

ACTIONS ARISING FROM ORAL QUESTIONS RAISED AT FULL COUNCIL ON 19th JULY 2016

- a) In response to a question from Councillor Sales, in his absence it was agreed that Councillor Bates, Chairman of the Economy and Environment Committee, would provide a written answer on whether consideration would be given to reducing the charge for Park & Ride Sites to £1.00 for a limited period, to incorporate the cost of parking and the bus journey, to demonstrate that it was an effective means of getting people to leave their car behind.

Response

A response was provided on 28th July reading:

Thank you Cllr Sales for this question. The current fare for park and ride services is £3 and the parking charge at the sites is £1. There are also a range of discount fares for families, etc. All services are operated commercially by Stagecoach and the services continue to be a great success with over 3m passengers using the five sites around Cambridge on an annual basis and many more using the busway park and ride sites.

Although as noted by Cllr Hickford, the City Deal Board is considering whether as part of the current proposals to reduce congestion in Cambridge, changes could be introduced to make park and ride more attractive, there has been no consideration to reduce the overall cost to £1. This would be an extremely costly measure and would require ongoing subsidy of many millions of pounds per year. Even for a limited period, it would be expensive and could be counter-productive when the fare was returned to the current level.

- b) In response to a question from Councillor Jenkins, it was agreed that in his absence that Councillor Bates, the Council's representative on the City Deal Executive Board, should provide a written answer on whether consultation on Phase 1 initiatives within the City Deal had been undertaken in the wrong order as Councillor Jenkins contention was that it should be looking at the results of its study before it decided what to do.

Response

A response was sent on 28th July reading:

Thank you Cllr Jenkins for this question. The first thing that I would say is that there is a very large amount of information already available to us through various travel surveys, the census and our modelling. This has guided the City Deal Board's decisions so far. That said, more information is always helpful, hence the recent decision from the Board.

My main point though is that with the need to address the congestion problems in Cambridge in order to protect the environment and the economy and to reduce air pollution being so pressing, the Board is confident that it has enough information on which to base the current round of decisions. So to address the specific point from Cllr Jenkins, it would have been nice to commence the process with the additional research, but that would have delayed the delivery of the schemes and so I am confident that this will not be a problem for the overall process. It will, however, be fed into subsequent decisions.

- c) In response to a question from Councillor Giles regarding what financial arrangements were in place for additional grass cuts in addition to the three cuts already carried out by Huntingdonshire District, Council Councillor McGuire the Chairman of the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee explained that discussions were ongoing with HDC on how to proceed.

Response

A reply on 29th July to all Councillors reading:

Thank you for your question on grass cutting in Huntingdonshire seeking assurances on the financial arrangements for the remainder of the season. As you are aware, there have been recent discussions with Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) and these will continue as we develop proposals for a more financially sustainable way of delivering the grass cutting service over county, district and town/parish land. In the meantime, I can assure you that the Executive Director has agreed that funding will be available to continue grass cutting throughout the current season until the new ways of working are established next year. This will mean that all county owned grass will be cut as normal from now onwards.

- d) In response to a question from Councillor Chapman, Councillor Count, the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee, agreed to provide a written answer on the Boundary Commission Review setting out where the figures for the current electorate and proposed electorate in his Division had come from and what they were based on.

Response

A response was provided on 26th July reading:

“The figures used for the length of the review were produced in early 2014 using the available planning monitoring data from 2013. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) adopted these as a basis for undertaking the review at an early stage and for use throughout the review. As Councillor Count outlined in his initial answer at full council the Boundary Review has considerably overrun compared to the originally published LGBCE timescale and although these electorate forecasts were produced with the best available information ‘at the time’ we do now have the frustration at this very late stage of the review (final recommendations publish in September 2016) of being able to see that for a part of St Neots, the electorate isn’t exactly as forecast.

Please do keep in mind though that the official consultation time period has closed. In response to representations made during the last round of consultation Alex Hinds at the boundary commission asked me to review the figures for polling district ET. Since full council I have written to both yourself and Alex Hinds at the boundary commission confirming the emerging discrepancy for this polling district (ET). When revisiting the original forecast and I confirmed that it was accurate in so much as it was consistent with the house building trajectories published at the time (late 2013) by Huntingdonshire District Council, however those published in December 2015 are different, in other words the planned developments for the area will be delivered over a long time period than originally anticipated.

I understand Alex Hinds from the LGBCE has now been in contact with you and confirmed the following:

“We have concluded that we are at a point where we cannot consider further amendments to the forecasts for Cambridgeshire. The forecasts 2014 – 2021 were produced by the County Council and agreed by the Commission as being the most accurate at the time. We appreciate time has moved on and development forecasts have changed since the initial forecasts were first produced. However, to ensure the review is completed in time for the 2017 county elections and to avoid any further delay in this review, we will be proceeding with the forecasts as agreed by the Commission and the County Council without amendment”.

Sent with Thanks

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- e) In response to a question from Councillor S Taylor, it was agreed that a written response would be provided by Councillor Bates, the Chairman of the Economy and Environment Committee, setting out what the Council was doing to ensure sustainability through the provision of additional employment in St Neots and when St Neots would have an Enterprise Zone.

Response

A response was sent on 28TH July reading:

Thank you Cllr Taylor for your question. Firstly, I think it has to be recognised that the Council only has a certain level of influence over when and where jobs are created. Quite rightly, most new employment is generated by the private sector and companies make individual decisions in their best interest. However, working with our district partners, the Enterprise Partnership and colleagues, we do promote inward investment and the provision of training to ensure employees have appropriate skills to meet the needs of employers. With district partners, through their Local Plans, we also work to ensure that appropriate land is available for employment uses and there is a good balance between housing and employment. One of the very specific functions that the Council also has is to develop transport plans to promote growth and deliver transport schemes that make access to jobs easier. An example in St Neots is the work we are doing with Highways England on the much needed improvement to the A428.

