

Council

10 December 2018

Public Questions (11 total)

1.	Question from Stephen Williams to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	Comparing like with like, i.e. same days, same times etc., please can you provide details of traffic counts before and after implementation of the Boot's corner closure, for College Road, St. Lukes Road, Ambrose Street, St. Georges Street and Gloucester Road between the Train Station and the Lower High Street?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>GCC colleagues have a network of 27 traffic monitoring points which formed the baseline prior to any phases being implemented and is designed to give robust and sufficient data in order to evaluate the trial. Clearly for consistency sake these monitoring points have remained the same and the data has been evaluated after each phase to identify impact.</p> <p>The full set of monitoring points is listed below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monson Ave Clarence Square All Saints Road Fairview Road Bayshill Road College Road St Georges St High Street St James Square Imperial Square Southern Arm Montpellier Spa Road Poole Way St. Johns Ave High Street London Road St. George Road Imperial Sq Northern Arm Ambrose St Rodney Road Albion Street Gloucester PI Winchcombe St North North Place Clarence Street St. George PI Royal Well Road Winchcombe St South <p>Whilst these may not cover the specific sites desired they collect data on adjoining routes.</p>

	Data has been collected since 2015 which was used as the baseline, and added to year on year as various phases of the trial have been implemented. Whilst headline analysis has been undertaken where concerns have been raised, GCC colleagues are keen to collect the full 6 month like-for-like data since the phase 4 trial began so that a full picture can be gathered.
2.	Question from Susie Godwin to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>Assuming that the Council finally accepts that this ill-advised scheme has not worked, would they agree with me that many issues could be resolved, including pedestrian safety, if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. There were 'proper' traffic lights, as at the top of Montpellier, and not the flashing orange variety and, b. that a bus lane remains on the left alongside Superdry etc, enforced by a camera 24 hrs a day. This would mean a single line of traffic on the right hand side (after removal of the seats and bike racks etc), and combined with better traffic lights, would ensure that pedestrians, businesses, locals and tourists, can get back to some normality in Cheltenham.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>As this phase of the Cheltenham Transport Plan is a trial, and the full data sets are not yet available it is premature to judge the outcome. Whilst several indicators are pointing to improved footfall, cycling and bus patronage other indicators, notably on traffic <u>dispersment</u> are yet to be released by colleagues at GCC highways. The trial is seeking feedback so I would encourage you to put your suggestion for a dedicated bus lane to GCC at https://gloucestershire-consult.objective.co.uk/public/trp/phase4/phase4</p>
3.	Question from Gary Knight to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>Now that Councillor McKinlay concedes (October 15th) that the equalities act 2010 does not mention 'all taxis must be wheelchair accessible', and furthermore can he now accept that sections 160-164 of the same act are 'prospective' and are not 'live'.</p> <p>Will the councillor agree that the framework for changing the taxi policy is fundamentally flawed.</p>
	Response from
	<p>At no time have I said that the Equalities Act 2010 requires all Taxis to be wheelchair accessible.</p> <p>What I have repeatedly said is that the Equalities Act 2010 places an obligation on licensing authorities to ensure that all taxis comply with the Taxi Accessibility Regulations.</p> <p>Through consultation the council have looked at various options giving consideration to the representations made to the council. Given the complexities of the issues involved, the council is considering a wide range of views and evidence in coming to its policy conclusions and would not wish to limit itself to a</p>

