

**COUNCIL 16 MAY 2019 - AGENDA ITEM 12
– QUESTION TIME**

Questions and written responses provided below.

QUESTION 1 – Mr R C Lunn will ask Alan Amos:

"Does the Cabinet Member for Highways agree that local bus companies could learn from the 11% increase in bus journeys in Guernsey in the first quarter of 2019, further strengthening an already popular service? Does he also agree that regular repeatable services with a clear fare pattern tend to increase use?"

Answer

I thank Cllr Lunn for his question and continued interest in bus services.

Certainly, we can learn from the innovative ways that other bus companies operate. I understand that the 11% increase in bus journeys in Guernsey was based on comparing data for January 2018 as against January 2019 but it must be noted that, in January 2018, they experienced some harsh winter weather which would inevitably have affected this data. However, Guernsey has reported increases in patronage since 2017 consisting of a 3.2% increase in the number of fare-paying passengers, a 3.1% rise in student travel, and 1.6% rise in concessions (OAPs). It has attributed this success to reliable, frequent, and timely bus services and believes that these are essential factors in improving confidence in bus services.

That is entirely consistent with my own view that any successful bus network depends on reliability and punctuality and that providing them is the best way to increase demand, especially for people who have a choice.

On the question of a clear fare pattern, again I entirely agree with Cllr Lunn. Fares should be published, simple, and as flexible as possible for the passenger. We are exploring ways to develop the existing Connecta ticket which allows for multi-operator journeys using different providers throughout the County on one ticket. One system that does impress me is the one used in San Francisco whereby anybody purchasing a ticket on a bus, or swiping-in on the bus, automatically gets a transfer which allows unlimited travel for 2 hours so that passengers can change buses and generally get on and off without having to buy another ticket, the only proviso being that the last journey is completed within 2 hours of the commencement of their original journey. This certainly encourages bus travel by making the experience so flexible and convenient for the passenger.

I can assure colleagues that our Passenger Transport Strategy in Worcestershire will be looking at all examples of best practice, including this.

Supplementary Question

It was queried whether more could be done to improve the marketing of bus services and whether local bus operators would benefit from an educational visit to Guernsey. Alan Amos acknowledged the importance of marketing but noted that there were some good examples of marketing taking place locally. All these issues would be addressed in the Bus Review. He queried whether Guernsey was the best comparator given its older age profile.

QUESTION 2 – Mrs J A Brunner will ask Alan Amos:

"Could the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment please confirm when the updating of lighting columns to LED will be completed in my division of Arrow Valley East?"

Answer

I thank Cllr Brunner for her question and congratulate her on the very proactive approach she has adopted to improving the street lighting in her Division, following which I was able to assist her in installing extra columns.

Worcestershire County Council has a duty of care under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain a safe highways network, including street lighting. Whilst we have progressively rolled-out the use of LEDs, in 2018 we launched the next phase of the Street Lighting Programme, beyond part-night switch off. This programme makes provision for the roll-out of two significant initiatives:

- Dealing with the ageing concrete columns, and replacing them with steel columns and an LED lantern; and
- Progressive replacement of low efficiency lanterns with new LED stock.

The aim of this is to improve our asset base and maximise delivery of energy savings.

The initial tranche of work has focused on the replacement of concrete columns, on a worst-first basis, and the majority of lantern changes to LEDs is clustered around this. By the end of 2019/20 it is expected that some 35% of the street lighting will have been converted to LED, resulting in a reduction in energy usage.

Arrow Valley enjoys a relatively new lighting stock, with very few concrete columns and so has not seen a significant increase in LEDs as part of this phase of the programme.

We also exchange higher-power consumption lighting on high speed routes where opportunities arise to share traffic management, e.g. with other cyclic maintenance, a recent example being on the Redditch Highway.

Should Members wish to consider the use of divisional and/or local funds to change additional lanterns to LED, I would commend them to contact their Liaison Engineer who will be able to assist them.

Specifically, with regard to the timescale and funding of the scheme, I can confirm that Phase 1 of the Street Lighting Programme was the part-night switch off. In 2018, we agreed to invest £4m (through the HII) for the replacement of the worst concrete columns and a further roll-out of LEDs to reduce energy usage. We are now in the second year of this programme.

The funding is for 2-3 year programme but will not provide replacement for all concrete columns and will not replace all lanterns with LEDs. Further funding will be required to replace further columns and roll-out LEDs beyond this phase

By the end of this phase once we have spent the £4m, as I said previously, we expect about 35% of our street lighting to be LED, which recognizes the need to balance use of the funding as between LEDs and concrete columns.