So overall as I say, there are only limited powers that we have as a Council, but we use what we have to promote employment and sustainability.

- f) In response to a question from Councillor Wisson, a written answer would be provided by Councillor McGuire, the Chairman of the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee, as soon as possible about when the first and subsequent grass cuts could be expected for the footpaths in Abbotsley and Great Paxton.

Response

A response was sent on 1st August setting out the question and responses provided at the Council meeting and additionally stating "Thank you Cllr Wisson for your question. The first thing I would say is that this has been a particularly difficult season for grass cutting as the weather has meant that growth has been particularly rapid. That said, I fully understand the concerns of residents and I have been focused with the Executive Director, on how we can address these issues.

In terms of the Rights of Way grass cutting specifically, the contract for the work is with two local family businesses and is in its second year of three. We have been satisfied with previous work but this year, the speed of growth has been a challenge for both contractors and as such they have struggled with the agreed programme. I understand from officers that these specific areas were cut by the contractors last week, and they are checking that this is the case. I can also confirm that the second cut for rights of way is due to start the last week in August.

- g) In response to a question from Councillor Manning, it was agreed that a written answer would be provided by Councillor Bates, the Council's Representative on the City Deal Board, confirming the arrangements for making decisions about the Milton Road trees and specifically whether the decision would be taken by officers.

Response

A response was sent on 29th July reading:

Thank you Councillor Manning for your question. I understand the sensitivity of landscape design and trees as part of the City Deal schemes and can assure you that for my part as a Board Member, I take these issues seriously and want to ensure that the schemes brought forward enhance the local environment. Turning to the process, the City Deal Executive Board resolutions on the Milton Road scheme make it clear that tree planting will form part of the scheme design. Following design workshops with the Local Liaison Forum (LLF), to which key stakeholder groups including local residents' association representatives and landscape and tree experts will be invited, a detailed scheme design will be prepared for public consultation, including proposals for highway tree removal and tree planting. Following public consultation and further iterations to the scheme design, in light of public consultation and with further input from the LLF, a scheme design will then be presented to the Executive Board for approval. So the final decision on trees will be made by the elected representatives on the Board.

- h) In response to a question from Councillor Sir Peter Brown, a written answer would be provided by Councillor Count, Chairman of the General Purposes Committee / Leader of the Council, setting out the arrangements by which any business case submitted by the Police and Crime Commissioner regarding the Fire Authority would be considered by the Council.

Response

An email response was sent on 22nd August reading on behalf of Councillor Count the Leader of the Council reading:

Dear Sir Peter,

This message is a follow up in response to your oral question raised at Council. I have included the text of the questions and initial responses from the transcript of the meeting below.

The Fire Service and the Police Service are both separate and independent organisations from Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC). As such any business proposal from one organisation to another would not normally come to the County Council as the primary authority, as stated in the question. The County Council's sphere of influence in their decision making processes are entrusted to the representatives we nominate to serve on the Fire Authority and the Police and Crime Panel. As such any decision regarding this issue would fall to be dealt with through their own decision making processes. This would of course include reference to the Fire Authority on which CCC is represented.

In terms of the secondary question, there is no facility for a request for the business case between these two external organisations to come to Full Council as the decision is not delegated by CCC, as intimated in the question, but enshrined in those bodies own sovereign decision making powers. The only route obviously open to Council would be oral questions to the Chair of the Fire Authority and the Chair of the Police and Crime Panel, but these response would be non - binding and time limited under normal constitutional procedure.

Question 8) Question from Councillor Sir Peter Brown to Councillor Steve Count, Leader of the Council

My question is to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Count, and it relates to matters regarding the fire authority and the police and crime commissioner and the police and crime bill that is now going through Parliament. I think by the end of the year the police and crime commissioner will be making a case, a business case, for what he wants to do to get involved with the local fire service. At some point that case has to come before this Council as the primary authority. I just wonder what he can tell me as to what the arrangements might be when that business case comes forward and how we're going to consider it.

Response from Councillor Count, Leader of the Council

Thank you Sir Peter. I'm unaware of the exact process to be fair. However, we have a constitution that lays down our relationship with all bodies. It stresses the limits for delegation and it will follow that. All I can say is that whatever involvement this Council has in looking at that business case will be given the full and due diligence that all of our other business is given.

Supplementary question from Councillor Brown

Chairman, could I just ask that, that case actually comes before a meeting of this Council and is not delegated?

Response from Councillor Count

Thank you. What I'll do Sir Peter is I'll have a look at where we are in the delegations regarding that and then I shall circulate to everybody a written reply and on the basis of that, we can come to a view as to what's the best way to proceed.

Regards,
Steve

Steve Count

Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council

Councillor for March North

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- i) In response to a question from Councillor Mason, Councillor Count, the Leader of the Council, agreed to take up with officers the question of the timing and scheduling of meetings about reports into defects in the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway

Response

An e-mail response was sent out on 4th August on behalf of Councillor Bates the Chairman of the Economy and Environment Committee which when responding set out the original question and responses and further added "Thank you Councillor Mason for your question at Full Council concerning the Busway. Most of the points raised were answered by Cllr Count. As Cllr Count said, this is a complex issue and getting the information right is absolutely vital. The current expectation is that the report, which hasn't yet been finalised, will be considered by General Purposes Committee the 29th November, and Group Leaders prior to that. This is currently being added to the forward agenda plan. The report is also planned to be discussed with Economy Transport and Environment (ETE) Spokes on the 1st November.

I hope this assures you this will be discussed by Members as soon as it can.

Updated 31st August 2016.