	<p>single piece of evidence.</p> <p>In my response to another council question in October, I said: “The Equalities Act 2010 does not refer to all Taxis having to be changed to Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles.</p> <p>However, as was outlined in the Cabinet report in March 2018, the Equality Act 2010 does place a general public sector equality duty which place a duty on the council to have due regard to the following when discharging its functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act. • Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (including age and disability). • Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. <p>Furthermore, the Government’s own The Inclusive Transport Strategy stated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4.21 In the longer term we want the service currently provided by taxis and PHVs to be as accessible to disabled passengers as it is for those who are not disabled. - Chapter 8 has a whole section on “Increasing levels of Wheelchair Accessible Taxis and PHVs” saying: “8.35 Through our engagement with disabled people during the consultation it was clear how important wheelchair accessible taxis and PHVs were to enabling people to attend hospital appointments, go shopping or visit friends. We want to see a much greater proportion of WAVs, particularly in non-urban areas, over the next 10 years.” <p>As can be seen from the above quote it is clearly Central Government’s intention to end disability discrimination in the Taxi Service, (a policy that this administration fully supports)</p> <p>The decision taken by this Council to introduce a !00% Wheelchair Accessible fleet is not “fundamentally flawed” as you suggest, but entirely consistent with Central Government policy and legislation.</p>
4.	Question from Gary Knight to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	What evidence can the council provide, that the people of Cheltenham, wish to have all taxis, wheelchair accessible and euro 5 (emissions) compatible.
	Response from
	The issue of emission standards is not an accessibility issue but one relevant to air quality. In October the council consulted with the trade and wider public on a number of technical issues associated with the implementation of the new

	<p>wheelchair accessible policy for taxis. One issue relevant to this consultation was the emission standards the council should apply to licensed taxis. The <i>minimum</i> adopted standard, taking into account the consultation feedback, was Euro 5.</p> <p>As I previously alluded to, Cabinet looked at a range of issues and options when considering the adoption of the wheelchair accessible policy for taxis. This included feedback received during the public consultation and subsequent engagement and feedback. Given the complexities of the issues involved, the council would not wish to limit itself to a single piece of evidence.</p> <p>The consultation feedback, including that submitted by members of the public who responded, can be found on the council's website.</p>
5.	Question from John Firth to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>As a regular town centre user, I can see no benefit from the closure of Boots Corner. As a resident of Saint Luke's Road, since the closure, especially between 4:30 and 6:30 there is a solid stream of traffic from the Bath Road to College Road along Saint Luke's Road, with lots of impatient and dangerous behaviour with cars driving fast down Saint Luke's Place to queue jump. A pleasant and quiet town centre residential area has turned into an almost permanent traffic jam with a consequent detriment to quality of life.</p> <p>I would like the council to reject this pointless scheme, reopen Boots Corner and reverse the damage to my neighbourhood. If not what do the council propose to do to mitigate the dramatic traffic increase in St Luke's?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Whilst you may see no benefit in the trial closure, others have identified significantly increased pedestrian movement at Boots Corner itself, greater use of cycling, more bus patronage and improved footfall at key commercial zones. This added to the positive news on the High Street, unlike other towns, suggests that Cheltenham is remaining attractive for investors which is important for the vibrancy of the town long term.</p> <p>My understanding from colleagues at GCC is that Saint Luke's Road and College Road have for many years suffered from peak time traffic flows but there is no suggestion of a "permanent" traffic jam.</p> <p>Any measures to mitigate traffic increases will be determined once GCC are in a position to release data sets.</p>
6.	Question from Mike Mudie to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>Given the increased likelihood of accident, injury and, frighteningly fatality in a pedestrianisation scheme involving motor vehicles (particularly now that people routinely walk around looking at their mobile phones) are our Councillors jointly and severally prepared to accept responsibility for any such deaths ?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Sadly there have been 3 deaths within the town centre attributed to speeding vehicles within the last few years; all before the phased introduction of the Cheltenham Transport Plan.</p> <p>Slower speeds as now seen on Albion Street tend to reduce the likelihood of</p>

