

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

The following questions listed on pages 39–40 of the agenda have been received from Councillors and will be taken as read along with the written answer detailed below. The Councillor asking the question may then ask one relevant supplementary question which shall be put and answered without discussion. A second supplementary question may be asked by any other Member of the Council which shall also be put and answered without discussion:

(a) Councillor McCaffery

“This Council is responsible for the safety of children in our care. The number of children in care has increased from an average of 375 in December 2008 to an average of 460 at the present time, an increase of 25%. Would the Cabinet Member inform this Council of the increase in the budget necessary to meet this substantial increase in demand?”

Reply from Councillor Brown, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People.

“Pressure on the children’s social care budget has been considerable this year and there have been significant additional costs (£1,519,000) stemming from increased activity.

These have arisen from an increase in legal fees (£650,000), an increase in agency placements for children (£487,000) and an increase in area social work teams (£305,000).

This pressure is being felt nationally across other Local Authorities and arises from a number of factors:

- the introduction of the Public Law Outline
- an increase in court fees
- an increase in referrals following the death of Baby P and other high profile cases
- credit crunch and other economic factors

Our staff have done an excellent job managing the increased activity and the focus has been on running a service which ensures the safety and well-being of children in Brighton and Hove. But we are not complacent about this and we will continue to work to ensure good standards of child protection and safeguarding.

Going forward we are taking steps to keep children safe and ensure effective use of resources at a time when child protection is under national scrutiny and central Government grant funding is failing to keep pace with the increased demand. This work includes a renewed focus on preventative services to support children and families at risk. It also includes reviewing how we work with partner agencies. We are also doing work to ensure best value placement costs and care planning arrangements.”

(b) Councillor Kitcat

“Can Cllr Geoffrey Theobald provide details on what is done with the biodegradable waste produced by the work of City Parks in particular where it is taken, how it is processed and whether this is done by contractors or the Council itself?”

Reply from Councillor Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

“Waste from our gardens and parks is dealt with in separate ways - depending on the nature of the waste. Wood predominantly produced from the maintenance of the city’s trees is chipped and used to mulch the city’s shrub beds, thus replacing residual herbicides which used to be used for weed control in these areas.

Chipping and mulching waste wood is carried out by our own staff. Mixed garden waste is taken to Stanmer Park where it is shredded and then transported to Isfield for composting to be completed. This is carried out by a specialist contractor selected following an open tendering procedure.”

(c) Councillor Kitcat

“Can Cllr Geoffrey Theobald clarify for members the contractual arrangements with Veolia regarding municipal waste collection? Is it the case that any residential waste collected from the street must be processed by Veolia?”

Reply from Councillor Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

“The Waste PFI Contract, like many contracts across the country is with a sole service provider. This means that they alone have the contract to handle the council’s waste and receive an income, and this income provides for the construction of the waste facilities for Brighton & Hove City Council and East Sussex County Council.

The contract is complex and the details are on the website.”

(d) Councillor Davey

“At the first full meeting of the recently formed city wide Transport Partnership the Cabinet Member for Environment who chairs the partnership suggested that he had been told to be there and thought that the meeting was a waste of time that would achieve nothing.

In light of this could the Leader of the council please clarify whether or not her administration is committed to cross sector partnership working to address the acute transport problems facing Brighton & Hove and whether she agrees or not

that the council needs to bring about a widespread shift to sustainable low carbon transport across the city.”

Reply from Councillor Mears, Leader of the Council.

“I have been assured by the Cabinet Member for Environment that he did not say those words at the Transport Partnership meeting but I really am unable to comment with any authority on what may or may not have happened because I was not there.

What I can say is that I personally endorsed the setting up of the Transport Partnership at the LSP meeting in October so that we could have a forum which enables the Council and our partners to work together on finding solutions to some of the City’s transport problems. I stand by this decision. We are already making progress in terms of low carbon transport through for example electric vehicle charging points, committing to park and ride and looking at our own vehicle fleet as part of the 10-10 campaign commitment.”

(e) Councillor West

“In 2005 Peter Brett Associates conducted a study of potential park and ride sites. Of the 11 potential sites that were considered worth looking at in detail, Braypool Sports Ground, Waterhall, Waterhall (“the Borough Plan site”), Mill Road West (Green Ridge) and Patcham Place all now fall within the National Park. Patcham Court Farm is being marketed for business development, Woollards Field will be home to The Keep (records office). The former Gasworks and Roedean Miniature Golf Course are now at the wrong end of the new coastal bus lane. As an indication of the feasibility of finding suitable sites it is worth noting the two top scoring sites were shockingly Patcham Place and Green Ridge! Of the remainder, that leaves just Basin Road, Shoreham Harbour and Court Farm, neither of which were judged able to properly serve the important A27/A23 junction.

In the light of this can Councillor Theobald state which sites are being considered in the new study commissioned of Peter Brett into Park and Ride, and by what miracle he expects this to reveal any better conclusions about the availability of feasible sites, and how the expense of such a study is therefore justified?”

Reply from Councillor Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

“Thank you for drawing out some aspects of the work that was undertaken by the previous administration. We have not commissioned a new study, but we have asked consultants to review and update the past work in the light of changes in circumstances that have occurred since 2005, for example the announcement on the National Park.

We want to consider the possibility of identifying sites that are smaller than those that were previously considered. Once we are able to report on the outcome of that review, we will do so.”

(f) Councillor West

“The 2005 Park & Ride study (using Halcrow Demand Modelling) also revealed that 2 out of 3 morning peak hour car trips begin and end within the city. Of the remainder more leave the city than are incoming. This pattern is repeated for daytime traffic as well. Only a small proportion of traffic in the city is therefore in-bound, perhaps only 10% of total trips. Moreover, the scale of in-bound traffic is such that even given a park and ride capacity of 1500 spaces, only around 10 percent of in coming traffic could make use of such a service. In other words the impact Park & Ride could have on overall city traffic is slight, perhaps a reduction of only a few percent.

In light of this, would Councillor Theobald agree that the greatest challenge for our transport policy is to make it possible for large scale modal shift by the city's own population, and that a comprehensive city wide rapid transit system (most feasibly bus based), plus measures to reduce the need to travel, will be essential to bringing this about?”

Reply from Councillor Theobald, Cabinet Member for Environment.

“Park & Ride has never been expected to be the sole solution to Brighton & Hove’s transport issues. It has to be part of a broader strategy for the city that gives choice for everybody. We know that travel patterns are complex in a city where people have many different needs.

We have therefore produced a joined-up strategy in our Local Development Framework, and will no doubt be discussing it in detail later on in this meeting.

We already have a more comprehensive bus service than in most towns and cities in the UK and proposals in the Local Development Framework, will increase job opportunities to help increase the number of people working within the city rather than travelling outside, thus reducing the need for travel for some residents.”