



10. MEMBER QUESTION TIME – (Standing Order 12)

Responses to Members' Questions – Part Two

COUNCIL

Tuesday 11 July 2023 Member Question Time – Part 2 Questions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 12

35. Councillor Russell Brown

Could the Portfolio Holder for Education, Employment and Skills confirm the proportion of children booked onto the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) offering free courses and free lunch who don't attend and what happens to the food wasted due to the non-attendance of people booked on?

Response

The Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF) is managed by Children's Services, Improvement & Partnerships. All children that attend receive a free meal. In addition holiday clubs run family cook and eat sessions. The number of children not attending at Easter was initially 911 places out of a total of 5,376 places. Out of the 911 places available 874 were filled via waiting lists with only 37 places remaining empty. Any food remaining is not wasted, as it is distributed to children in attendance for them to take home.

36. Councillor Ursula Sutcliffe

Could the Leader of the Council confirm the rental income being generated from external organisations from the entire TFD Building in Holmewood? How much of the rental income is being spent directly in Holmewood?

Response

The TFD centre was only opened during 2022-23 following its £1.3m upgrade. The total rental income from TFD centre is currently £19,069 per year. The running costs (part year only) totalled £98,800 in the financial year. Rental income is collected as part of the Council's overall revenue collection and is not directly attributable to spend in any location. We're one district and make investment decisions for the good of the district, just as we did when we made the investment in upgrading the TFD centre in the heart of Holmewood.

37. Councillor Alun Griffiths

How many small road marking schemes are currently waiting to be implemented?

Response

The total number of road marking schemes which have been ordered but are yet to be completed across the district is not broken down into categories which allow specific identification of 'small' road marking schemes.

I am therefore only able to confirm at the time of writing that of all road marking schemes ordered and not yet completed there are 134 sites being worked through by our lining contractor. This list is a 'live' programme with new projects added and

completed projects removed on a daily basis but we are working with our contractor to reduce the overall backlog number of sites. The number of road marking schemes being completed each month is around 67 and we are roughly keeping up with the numbers of jobs coming in, but this will be kept under review. To put these numbers into context, road marking schemes vary significantly as they can take anything from 20 minutes to a full day in some cases, so it is not all about the numbers but also the type of jobs and the work is weather dependent which affects output.

38. Councillor Debbie Davies

Could the Leader of the Council confirm whether any consideration is given to employees who may not have worked 25 years continuously, for example due to having time off for family responsibilities, when offering recognition for employees in the form of “long service awards”?

Response

The criteria states 25 years continuous service with Bradford Council and therefore anything outside of this would not meet the current eligibility criteria. A change to this would bring out different equity issues for various groups of people and therefore unfortunately it cannot be flexed in the way you suggest. Of course our staff do great work often in difficult circumstances and we acknowledge their contribution in many ways including through Staff Awards.

39. Councillor Kevin Warnes

Will the Leader of Council ensure that the relevant officers take action to clean up all the graffiti on those parts of the public realm for which the Council has responsibility along the towpath of the Leeds-Liverpool canal between Shipley (Dock Lane) and Saltaire (Hirst Lane), and write to the Director, Yorkshire & North East, of the Canal and River Trust to request that they do likewise?

Response

In the past the structures teams have worked with the graffiti removal teams removing graffiti from a variety of substrates and included pro-active ‘easy’ graffiti removal coatings on some of our structures.

One of the Ancillary Services team has looked into the bridges and prepared a summary of the bridge and main materials so our Principal Engineer can have an informed discussion regarding the graffiti and its clearance. They are awaiting this information. Once the review is completed by our principle engineer for structures we will have more of an idea of what we are able to use on each bridge in particular. We are also looking at the options of murals and graffiti protective coatings, we will know more about if this is possible based on the findings from the structures team.

Email enquiries were made to CRT in April after a Community payback request was made by the assistant ward officer. The CRT has a partnership with the Community Payback team and CRT have provided them with a priority task list to work through, some does include graffiti removal however CRT were not sure if it included the bridges in Shipley.

