

(5) MEMBER QUESTIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, questions have been submitted, and responses provided, as follows:-

(1) From Councillors AW Berry and Mark Harris to Councillor Nick Parsons, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

'There is considerable interest and enthusiasm being shown about a proposal to run a hybrid electric/diesel light-railway between Cirencester and Kemble by re-opening the old railway line.

The track would start on the edge of the proposed Chesterton development, with a car park under the electricity pylons (space which could be used for little else) and the possibility of a regular bus circuit to and from the town centre. (A possible 'park and ride' operation?)

This proposal is being driven by Warwick University (with other universities) who want a track to test their new driver-less hybrid light-railway train. It is expected that they would agree to conduct an initial survey by students which, if successful, would need to be supported by a follow-on specialist survey.

The project is not without its potential problems, mainly the lack of a bridge over the A429 just outside Kemble; however, we would appreciate Cabinet giving a response to the following:-

- Do you like the concept?
- Would you be prepared to support it:-
 - as a project?
 - by making available funds for the professional survey?
- The survey and all other things being positive, would you support the raising of funds for the project, including financial assistance, possibly from the new strategic infrastructure fund?

Further information is available at: <http://cirentrain.org.uk>'

Response from Councillor Nick Parsons

'I thank you for your question - the proposal would appear an interesting concept.

I have read with interest the initial scheme/project document, and note that it is realistic in identifying not only the positive implications and benefits but also the negative aspects and many challenges (particularly regarding bridge construction/works, and land assembly).

I would also support the intention to undertake early stake-holder engagement, including those involved with the Chesterton Strategic Site given not only the land use aspects but the funding assumption made in the scheme document - 'It is anticipated that the rail service would be seen as an integral part of the housing development adjacent to Chesterton, as there will be an obligation on the developer to contribute to local public transport enhancement'. It may also be worth contacting the County Council, given its current Local Transport Plan deliberations.

In response to your specific questions, I believe that any formal support would depend on the findings/outcome of the initial study, and any stake-holder responses.

I am sure that you will acknowledge that it would not be possible, or indeed right, to commit the Council to future funding at this stage, even in principle - this would need to be considered in the light of the initial study findings.'

(2) From Councillor Ray Brassington to Councillor Nick Parsons, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

'Will the Council undertake a review of the various lighting systems used both inside and outside its buildings with a view to replacing old units with LED lights? Their use would significantly reduce energy demands and therefore emissions of Carbon Dioxide which are a contributor to climate change.

LEDs last as much as 20 times longer than other lighting sources, and therefore don't need to be replaced so often. This reduces the impact of manufacturing, packaging and shipping. LEDs also are designed to provide more than a decade of near maintenance-free service.

Additionally, LEDs consume less energy than incandescent and high-intensity discharge (HID) lights. LED lights use only 2-17 watts of electricity, which is 25%-80% less energy than standard lighting systems. And while compact fluorescent lights are also energy-efficient, LEDs use even less energy.

LEDs contain no mercury, unlike their HID counterparts, whose mercury-laden remnants can seep into our water supply and adversely affect sea life, and those who eat it. A downstream benefit to using LED lights is that they produce significantly less heat than other lighting sources, meaning cooling costs are greatly reduced. This adds up to considerable energy savings.'

Response from Councillor Nick Parsons

'The observations and comments of Councillor Brassington are valid, and I can confirm that they are matters of which we are aware and, indeed, have been, and continue to be, the subject of on-going action.

By way of detail, I would advise as follows:

Through its Property Services and Energy Conservation Officers, the Council has considered several schemes to introduce LED and other high efficiency/low energy consumption lighting over recent years. In the early stages of this process, fluorescent lighting was converted to high frequency, low energy T5 type and compact fluorescent lamps utilised in other luminaires.

Prior to the agreement to contract out the operation of the Leisure and Cultural Facilities, the Council had set out schemes for a variety of energy reduction strategies within these properties, including the conversion of traditional lighting to LED. These requirements were included as conditions of the contract arrangements agreed and have recently been implemented by the Contractor throughout.

The Forum Car Park refurbishment scheme includes LED lighting and similar options are being considered for inclusion within further upgrading schemes. Supplementary car park lighting to our own 'green' car park at Trinity Road provides high level LED flood type luminaires.

In terms of our offices:-

- The areas of the link and south wing recently converted for the co-location of DWP has LED lighting throughout; and some smaller trails schemes have been implemented as part of the recently completed office/officer relocation project carried out to facilitate the release of the Link Block and South Wing for tenancy availability. The first floor thereof is due for upgrading works in the near future to provide for these additional tenancies, together with certain other retained areas, and LED lighting will be included within the schemes.
- The areas of the planning atrium for the collective occupation of the restructured Public Protection service, located beneath the Council Chamber, are due to have all lighting converted to LED within the next few weeks, in readiness for the 'go live' date of 23rd May 2016.
- We are currently in the process of grouping other areas for upgrade, based upon previous studies, and are looking to embark upon an upgrading programme of these additional areas, which will then be extended to our other properties within the District, including the Moreton Area Centre.

Given the expenditure involved, roll-out needs to be planned according to budget availability - with this in mind, a two-year programme of planned installation works to priority areas will be formulated. However, within any reactive replacement works which occur in the interim, we will seek to implement the lowest energy and most cost-effective solutions.

It is accepted and acknowledged that advances in LED technology, colour rendering/ resolution, performance and cost in both capital and on-going maintenance terms have significantly improved the viability of LED against other lighting technologies.'

Notes:

(i) Question (1) above was submitted by the deadline by which a response was guaranteed to be provided at least 24 hours in advance of the Meeting - and the response was duly sent to the Members concerned.

(ii) Question (2) above was, however, submitted after the deadline by which an answer could be guaranteed either in advance of, or at, the Cabinet Meeting. However, the Cabinet Member has been able to provide a response in the time available, which has been sent to Councillor Brassington.

(iii) If any of the questioners is present at the Meeting, he will be entitled to ask one supplementary question in respect of each original question. Any supplementary question must arise directly out of either the original question or the answer given thereto.

(iv) An immediate answer cannot be guaranteed to any supplementary question, but the Cabinet Member will try and answer any supplementary question(s) at the Meeting. However, if this is not possible, then the Cabinet Member will answer as much as possible at the Meeting and then provide a full response within five working days. If, for any reason, a full response cannot be provided within those five days, then a holding response will be sent to the questioner, along with the reason for delay and a likely timescale for the full response.

(END)