With regard to her own Division, I know Cllr Brunner will be pleased to know that Redditch is the first large town where a District has been subject to a widespread LED roll-out as part of the LED lighting upgrade programme. In addition, Redditch has had the highest number of LED upgrades on average compared to other larger towns in the County, and

Matchborough East area has had the highest number of LED upgrades in the Redditch area. Highways are currently upgrading the poorest condition concrete columns in the Redditch area.

Supplementary Question

The running cost of an individual LED light compared to that of an individual sodium lantern was queried. Alan Amos stated that the cost comparator figures were as follows:

Residential lighting:

LED – £7.54 per annum

Sodium Lantern - £34.97 per annum

Road lighting

LED - £51.22 per annum

Sodium Lantern - £102.57 per annum

QUESTION 3 – Mr L C R Mallett will ask Alan Amos:

"Please could the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Highways provide an update on the Council's position in relation to implementing new 20MPH zones?"

Answer

I thank Councillor Mallet for his question.

Colleagues may know that Highways undertook a 20mph zone trial in Rubery a little while ago and the results were both interesting and significant. It showed that in a majority of sites (56%) there was actually an increase in speed; and that introducing a 20 mph speed limit appears to have little effect on reducing speeds without additional traffic calming measures. The role of the police here is critical since they will be the enforcers of such limits. They told us that it is not acceptable for them to enforce such speed limits as a matter of routine and that local speed limits should not be set in isolation i.e. they need to be part of a package of engineering works. So, Highways cannot expect the police to enforce 20 mph signs and zones, and almost certainly will not do so in those circumstances. The Report concluded by saying "benefits from the introduction of this 20 mph pilot scheme have not been realized".

The data from that trial has informed a draft 20 mph policy now in preparation that will be included in the updated Traffic Management Policy due to be completed this summer. However, obviously, notwithstanding all the factors above, there are certain locations where a case could be made for a 20 mph zone so any policy would support investigation into the possibilities for speed reduction to 20 mph as appropriate for the following 4 types of situation:

- 1) outside schools through advisory limits;
- 2) at accident collision cluster sites;
- 3) in connection with major projects as appropriate;
- 4) for all new residential development through appropriate design

Supplementary Question

Either before or after the 20 mph policy was published and further to a petition submitted a couple of years ago, Alan Amos agreed to meet Mr L C R Mallett to discuss ways to address speeding issues experienced in the Millfields area of Bromsgrove

QUESTION 4 – Mr R M Udall will ask Alan Amos:

"The Cabinet Member will be aware of the opposition which I have expressed to the new parking restrictions being proposed for the A44 Bromyard Road in St John's. He will also be aware of the total opposition from residents; who have indicated concerns about increased traffic speed, safety, displacement, the impact on local services and businesses and the lack of any alternative parking places. The proposal has not won a single letter of support from any resident. There is growing discontent and anger in the local community, every time residents have been consulted they have responded with a firm no. Can he therefore confirm that he has no plans to overrule the local member and that he will not impose the proposed restrictions on to the local residents who have shown total unity in their opposition to new parking restrictions?"

Answer

I thank Cllr Udall for his question.

It gives me the opportunity to start by reminding him of the initiative I took last year to run a 6-month pilot scheme in Worcester City to involve the public more meaningfully in TROs putting down yellow lines. Previously, very often, the first any resident knew about new yellow lines was when they appeared outside their house because, understandably, they hadn't seen a Notice stuck on a lamppost or in the local paper. So I decided to introduce a pilot scheme to properly consult residents who are now proactively consulted on any scheme which directly affects their property. I am pleased to say that, as a result of this initiative, nobody should not know about these proposals.

In response to the ongoing concerns about congestion in the City, we're looking at packages of proposals along the key strategic corridors of the City, in this case the A44 from the M5 to St. John's. The proposals here along Bromyard Road are being pursued to reduce the impact of pinch points where turning vehicles hold up traffic, or two large HGV's and/or buses find it difficult to pass, causing congestion. This type of congestion causes 'platooning' (bunching) of vehicles, with the consequence that traffic signals along the route operate less efficiently causing further congestion.

The original proposals were for a 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. restriction 7 days a week but, having listened to what residents told us, we decided to amend that so that the new/current proposals exclude any restrictions on Sundays. With the revision of the original proposals, the public have now been re-consulted on the variations to ensure proper process has been followed. The current version minimises the impact on residents as the restriction is only in place during the day for the minimum period to cover peak traffic flows, allowing residents to park at night. When making the final decision to move forward with this Traffic Regulation Order all factors and comments will be considered and an appropriate balance on road space occupation determined.

