

Council

16 December 2019

Public Questions (1 total)

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| 1. | Question from Amber Astron Christo to the Cabinet Member, Development & Safety Councillor Andrew McKinlay |
| | <p>Re BOOTS CORNER.</p> <p>Over £20,000 of tax payers money has been spent. It is now proposed that it is all re-designed at a cost of over £100,000?</p> <p>The scheme has been badly thought out and has simply removed the polluting transport away from the shopping area, into residential streets. My additional concerns are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A backlog of traffic builds up on Bath Road, Old Bath Road, College Road, Sandford Rd., Thirlestaine Rd., Suffolk Rd., Hales Rd., Hewlett Rd., and many others. Rush hour traffic results in commuters sitting in a backlog, idling and polluting the air. You have simply moved the problem from one area to another.• The particles from diesel are still pouring out at Boots corner, from buses and cabs, and you have encouraged people to sit and breath that pollution in, with new seating provided.• The real problem is that the way transport is moved around Cheltenham is badly thought out, with a lack of signage or sensibility.• Many businesses claim the scheme has negatively impacted their takings/footfall. <p>What exactly are you going to do about these issues?</p> |
| | Response from Cabinet Member |
| | <p>The works at Boots Corner were a temporary measure to coincide with the experimental traffic order introduced by colleagues at GCC. The works could not be permanent as it could be deemed to predetermine the outcome of the trial.</p> <p>That trial will be considered by the GCC Traffic Regulation Order committee on 16th December and by GCC cabinet on 20th December 2019, for a final determination. All of the points that you raise were considered by CBC cabinet on 5th November 2019 and the full papers can be found here https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/g2980/Public%20reports%20pack%2005th-Nov-2019%2018.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10</p> <p>Interestingly the traffic flow data from GCC appended to the above report does not support your assertion. In fact GCC states:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The traffic data collected during March 2019 suggests the closure of Clarence Street as part of the Cheltenham Transport Plan Experimental Traffic Regulation Order is having only a limited effect on the wider traffic network;• Traffic volumes across Cheltenham between 2008 and 2015 decreased by approximately 13% and are continuing to fall;• In 2018, traffic volumes across Cheltenham were approximately 20% lower |

than they were in 2008;

- This pattern is likely to continue given the rise in home working and modal shift.

So we actually have declining vehicle movements within the town.

In terms of air pollution, again I refer to the appendix to the report. This notes:

- A slow decline of NOx over the last 10 years; and
- A 7.5% decline since 2014, reflecting a reduction in traffic volumes and improvements in emissions.

So we have an improving air quality position within the town.

The way people move around the town has changed dramatically, as shown by this data from Stagecoach:

- An extra 270,000 bus passenger journeys made across Cheltenham in the first year of the trial;
- That's about 5,200 a week or 4.3% growth (compared to a national decline of around 2%);
- Additionally, buses have seen an improvement in their punctuality, which is up from 92.5% to 93.1% (based on all routes which cover about 2.6 million annual miles).

Additionally, at Boots Corner itself, the following data has been independently recorded:

- 124% increase in pedestrian movements;
- 185% increase in the number of cycle movements.

This is evidence of changing patterns of movement away from the private vehicle, and is supporting the challenges associated with mitigating emissions which are contributing to global heating.

Whilst some businesses have claimed declining footfall, this is not entirely borne out by the facts. In respect of day and stay-over visitors over last year

- Day visitors to Cheltenham grew to 1.9 million – a 7% increase;
- Staying visitors rose to just under 1.1 million – a 6% increase;
- Cheltenham has significantly outperformed the national trend.

Source :The South West Research Company.

Town centres are complex entities and we are fully aware of the challenges being faced by the retail sector, which is exactly why we have encouraged both new players into the centre e.g. John Lewis & partners, but also diversification including:

- Leisure at the Brewery Quarter;
- New food & beverage offers;
- New office space – Formal House, Honeybourne Place and at the Brewery Quarter;;
- New housing – Regency Place.

The trial at Boots Corner has clearly not 'frightened' investors, as in addition we have major

improvement works in progress at The Quadrangle, St George's hotel and 111-117 High Street.

Our plan is to continue to support the wide range of businesses within the town centre, whilst equally responding to the challenges of climate change by seeking long term reductions in carbon emissions.

The recent Cheltenham residents' survey 2019 had promoting walking, cycling and public transport within the top 3 priorities for the Borough and the Council will aim to respond to that prioritisation by pursuing policies that further support sustainable transport options for the town.