

**(6) MEMBER QUESTIONS**

Questions have been submitted, and responses provided, as follows:-

**(1) From Councillor RW Dutton to Councillor Sue Coakley, Cabinet Member for Environment**

'The ambitious flood relief scheme for Moreton has now been successfully completed. This was a major achievement, not completed without difficulty, and I take this opportunity on behalf of the residents of Moreton to thank you and all those who brought the Scheme to fruition. It is now anticipated that the Scheme will make a significant contribution to avoiding a repeat of the disastrous flooding that occurred in the town in 2007. It is of course recognised that it will be important to monitor and maintain the Scheme, which is quite extensive in scale. Many residents in Moreton much appreciate what has been achieved.

Will the Cabinet Member now please summarise the total cost of the Scheme and indicate how this cost has been borne. I understand some final payments may still be under discussion but, for the purposes of your answer, please make a round sum allowance for these within your response.'

**Response from Councillor Coakley**

*Since 2012, a series of flood prevention works have been carried out at Moreton-in-Marsh, mostly in response to the flooding of 2007. Those works have included property level protection, new culverts under the public highway and road bridge, diversion of drainage ditches, new surface water drains, a flood defence bund, watercourse de-silting and vegetation clearance, new headwalls and trash screens, new culverts in field drainage systems and a new surface water diversion pipeline.*

*Moreton had this series of works carried out to achieve a general level of flood protection, primarily for the areas that suffered in 2007 but also for the general area of the town.*

*Since 2012, £1.3 million has been spent on flood defence work for the settlement. The final pipeline cost was estimated at over £900,000, including landowner compensation, land agent and legal costs.*

*The final cost is expected to rise by at least another £20,000 to cover the cost of the final land reinstatement claim being negotiated. That money has been ring-fenced in the CDC flood defence reserves.*

*The partners involved and their contributions are as follows:*

- |                                  |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| • Cotswold District Council      | £660,782 |
| • Gloucestershire County Council | £458,710 |
| • Environment Agency             | £160,000 |
| • Moreton-in-Marsh Town Council  | £20,000  |

(2) From Councillor Jenny Hincks to Councillor Tony Berry, Leader of the Council

Can the Leader please tell me why CDC had not been liaising with GCC Highways about the resurfacing of Ashcroft Road until 4<sup>th</sup> February? I, as a town councillor, knew some time before that, and had been in communication with Highways, including the lead engineer, with concerns from residents and local businesses about the road being closed for nearly a week.'

Response from Councillor Berry

*The Council became aware of the potential resurfacing works back in mid-December, through notification of a much wider programme of works over a broad period.*

*However, unlike affected residents and businesses, we did not subsequently receive any notification of the confirmed works or dates (as no connection had been made regarding the car park usage, and it was apparently not known that we owned and operated the car park).*

*Our Officers became aware of the actual dates by way of a request from a local business, forwarded on by one of our members, for us to make available some spaces in a nearby car park for his staff to use during the period of the works.*

*As soon as the situation was known, our Officers contacted the County Council to see what might be done to find a way of minimising the impact on traders in the town and visitors, as well as reducing the potential traffic chaos arising from the displacement of around 1,000 cars each day into the surrounding areas of Cirencester.*

*A number of options were suggested and explored and, within the week, a solution had been secured - namely to move the work to a number of consecutive Sundays. As soon as this had been achieved, we issued a Press Release; and the following day (a Saturday), we hand delivered letters to the affected residents, businesses and organisations.*

*I am grateful to the swift response of our Officers, and of the collaboration of County officials to enable a solution - they are to be commended. We have also received a positive response to our initiative and actions, particularly from businesses.*

(3) From Councillor Jenny Hincks to Councillor Tony Berry, Leader of the Council

'Can the Cabinet Member please tell me why a person with disabilities cannot access public toilets in the Cotswold area with their RADAR key?'

Note:

*This question has been withdrawn by Councillor Hincks as the problem identified was a short-term issue that has been resolved.*

(4) From Councillor Mark Harris to Councillor Tony Berry, Leader of the Council

'A resident has approached me concerned about charges for building control services at this Council.

He was quoted £1,198 for a pre application meeting, a plan check, consultation with the fire service and issue of completion certificate.