As stated in an email from CRT on 14th April any removal of graffiti from a listed structure must only use techniques that are approved by their Heritage Advisors and this would include an Environmental Appraisal report including looking at Planning, Heritage, Ecology, Environmental Science and Access. CRT have stated they would be happy supporting the general principle of canal tidy up and graffiti removal, under strict caveat that we will agree target areas and methods in line with their Heritage Policy.

There are several derelict buildings along the towpath of which we are not responsible for maintaining, nor would CRT, we could look into painting over graffiti already there but would need permission from relevant property owners, something which would be difficult to access and costly to the council.

40. Councillor Mike Pollard

As monies for public sector capital spending are finite and thus Council bids to various funding pots will not always be successful, I was disappointed to read that £500,000 was paid to external consultants for work on unsuccessful Levelling Up bids by the Council and I should be grateful if the Leader of the Council would confirm that in future more reliance will be placed upon Council Officers to produce the bids avoiding any additional cost to the Council?

Response

Clearly after a decade of government austerity cuts, which you have supported in the council chamber, councils have been left in the difficult position of having far less internal capacity yet faced with the need to develop strong bids for Levelling Up funds for much-needed investment. It is disappointing that the last round of Levelling Up Fund bids the council submitted were unsuccessful, indeed only one of the bids submitted by all West Yorkshire councils was accepted in the last round. We were given feedback that our bids were strong and we had committed the funds to develop them in good faith to give us the best opportunity to secure further funding into the district. Unfortunately it later emerged that the government had changed the criteria after the submission date, which meant that any areas that had a successful Round 1 bid, as we did, would no longer be eligible for consideration for funding in Round 2.

We have been building capacity in our teams but inevitably with large scale bids of this nature and in this short timescale, we will always need to seek some specialist expertise to support our bidding as is normal for councils across the country. The real issue of course is that local authorities shouldn't have to compete with each other in this way, we should be allocated funding to level up. This is something that the current Secretary of State has said he agrees with, however we will have to wait and see whether this learning is carried through to the next round of funding which has yet to be announced.

41. Councillor Martin Love

Can the Portfolio Holder tell us what level of PPE is worn by Council staff spraying weed killer on both the district's highways and in our parks?

Response

When deploying herbicide for our weed spraying programme, we remain cognisant of our duty of care for members of staff, external contractors and the impact on the environment. The exact Personal Protective equipment we use includes disposable gloves, Face shields or Particulate masks as well protective footwear, we also adhere to the Manufacturers recommendations and where additional protection is needed, we will of course comply.

42. Councillor Debbie Davies

Would the Regeneration, Planning and Transport Portfolio Holder, confirm how many Clean Air Zone fines have been issued to council owned vehicles?

Response

There have been 29 penalty charge notices issued relating to council vehicles.

43. Councillor Janet Russell

Can the portfolio holder provide an update on timescales for the long awaited bridge crossing the A629? Could any of the works such as improvements to the footpaths and cycleway from Silsden Town Centre or between Steeton & Silsden station and the hospital be expedited to help encourage active travel even before the bridge is built?

Response

The Steeton and Silsden Cycling and Walking project was granted a small amount of initial funding in 2017 to develop an Outline Business Case (OBC) and it was only last year (2022) when full funding was granted by the government as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme which is administered by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and goes through the Combined Authority's Assurance Framework.

The Combined Authority release funding to the Council in stages as the scheme progresses through the Assurance Framework. Funding to deliver any aspects of the scheme such as improvements to the footpaths and cycleway will be subject to either Full Business Case (FBC) approval or Approval to Proceed (AtP) by the Combined Authority.

Work on developing the Outline Business Case (OBC) for this project is now being revisited to align with the output requirements of the CRSTS funding and recent policies such as LTN 1/20. We currently have a contractor on site undertaking Ground Investigation work to help understand what type of foundations are required for a new bridge crossing. The result of the investigations will help to refine the design of the bridge and will be presented in the updated OBC to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to secure the next stage of funding for the development of FBC expected early 2024.

The project remains on track for completion within the CRSTS programme timescales of 2027.

44. Councillor Debbie Davies

Further to the use of sign language at a recent meeting to launch the refreshed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan, could the Leader of the Council clarify whether there are any plans to provide signing for other meetings, such as Full Council?