We are still currently going through the proper process and are now at the stage where we are considering all the representations. I have asked officers for some more information, as I am well aware of the strength of feeling amongst some people, and would want to be satisfied that we have all the facts before coming to a decision. I have no intention of interfering with the proper process nor of making any pre-emptive announcement or decision until all the consultation has been fully examined.

Supplementary Question

It was queried whether the Cabinet Member would be willing to meet local residents in the St John's division so that they could make him aware of their concerns about the proposed parking restrictions on Bromyard Road. Alan Amos responded that he would not wish to interfere with the existing consultation process. No decision had been taken as yet. The delay in the process was due to more information being sought in response to the strength

of local feeling. The final decision would take all the facts and views expressed into account.

QUESTION 5 – Mr R C Lunn will ask Karen May:

"Does Liberata offer us a free upgrade of software when one becomes available, on the systems we buy in from them?"

Answer

Thank you very much Cllr Lunn for your question.

All systems require upgrades and patching work to ensure they remain up to date with legislation, security and application needs. The contract for service with Liberata UK includes implementation of improved system functionality via 'patches' (i.e. minor upgrades) which are applied free of charge e.g. annual statutory changes from HMRC, security developments and 'bug' fixes. A major upgrade to the system or a change at our request such as setting up Worcestershire Children First is chargeable. This is industry practice and would be the case even if there were no third party contract. Some industry contracts do include the cost of all up grades in the initial contract price, however the client can end up bearing a higher cost if there are fewer up grades than forecast. This formed part of the contract discussions with Liberata and the current arrangement was set. I can confirm that to date no major upgrade has been implemented by the Council and thus no additional costs borne.

QUESTION 6 – Mrs J A Brunner will ask Adrian Hardman:

"Could the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care inform me what steps he is taking to share the success of the Transforming Care Programme in Worcestershire with a wider audience?"

Answer

In 2011, documentary producers Panorama exposed horrific abuse of patients and vulnerable people by carers in the Winterbourne View Hospital. In Worcestershire, we formed the Worcestershire Transforming Care Partnership. This partnership includes members from the Health and Social Care sectors as well as voluntary, charity and patient groups.

Road to success

The success of the Worcestershire TCP could not be achieved without partners working together. We have developed collaborative working with many partners including: NHS England, NHS England Specialist Commission, Community Learning Disability teams, Local Authority commissioning, Continuing HealthCare, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Speakeasy N.O.W. and Worcestershire Association of Carers.

In line with our aims of the programme to enable people with a Learning Disability to be integral to our local service and programme delivery we worked with Speakeasy N.O.W to identify a member, Rachel Barrett, who received special training and support to be an advocate for people with Learning Disabilities and Autism throughout the programme.

Success and sustainable outcomes

As a result of the programme all patients with a Learning Disability and/or Autism detained in an inpatient locked and secure service, had the opportunity for an independent review. All of Worcestershire's locked inpatient facilities have been closed, and admissions secure inpatient services have reduced by 50%.

The TCP programme is nearing completion but as its legacy we intend to take the learning and continue to transform the way we deliver our local services.

- Individuals with a Learning Disability continue to have a voice that supports their own service delivery.
- A local policy has been written and embedded which supports better outcomes for people and avoids admission to inpatient services.
- We are now developing a new Complex Needs pathway that sits across health and social care, this will embed our learning experiences from the TCP, and ensure that all Worcestershire residents with a Learning Disability and Autism will be monitored robustly and reviewed at our TCP multi-disciplinary panel to ensure that our residents are in receipt of the right care and support at the right time.

The Worcestershire TCP is recognised within the West Midlands region as being a centre of excellence and I am delighted to say that the national lead for the programme, Ray James, frequently references the Worcestershire experience as good practice.

I have recently had the pleasure of supporting the programme for a Municipal Journal award and I very much hope that everyone working on the programme get the recognition they deserve.

QUESTION 7 – Mr R M Udall will ask Lucy Hodgson:

"Can the Cabinet Member confirm she has no plans to introduce car parking charges at Worcester Woods Countryside Centre?"

Answer

I can confirm that there are no plans to introduce car parking charges at Worcester Woods Countryside Centre.

Supplementary Question

In response to a query, Lucy Hodgson undertook to liaise with officers to look at possible ways of increasing revenue for Worcester Woods Countryside Park.