His agent thought this was excessive and sought an alternative quote from another local source and was quoted £450.

Can the Leader explain why Publica is charging nearly three times as much as another local firm for an identical service?

On the face of it, it appears that local taxpayers are being ripped off by Publica. How can we ensure that CDC isn't being treated in the same way?

Response from Councillor Berry

*The first point that I need to make is that both service standards and fees and charges for any of the services provided by the Council, either direct or via Publica, are set by Council Members, either collectively or by individual Cabinet Members.*

*As Members will be aware, the Building Control Service operates in a commercial market, with Authorised Officers able to provide local services. We are also aware that the services offered can vary considerably and so, without knowing the specific detail, it is not possible to explain the variation. However, we would be happy to look into the matter if you could provide us with more information.*

*I would wish to conclude by expressing regret at your choice of language, especially with regards Publica. Publica is our company, and represents an innovative way forward to help the Council meet its financial and other targets in the future. There is no 'ripping off' - indeed, not only has Publica met its financial targets but it has managed to exceed them, for our benefit and for the benefit of the District and all those who live and work here. Perhaps you might wish to reflect on your comments.*

(5) From Councillor Andrew Doherty to Councillor Tony Berry, Leader of the Council

'The Cotswolds was recently ranked joint last (out of the authorities in the area) in a BBC Newsbeat study of "How good is your place for young people?".

What steps will the council be taking to improve that performance and address the issues that particularly affect the under 25s in our community?'

Response from Councillor Berry

*Whilst this Council is not the statutory body responsible for youth services and nor do we have direct influence on many of the factors that led to this ranking - such as bus services, wild land (not farmland or parks), or bars, pubs and clubs - we acknowledge there is more to do.*

*With the reduction in public sector funding over the past ten years, we have seen a reduction in youth services and a refocus to a more targeted approach to serving the most vulnerable.*

*In recognition of these challenges, this Council has established the Cotswold Youth network with over 200 organisations registered. The Council is investing in activities both small and large scale across the District. The Health Connect project in Bourton will see a youth council developed and piloted to see its effect, along with a skills-based outdoor education programme in conjunction with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, for young people not set on an academic path.*

*As with many of the key issues affecting our District, a collaborative approach with our partners will have the greatest impact on this issue.*

(6) From Councillor Ray Brassington to Councillor Tony Berry, Leader of the Council

'When the 'provisional' planning permission for Chesterton Farm was granted by Council in January 2018, the S106 arrangements were to be completed by 12<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

As planning officers have granted FOUR extensions to the developer on this deadline - without any reference to full Council - will those permissions be lapsing on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2019?'

Response from Councillor Berry

*A further extension of time may be requested, and considered, if the S106 Agreements have not been completed and signed by 28<sup>th</sup> February. Extensions of time fall to be considered by the Case Officer. The drafting of the S106 Agreements is in accordance with the Head of Terms agreed at the Special Council Meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2018 and there are no new or altered material considerations that would require the Full Council to reconsider the application.*

*The S106 negotiations are near completion, with progress being made daily. The majority of the Schedules within the agreements have been agreed subject to the specific legal wording.*

*More generally, notwithstanding the fact that a 'completion date' had been identified in the original Council decision, that decision also clearly recognised that an extended period for finalising the legal agreements might be likely. This is not unusual for a complex large-scale development.*

*Progress has been regularly monitored by the Case Officer, and the determination period for the application has remained under continual review, with the Council responding to requests for extensions of time in a proportionate manner and on the merits of doing so at the time. The relevant correspondence is available on the planning portal.*

(7) From Councillor Ray Brassington to Councillor Sue Coakley, Cabinet Member for Environment

*'In September I asked about street signs in the District and you said "I am happy to look at the cost of having the frames painted for all new signs that are installed. If this results in any significant budgetary impacts, a report will be brought back to Members for decision.'*

What is the latest on this?'

Response from Councillor Coakley

*This issue is part of a current wider piece of work to establish how we best deal with street sign provision (including budget implications), which we hope to have concluded by the end of March.*

(8) From Councillor Jenny Forde to Sue Coakley, Cabinet Member for Environment

'Please can you tell me how many instances of fly tipping there have been in my ward since the last Council meeting in December?'