Response

The ambition of the Council is to ensure that all events are accessible to all, and that the access requirements of all people attending are met.

Following the publication of the new EDI plan, there is work underway to review access arrangements across the council. The use of interpreters for events, including Full Council, will be considered as part of this work.

45. Councillor Celia Hickson

Burnham Avenue has been on the list waiting for Traffic Management Measures as part of Safer Streets Budget since 2002 - when can ward councillors tell residents that they will finally see much needed speed reduction measures on their road?

Response

The appropriate source of funding for traffic measures at this location would be the Bradford South Area Committee's Safe Roads Budget. This budget is considered annually by the Committee and a decision is made on which schemes are to be included in the programme. As you will appreciate, there are very many requests for various traffic measures including for example pedestrian crossings, permit parking schemes, yellow lines, road closures as well as traffic calming; the requests for action are far in excess of the resources available.

Due to the limited resources available to the Area Committee there can only be a small number of schemes installed each year. The funding for the current financial year has already been allocated by councillors. Priority is given to sites where there are significant numbers of road injuries and where specific engineering interventions are predicted to have casualty reduction benefits. Previous requests for traffic measures on Burnham Avenue have resulted in this location being added to the waiting list for funding. However, the safety record for this location (there have been only 2 recorded injury collisions in the last 5 years – both resulting in slight injuries) is better than other more problematic locations in the area, which has resulted in it not being prioritised for funding to date. The request will remain on the list for consideration as and when future budgets are allocated or an alternative source of funding is identified.

46. Councillor Bob Felstead

Does the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Transport, concur with the Labour MP for York Central's call for speed limits of 10mph in residential areas?

Response

More work needs to be done at a national level with the Department for Transport and the Transport Research Laboratory to understand the impact and viability of 10mph limits on selected local roads. The scope of this work will review the impact of such measures on risk, casualty reduction, environmental issues and enforcement.

The council mandates a default 20mph limit on all new estate roads delivered through its planning processes and we are continuing with our district wide delivery programme on 20mph zones for towns and schools to make our roads safer for all.

47. Councillor Matt Edwards

What are the Council doing to move forward with enforcement at the former Holmeview Care Holme on Mead View in Holmewood?

Response

Council Officers are aware of the property and its current status. Environmental Health and Building Control teams have visited the property to determine its safety to the general public. The property is in private ownership and although some initial, pre-development, site works started some time ago, these works have ceased with the site now left in an unsightly condition. Site security/safety is primarily a matter for the private landowner and whilst obviously we very much want the site to be better used, it is currently the view of council officers that there are no immediate threats to public safety and that there are no current breaches of planning controls.

However, I have asked that the Environmental Enforcement Board, which consists of officers from a number of different departments, consider the building and what action would be taken. I have also tasked officers with engaging with the owner to encourage either development or sale of the property to a developer who is willing and able to deliver the site.

48. Councillor Debbie Davies

Further to two members of the Bradford Area Planning Committee (including the Chairman using his casting vote) approving an overbearing two storey extension to a terraced house, where permission had previously been refused four times (including once before it had even been built) and an enforcement notice had been issued 7 years ago ordering the extension to be pulled down, could the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Transport, confirm that he has confidence in the commitment to governance of all members of that committee and does he understand why residents who know of the application and approval may not?

Response

Yes, I have confidence in members on Planning Committees who do a difficult job in often contentious circumstances. Whilst it would be inappropriate for me to offer a running commentary on individual panel decisions, I can confirm that regular training takes place for all members on planning which as you are aware is a quasi-judicial process.

49. Councillor Kevin Warnes

Will the Portfolio Holder please update us on progress on the long-awaited Bradford District Local Plan, including information about the number of times the Cross Party Working Group has met and when its next meeting is scheduled for?

Response

The Council is making progress on the Local Plan though slower than it had hoped. This is due to the scale of the technical work which is required to underpin the document, resource challenges and changes to national planning policy and guidance (including the emerging Levelling up and Regeneration Bill). The Council has just issued an update online and to members/public on the Local plan which sets out some of the key elements of the work and progress, which can be found online, see July edition of Plan It.

