

CABINET – 20 DECEMBER 2016

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Question received from the following Members:

1. From Councillor Bartholomew to Councillor Stratford

“At the meeting of the Cabinet Advisory Group on Income Generation on 11 October I put forward a proposal for a 'Speed Tube Protocol' which I believe will not only improve Highways' response to planning applications, but will generate substantial income for the Council.

In an exchange of emails subsequent to the meeting between myself, the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Cabinet Member for Economy & Environment, it was agreed that an officer report on this proposal would be prepared for the meeting of the CAG on 29th November. Unfortunately this did not occur and is not referred to in the final report of the CAG.

Now that the Group is ending, could I have an assurance from both Cabinet members that a working party, in which I am to be included, will be established to investigate and develop the proposals?”

Answer

2. From Councillor Howson to Councillor Harrod

“Using the data provided by the DfE for the Stage 2 consultation on a National Funding Formula for Schools, how many primary and secondary schools in Oxfordshire are shown in the DfE calculations as net gainers and net losers under the proposed future arrangements?”

Answer

“Figures provided by the F40 group give the following numbers of gainers and losers:

Primary: 108 gainers, 121 losers
Secondary: 24 winners, 10 losers”

3. From Councillor Tanner to Councillor Nimmo Smith

“Does the Cabinet member now deeply regret putting dangerous buses back into the pedestrianised Queen Street in Oxford against the advice of his own officers and to the huge disappointment of the developers of the new Westgate shopping centre?”

Answer

“I think Cllr Tanner is confused about the process and should pay more attention to the agendas.

Queen Street allows for buses at present and was only closed to these services during a specific period of construction of the Westgate Centre to allow better site access - once the developers had carried out the work, Queen Street was always programmed to re-open to buses.

The recent item on the Cabinet Member Decisions Environment meeting was regarding the longer term situation in Queen Street. If Cllr Tanner had read the papers properly then he would have understood the difference.

It will be a Cabinet decision about whether or not to pedestrianise Queen Street once the new Westgate centre opens. The item on the Cabinet Member Decisions Environment meeting has a much wider impact than the routine yellow lines, disabled parking bays and pedestrian crossings normally dealt with and it is appropriate that a wider decision is sought. Cllr Tanner is - as always - welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the debate, which may, or may not, give him the decision he seeks.”

4. From Councillor Purse to Councillor Nimmo Smith

“Given the likely impact of far fewer cuts of verges will lead to changes in the vegetation on verges, what is being done to ensure that the biodiversity of Oxfordshire verges does not suffer, and are any guidelines being passed on to Parishes taking on their own grass cutting.”

Answer

5. From Councillor Purse to Councillor Nimmo Smith

“Lorries parking in laybys along the Eastern Bypass between Headington and Cowley continue to bring a nuisance to local residents and others using the roads and laybys as the drives stay for hours at a time and habitually use the roadsides as toilets. Can the Cabinet member urgently enter into talks with those large local businesses likely to attract deliveries about providing proper facilities for lorry drivers to park, so reducing the unpleasantness and risk to public health being caused at present.”

Answer

“The laybys referred to do provide an important facility to allow HGV drivers to have their statutory breaks which are designed to ensure drivers don’t drive when they are tired.

Senior officers and Councillors do have regular meetings with key representatives from the BMW Mini plant in Cowley and we continue to raise with them issues relating to the major HGV flows to and from their site. I am aware that over the last few years they have made a number of changes in their arrangements to allow them to accommodate more HGVs on site.

I have asked officers to liaise with both the City Council (who are responsible for cleansing) and Thames Valley Police to see whether there are any low-cost measures that can be taken to relieve the problems referred to.”