Response from Councillor Coakley

*There has been one instance of fly tipping reported in the Chedworth & Churn Valley Ward since the last Council Meeting.*

(9) From Councillor Jenny Forde to Councillor Tony Berry, Leader of the Council

'You might be aware that I've started a campaign with County Councillor Paul Hodgkinson to secure a safer crossing over the A435 at North Cerney.

In order to access North Cerney Church for their morning worship, pupils at the village primary school have to cross the busy road using a police escort to hold the traffic. This isn't a good use of police resources and is dangerous.

Does the Leader support my campaign and what can Cotswold District Council do to help make it a reality?'

Response from Councillor Berry

*I would agree on both fronts - that this is dangerous and not a good use of police resources.*

*I know that, some time ago, there was a reduction in the speed limit on the A435 at North Cerney - but do not know whether the situation to which you now refer applied at that time and therefore may have been a consideration in the decision to reduce that speed limit.*

*However, if this is not a long-standing issue, I would presume the school's leadership will have taken these factors into account in arriving at the decision to hold morning worship at North Cerney Church.*

*Nevertheless, in view of the safety aspects, I would be happy to write, on behalf of the Council, to Gloucestershire County Council Highways to ask what measures they can consider/implement.*

(10) From Councillor Joe Harris to Councillor Tony Berry, Leader of the Council

'What plans do the Conservative administration have to help tackle social mobility in the Cotswolds?'

Response from Councillor Berry

*We recognise this is a complex issue, with a range of factors that need to be addressed. With the exception of Stroud, all Gloucestershire districts were ranked in the bottom half of England for the social mobility rankings in the State of the Nation 2017 report.*

*We are committed to working alongside our public sector colleagues to address the root causes impacting on social mobility in our District and our County. We recognise this needs a multi-agency approach, and a county-wide social mobility group has been established to develop a deeper and proper understanding of these root causes, and to take forward some actions which will positively impact on social mobility, for the long term.*

*Cotswold ranked especially poorly for youth and some of the things we've already put in place are detailed in my response to Councillor Doherty's earlier question. There is clearly a need to address the number of young people not in education, employment or training after completing their compulsory education, so we plan a continued focus to drive economic development by working with the LEP to remove barriers to the delivery of new employment activity.*

*Work is underway to ensure that we have a bank of evidenced data across a wide range of issues that impact on the District and its communities to help inform the Council's Corporate Strategy for 2019-2023. That Strategy will include the positive actions we can take that contribute to improved social mobility - both directly and through representation to partners.*

*There is a collective responsibility to make the Cotswold District an even better place; and social mobility is a prime example of this shared accountability.*

*Whilst we absolutely recognise the need to improve social mobility, we should not forget that this is just one factor in determining the 'quality of life' for our*

*residents and there are many other components that are important to people. The Halifax Bank have been tracking a broad basket of indicators over many years - not just picking on one particular aspect. In their latest release of results for 2019, Cotswold District ranked as the seventh best place to live in the UK (up from 43<sup>rd</sup> place in 2017) and the best place in the entire South West region.*

*We should celebrate all that is good about living within Cotswold District whilst also recognising that there are always areas of improvement.*

(11) From Councillor Joe Harris to Councillor Tony Berry, Leader of the Council

'Will the Leader condemn the behaviour of Aura Care Ltd in their contravention of planning conditions, in particular marketing Stratton Care Village widely on hotel websites?'

Response from Councillor Berry

*I would hope that any developer would comply with the conditions/restrictions imposed on planning permissions but, unfortunately and as we all know, this is not always the case. Similar, we will all be aware of developers that carry out work without even applying for permission.*

*Neither is lawful, and developers do so at their own risk. If such instances are made known to us, then it falls on us to determine the expediency of action, having regard to the requirements and parameters of planning legislation and guidance.*

Notes:

(i) The above questions were submitted by the time by responses are guaranteed to be provided to the questioner at least 24 hours before the Council Meeting (by virtue of the Council's Procedure Rules). As such, written responses will be provided to all Members either in advance of, or at, the Council Meeting.

(ii) If the questioners are present at the Meeting, they will be entitled to ask one supplementary question arising directly out of either the answer given or their original question.

(iii) The Member to whom any supplementary question is addressed will try and answer any supplementary question at the Meeting; but if this is not possible, then the 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)