Work is progressing on both the site allocations and the evidence with recent workshops taking place on the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which is a key element in providing an update on the housing needs in the district. Resources are being put in place to support the programme through the intense work ahead to move to the next version of the local plan.

The overall programme is currently being reviewed and will result in a formal update to the Local Development Scheme (programme document required by Government) later this year. At present work is focused on working towards a local plan and supporting material to go to members later in this year to then allow publication in 2024 followed by submission to government for examination.

As part of the programme the governance is being refreshed and while the Cross-party reference group has only met a couple of times it will be reconvened following the summer break to provide a fuller update to the members of that group and then meet on a more regular basis as the local plan takes shape.

50. Councillor Bob Felstead

Could the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Transport, provide an update on the improvements planned for Forster Square Train Station, that were originally due to have been completed over two years ago?

Response

There are a number of positive schemes and plans for the Bradford Forster Square Station, but the complex interfaces between each are needing careful management.

The development of proposals for the improvements to Forster Square station were unfortunately impacted by the Covid19 pandemic which delayed the Council entering into contract with its delivery partner for the project by approximately 8 months.

Since then development work on the proposals has had to contend with the impact of construction price inflation which has increased significantly. The impact of construction price inflation has impacted development of the proposals in a number of ways including:

- Towards the end of 2022, the Combined Authority carrying out a detailed Inflation Review of the entire West Yorkshire+ Transport Fund programme due to a number of schemes exceeding their construction budgets. This review sought to identify a number of schemes to be paused, or pipelined prior to delivery. Bradford Council were successful in ensuring that the Forster Square scheme was identified as a project to continue through to delivery through this process.
- The scope of ambition for Forster Square has had to be reduced to offset increasing construction costs on a frequent and on-going basis leading to the situation where a preferred design has not yet been identified which sits within our overall budget envelope and could be taken to consultation.

51. Councillor Matt Edwards

Would the Portfolio Holder outline whether Bradford Council is intending to consider Red Routes as a means of controlling dangerous parking on key routes - particularly close to Schools? If so, what work is being done and are any locations being considered?

Response

Our position on Red Routes is under active review alongside how powers granted under Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 which come into force on 22nd July 2023 can support efficient operation of the highway network.

Currently, the use of red route powers if implemented would be prioritised as follows:

- On the Key Route Network (the majority of which is 'A' Road) in order to improve traffic flows and remove obstructions to public transport.
- Along sections of 'B' Roads where dedicated bus lanes are not practical due to width considerations.
- Along Sections of 'C' Roads where specific traffic problems are encountered by public transport operators on a regular basis caused by parking or other obstructions.

In all of these situations red routes would only be deployed where more 'traditional' means of enforcement (double yellow lines with no loading tabs, enforced by wardens) have failed or it is deemed that camera-based enforcement is necessary due to persistent offending and related staffing resource issues.

No consideration has been given to the use of red routes on unclassified, or local estate roads, outside schools due to the following factors;

- Displacement of parking and related issues affecting local residents and businesses.
- Overall cost of implementation in terms of staffing and equipment.

It is considered that 'traditional' means of enforcement are currently sufficient to be employed around schools. A fully considered policy will be developed and presented to Executive for consideration at the earliest possible opportunity.

52. Councillor Debbie Davies

Could the Portfolio Holder for Education, Employment and Skills confirm when we will see more equitable funding for the District's libraries, as the Bradford City Library last year had a budget of £634,000 compared to the median figure of £13,800 for the 27 district libraries?

Response

Around 800 libraries in the UK – one in five – have been lost to the government cuts since 2010. In that context we have worked successfully in difficult circumstances to protect libraries across our district whether that's through council-run, volunteer or hybrid services in partnership with local communities.

The Library Service is organised in a tiered model reflecting the size of each community served, with the City Library serving the largest catchment population; main town libraries serving larger urban conurbations, and smaller libraries serving local communities. This is a common approach to library services across the country.

City Library is by far the busiest library in the district serving 177,796 visitors in 2022/23, more than the combined number of visitors to our next two busiest libraries (Keighley Library at 86,208 and Shipley Library at 80,108 visitors). It is usual for library services to provide a main library in their city centre that is larger, open longer hours and provides the widest range of stock. As a result, it is inevitable that the city library will require the highest budget.