	<p>fatalities. Equally buses have been utilising the High Street with pedestrians from Boots Corner to Bennington Street for many years with no significant incidences; again because of the slow operating speeds.</p> <p>All phases of the Transport Plan have been subject to road safety audits by GCC prior to implementation and in line with many other towns and cities the objective is to create a more pleasant and safe environment.</p>
7.	Question from Mike Mudie to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	As the current scheme is so overwhelmingly unpopular and dangerous, would the Council now consider the alternative of a bus free pedestrianisation scheme in tandem with a suitable road system to deal with the displaced traffic ?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Whilst that it a personal opinion, the suggestion of a bus free pedestrianisation area is helpful. This was considered at length but unfortunately due to the historic nature of the street configuration no solution could be found that would not interrupt the flow of buses into the town centre. The first phase of the Transport Plan with 2 way flow on Albion Street improved direct bus access but designers have not found a solution that removes bus movements whilst equally ensuring that bus passengers can easily access their goal of the town centre.
8.	Question from Carl Friessner-Day to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	The closure of Boots Corner is a trial and by definition a trial is a temporary measure in time. However in recent media commentary Cllrs have presented the closure of Boots Corner as a fait accompli and that if anything the road structure elsewhere would be tweaked to make it work. Could the Council go on record for the constituents of Cheltenham and confirm that reopening Boots Corner is still a possible outcome should the desired outcomes presented by the Council in 2015 not prevail?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The GCC traffic regulation order committee stipulated that phase 4 Boots Corner would be a trial and nothing has changed to that position.
9.	Question from Carl Friessner-Day to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	One of the objectives to the closure of Boots Corner was to reunite the high street and stop severance of our town centre. Given the continued need for traffic lights at Boots Corner because of the volume of buses and taxis, and more concerning the massive increase of traffic on Rodney Rd, would it be fair to conclude when it comes to at least the severance element of the high street, the transport plan has failed to deliver on the promises made to the electorate of Cheltenham.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The traffic lights were retained at Boots Corner at the request of the disability consultative group who wished to be reassured that east-west travel would remain as before during the trial. The temporary narrowing of the road has made general pedestrian flows easier but the requirements of all groups will inform any final determination. Options to address the increased traffic flow in Rodney Road are being explored by GCC.</p> <p>The issue of severance has been significantly reduced as shown by the increased pedestrian and cycle movements east-west but the purpose of the trial is to understand as many dynamics as possible.</p>

10.	Question from Liz Rolls to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>Given we have the evidence of the World Health Organisation concerning the impact of air pollution exposure on the development of cancer, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory disease, how does Cheltenham Borough Council propose to meet its statutory duties for public health, that were conferred on local authorities by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, when the Council's decision to close Boots Corner to the majority of traffic has increased these known damaging effects on town centre residents by changing a low risk traffic flow situation (that is exposure to pollution by a fleeting and transitory population from moving traffic at Boots Corner), to a high risk one (that is, to increased exposure to pollutants by settled residential populations as a result of the disproportionate increase in stationary traffic outside their homes for significant periods of time?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>CBC has been working with colleagues at GCC on a range of mitigation measures across the town for several years. This data can be found on the CBC website.</p> <p>The ambition is to continue to reduce the impact which is why this phase of the trial, like all other phases, has both traffic monitoring and pollution monitoring data being collected.</p>
11.	Question from Bernard Rowe to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 and Part II of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 requires local authorities in the UK to review air quality in their area and designate air quality management areas if improvements are necessary.</p> <p>The Public have advised that closing Boots corner will divert traffic to others smaller streets causing congestion, noise and more pollution, particularly St Georges Street.</p> <p>What part of this act gives the council the rights to actively work against this act to drive up pollution in these areas?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The Council is currently undertaking air quality monitoring beyond the statutory requirements of the Act, for example, in order to provide reassurance in relation to Cheltenham Transport Plan. The map of monitoring points is on our website <u>here</u>:</p> <p>As part of the Boots Corner trial, both traffic flows and pollution levels are being monitored to understand the impacts, along with other performance measures such as pedestrian movements, cycling and bus patronage. All of this information will ultimately inform the decision by colleagues at GCC regarding the impact of the trial.</p> <p>We have started to produce a monthly report of data from gas mesh pods, alongside the annual nitrogen dioxide data. Specific monitoring points in St George's Street are shown on the map and the data currently available does not show an exceedance. If levels approach statutory limits in future, we will take the necessary steps to address the issue, as described below.</p>

	<p>We have commissioned a Detailed Assessment of local air quality, and anticipate the results will be received in Spring 2019. It is our intention to review the existing Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) based on this study, and the legislative process will be followed accordingly. This might result in the existing AQMA being amended and a new local Air Quality Action Plan would be produced to accompany this and to set out how the council and partners intend to reduce air pollution impacting on that area.</p> <p>We are also part of a countywide Air Quality & Health Partnership facilitated by the County Council, which aims to deliver a consistent monitoring approach and behaviour change interventions across Gloucestershire.</p>
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