who is now responsible for the consequences of all the properties being flooded on the 20th October and, what is going to be put in place to ensure this does not happen again? We proved categorically that we were put at risk and were ignored.”

Written response:

“Dear Mr Allen, thank you for your question, and I’m really sorry for the awful flooding damage that you and your neighbours experienced at the time of Storm Babet.

The County Council in their role as Lead Local Flood Authority were consulted on the Woodhall Homes planning application and provided a response to that request from the District Council for them to consider when determining the application.

The County Council did raise an objection at the time of a further Section 73 planning application, in relation to flood risk concerns, but legislation would not allow that objection to be taken into account at that time and therefore, following legal advice, the County Council’s objection was removed. The decision to allocate the site and determine any planning applications or developments lies with North East Derbyshire District Council as the Local Planning Authority.

With regards to mitigating future flooding to the flood affected properties, the County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority will continue to work with all partners and relevant organisations to model what happened on the 20th October and discuss any flood mitigation measures that can be put in place. As you know, officers recently met with residents to discuss the issues and concerns and we will continue working with you on this.”

b) Question from Chrissy Grocutt to Councillor C Cupit, Cabinet Member for Highways Assets and Transport

“Councillors will be aware that buses can reduce congestion, pollution and the CO₂ emissions which are heating our planet, but they are only able to do this when people travel by bus instead of by car. Of the 8,000 bus stops here in Derbyshire, there are 4,000 without timetable information; 2,000 have timetable cases owned by operators who do not show services run by other companies

using the stop. The remaining 2,000 bus stops have timetable cases owned and managed by Derbyshire County Council - I have found discrepancies at many of these.

Despite recent government funding of £47million for their Bus Service Improvement plan, Derbyshire County Council are failing to advertise buses at bus stops, despite Government recommendations which state that bus stops should be used as free advertising and carry full information. When will all bus stops in Derbyshire carry full information and travel maps?"

Response:

"Thank you for your question and thank you for engaging and for your support on bus services in our county. I know we have been corresponding directly and you have also been speaking to the bus team as well. I am grateful to you for flying the flag for public transport because I know you know a lot about it.

You are absolutely right that for someone to be encouraged to use the bus the first key step is knowing where it will be and then also where to get it and how to get to where you want so it is absolutely critical and it is there for a key part of our £47m BSIP plan. So part of this is updating the stop information to reflect the latest timetables and routes, which as we know changed quite a bit during the pandemic.

I am happy to reassure you this is something we have discussed quite extensively at the BSIP Board meetings with operators and we are working with operators to make those improvements over the coming weeks and months where it is needed now the services have sort of settled down, but alongside paper and static timetables on stops people today I think rightly want live and where possible wrap-around information and you hint at that in your question, so we are also trying to provide that through the RTI signs and rolling them out. We already have 300 of those in the county and also electric information boards on some of the key hubs. I think we have those in Belper and Long Eaton so far, so with this we know a lot of people, but not everybody, wants to get their bus info through different means as well such as on-the-go or in between, so we are also building an app and refreshing and rebuilding our bus timetable website to make that easier to access. We are sinking the two, both the timetables and the stops and the sort of technology side by moving to include QR codes on bus flags and stops for those who want to or can use them as well, so hopefully sort of as a summary that reassures you we have done a lot but we have also got a lot more to do and we are working on it. Does that help you?

Supplementary question:

Thank you very much. Councillors, can I please ask you to ensure that all bus stops in your areas and your wards show correct and accessible timetable information showing all of the services which call at each stop? Also it would

be great if you could sometimes use the bus services in your wards. Thank you.

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

“As a former officer the potential Council overspend of 46 million is disheartening to hear. I trust sufficient time has been provided to fully address the situation.

During my career I have contributed to help ensure the Council has managed its budget and provided protection, for example constructing the payment criteria/rules for the mass equal pay settlement agreements in 2006, contributing to Derbyshire Package terms/conditions formulation and being the lead officer for all matters associated with employee pay in ASCH for 12 years up to 2020.

I note the launch of the 2023 Your Voice Annual Survey and listening to the voice of the public is all the more important at this time – to also include any additional suggestions provided. Even more so than the 2022 survey.

Other than being published on the website how else is the survey being promoted/are focus groups going to be used again?”

Response:

“Since 2019, the Council has run the Your Council, Your Voice (YCYV) Survey on an annual basis, combining the annual residents survey and budget consultation. This approach has enabled the Council to:

- Gain a high-level understanding of resident satisfaction with Council Services
- Track resident perception on a range of key issues over time
- Support the monitoring of key Council Plan performance measures and
- Contribute towards annual budget preparation

This year’s survey asks for views on where we should prioritise our spending, satisfaction with our services and which services are most important and least important to residents, and why. There's also an opportunity to prioritise ideas as to how we could save money or raise additional revenue including an opportunity for people to give suggestions. In addition to being online, the Survey has been publicised as follows through:

- A direct survey e-mail to residents who have previously expressed an interest in being involved in further consultation organised by the Council
- A media release in the News section of the Council’s website, in the ‘Members’ News Councillors’ briefing, in the ‘Our Derbyshire’ employee

newsletter and referenced before its launch in the online 'Derbyshire Now' Council's residents' magazine

- Through Community News e-newsletter which goes to a variety of community and voluntary groups, town and parish councils and a variety of other organisations signing up, and Derbyshire Now e-News which goes to residents signing up for the latest council news
- Media releases
- Organic social media campaign on Twitter and Facebook

The Council's Cabinet will consider the survey responses relating to the budget, along with budget proposals at a meeting in early February 2024 before the budget is considered by Full Council later in the same month. As the questioner states, listening to the voice of the public is all the more important at this time and Derbyshire residents will be given the chance to have their say about individual proposals which may affect them, through a variety of consultation and engagement activity over the coming months. In addition, it is also planned to hold a series of focus groups relating to non-budget issues in the Your Council Your Voice survey in the year ahead."

Supplementary question:

"In relation to the request within the survey for additional suggestions I noted actually there is a maximum character allowance of just 100, that is characters not words. Shouldn't the public be allowed more free text space to make suggestions regarding achieving savings and generating money, especially at this pivotal time? After all there were 2,431 individuals who completed the survey last year and that character limit might have been perhaps more relevant then but we are in different times, so the question is can the survey documentation be reviewed, now it is live it hasn't closed yet, and change to allow a greater contribution from those completing the survey so they can provide more detailed feedback, examples, ideas and suggestions and not be restricted by 100 characters, which isn't a great deal?"

Response:

"Thank you, Mr Ingham, I wasn't aware that it was restricted to 100 characters but your question has been heard and I am sure the technical people who have set that up will take note of it and if it can be facilitated it may well be done but I have already expressed the other mechanisms that are available to the public to engage with the Council on this survey. I have to say that over the years since 2019 it has been relatively successful compared to the old mechanisms we used to use."

- d) Question from Linsey Farnsworth to Councillor B Lewis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Leadership, Culture, Tourism and Climate Change was withdrawn before the meeting.**