In addition, it is widely understood that a large proportion of the cost of City Library is premises costs which were entered into as part of a much wider rationalisation of the council estate that delivered millions of pounds in savings from rental income and maintenance liabilities whilst also consolidating a large number of staff into the city centre supporting the economy. We are currently exploring options for an alternative location for the library for the future which may further reduce its cost.

Given the differences in sizes of population served, visitor numbers, opening hours etc, budgets are equitable in relation to the tiered model described above.

The Council has also made significant recent capital investment in libraries across the district recently, including: Wibsey Library refurbishment (c£320k), Holme Wood Library refurbishment (part of a c£1.3m refurbishment of the TFD Centre), Keighley Library maintenance works £80k), Ilkley Library lift repairs £31k, Eccleshill Library new roof (£120k), Baildon Library - temporary building refurbishment (£76,600) and acquisition of new building (£305k); a further £250k is scheduled to be spent on Laisterdyke Library in the coming year.

53. Councillor Kevin Warnes

Will the Leader of Council please ask officers to ensure that drainage repairs are carried out as soon as possible to keep the footpath leading up from the bowling greens in Northcliffe Park clean and dry (bearing in mind that an intermittent leakage issue at that location has remained unresolved for at least a year)?

Response

A land drainage inspection took place on 20/07/23, a further drain is needed along the footpath that leads up from the Bowling Green which will now need to be costed.

The path was cleared using a mechanical sweeper, a flowmaster drainage clearance has been arranged to unblock the drain, we will continue to have the drain unblocked and the path swept and when the new manhole is installed, it should hopefully resolve the issue.

54. Councillor Mike Pollard

Could the Portfolio Holder for Healthy People & Places confirm the latest figures regarding library closures due to staff shortages and when will a long term solution be found to this problem?

Response

In June 2023 (the last full month for which we currently have figures) there were 27.5 hours of unscheduled library closures due to staff shortages across Council run libraries in the district.

Two long term solutions are being taken forward to resolve this problem:

1. A review of library opening hours (which are very generous compared to library services elsewhere) with a view to concentrating staff resources where and when they are most needed during the day, thereby providing more capacity and resilience. Public consultation will be carried out on these proposals during late July and August.
2. A review of casual staffing with a view to ensuring the Service has sufficient casual assistants who are willing and able to work at libraries across the district at different times of day to help cover staff sickness. Additional casual assistants have been recruited and we may need to recruit more again.

55. Councillor Kevin Warnes

The leader of Council will be aware that the towpath along the Leeds-Liverpool Canal has been significantly upgraded from Leeds through to Silsden, with the notable exception of the very well-used stretch between Saltaire and Shipley. That relatively short length of towpath, running through part of our World Heritage Site, remains uneven, unsightly, and subject to waterlogging for much of the year for reasons beyond human comprehension. Will she please liaise with both the Canal and River Trust and CityConnect to press them to upgrade this important link as soon as possible?

Response

I'm pleased to say Sustrans have received funding from Active Travel England to improve the canal towpath between Otley Road Bridge Shipley and Hirst Lane. They have commissioned the Canal and Rivers Trust to design and deliver the scheme and have been liaising with our conservation officers to ensure it is suitable for a World Heritage Site. The scheme needs to be delivered this financial year. They have

developed a comms plan which sets out who and when they will be informing about the scheme. This includes ward members and the Town Council.

56. Councillor Bob Felstead

Would the Leader of the Council agree with me that it is something of a perverse outcome that The Lord Mayor's nominated charity, the Bradford Cinderella Club, (which aims to provide the most deprived / vulnerable people across our district with a holiday), which consistently meets four of five criteria for council grant funding, is refused because it doesn't meet the fifth criteria of having a full time employee, which would obviously divert funds intended to provide holidays for the needy and will she commit to reviewing the grant aid criteria, to assist this much valued club in years when it isn't the Lord Mayor's Charity?

Response

Officers were asked to investigate the funding application in question and they advise it was in fact distributed by a charitable organisation rather than Bradford Council. They are responsible for setting their own grant criteria.

Bradford Council recognises the important work of the Cinderella Club to support vulnerable children in the Bradford District. Opening participation of activities and meeting the basic needs of the district's vulnerable children during the costs of living crisis cannot be underestimated. Bradford Council does not have a standard clause that requires an organisation to have full-time employees to secure all the grant funding opportunities it releases.

57. Councillor Celia Hickson

The developer of the newly constructed Interchange 26 Industrial Park near Oakenshaw is causing residents in both Bradford and Kirklees many problems, particularly around signage and HGV traffic on local lanes. Can the Council assure Bradford residents of Mill Carr Hill Road in Woodlands that the appropriate Highway measures are in place to prevent their lives being blighted by HGV traffic from this site?

Response

Appropriate measures along Mill Carr Hill Road within the Bradford District are in place. The road is covered by an existing 7.5t access only weight restriction. That measure prohibits unauthorised use of the road by HGVs over 7.5t. Abuse of that restriction is an enforcement matter. We cannot comment on the roads within the Kirklees boundary but it is understood that certain highway works required as part of the planning permission are still to be undertaken.

58. Councillor Kevin Warnes

Now that the Council has nearly finished significantly upgrading cycle provision along the Bradford Road near Beckfoot School, can the Leader please explain why the cycle lane running on along the Bradford Road towards the junction with Cottingley New Road remains completely unsegregated from the road traffic that blocks it every day and makes cycling along it unsafe for local children?

Response

The delivery of the Bingley-Mercure pop-up cycleway has faced a number of challenges in its delivery resulting in an ultimate solution which is recognised as a compromise solution arrived at due to financial budgetary constraints.

To fully accommodate segregation of cyclists' south of Cottingley Bridge would require widening of the road at this junction to achieve an alignment suited to balancing the competing demands from cyclists whilst supporting the movement of general traffic, avoiding unnecessary congestion on an already challenging area of the network.

Whilst it is recognised by all involved that the compromise solution is not the ideal design the Council has taken action to improve facilities for cyclists on this road now, rather than wait until such time as it is able to secure the necessary funding to provide a more comprehensive segregated solution at this location.

Efforts to identify and secure any potential funding for the completion of this scheme will continue to be pursued where options arise.

59. Councillor Matt Edwards

Would the Leader of the Council join me in thanking Peter Eccles and the Bradford South Park teams for their work tackling anti-social quad bike usage at Pit Hill Park in Holmewood?

Response

Of course, tackling ASB issues relating to quad bikes involves a number of partners including local residents in affected neighbourhoods, it often takes imaginative and creative ways to resolve the issues. The Bradford South Parks team are custodians of a number of Parks and Green spaces in the South area, and excellently balance the requirement that our green spaces are open, accessible and safe for all to use. The thanks will be passed onto the whole team.

60. Councillor Kevin Warnes

Does the Leader of Council agree that elected members, particularly the members of our planning panels, should be able to read the comments submitted on planning applications and, if so, will she take action to ensure that this access is facilitated as a matter of urgency?

Response

The Council has had to make the operational decision to remove actual public comments from view for a number of reasons. The main reason was due to the high number of inappropriate comments received from residents that breached the General Data Protection Regulation, or GDPR. We receive many comments from people that include personal data and information that upload onto Public Access directly, meaning an actual breach of the GDPR can easily occur

The Planning Advisory Service, the Planning Officers Society and others have advised that in these circumstances the Council should remove public comments from view. Other authorities, such as Manchester City Council, have already done so, or have never published public comments. The Council is not legally obliged to publish the comments they receive from members of the public. However, all comments received would continue to be summarised in the officer's recommendation report for planning applications, and members of the public will be able to offer their views for those items that go to the Regulatory & Appeals Committee and the planning panels. Also, people don't need to register with Public Access to get confirmation that we've received their comments; if they submit their email address they will be sent an email confirming the receipt of their comments.

Also, those applications that are contentious are determined by committee and the planning panels so councillors and objectors can publicly and directly express their concerns in that way.

Unfortunately, there is no technological way that we can prevent GDPR rules being broken other than withdrawing public comments from view on Public Access. I hope the above explains the situation.