

**1 QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR KEITH SOWDEN TO COUNCILLOR EILEEN BLAMIRE**

We have some of the best cycle paths in the country, but there is one section, from the bypass to Overton, which is positively dangerous.

Firstly, to protect ourselves from possibly being sued, should we attach another sign to the cycle path sign, stating 'Not Suitable for Cycles'?

Secondly, can we take action against the person responsible for designating this section under the Trades Description Act?

Lastly, now that we have money coming in, specifically to promote cycling, can we get something done about it?

Councillor Blamire responded: 'It's good to hear that the success of the Cycle Demonstration Town project has provided some excellent off road cycle routes to encourage more people to choose to travel by bike.

'The route referred to in the question is a signed cycle route to Overton/Sunderland Point which uses the highway. By definition the highway is suitable for use by cyclists and the danger which Councillor Sowden refers to is presumably from vehicular use of that road and the potential lack of care which some drivers may have towards other users of that highway – including pedestrians, horse riders as well as cyclists.

'As well as identifying routes for cyclists, one of the reasons for putting signs in place is to raise awareness amongst drivers that they are likely to encounter cyclists on that road and they need to modify their driving behaviour accordingly.

'Some Cycling Demonstration Town funding is used to raise awareness amongst other road users that they are likely to encounter cyclists on our roads – this includes our publicity campaigns, high profile signage and the commitment of the CDT Board to support the introduction of more 20 mph speed restrictions to make our highways more safe for all road users. Unfortunately a lot of the CDT Board money is provided on the basis that it is spent on what they think we should do to improve routes coming into the town for work, etc and we get a lot of complaints from the rural areas because that is not where we are able to spend the money.

'Alasdair Simpson, the Senior Cycling Officer at County and Gary Bowker had noted that some of the direction signs have been removed and it is down to the Highway Authority to replace – they will survey the route and report the missing signs.

'I would also add that there have been no recorded injury accidents to cyclists on the route to Overton and Sunderland Point in the last five years, though there has been an injury accident to a cyclist elsewhere in the village.'

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Sowden re-iterated his view that it was a dangerous route and asked if Councillor Blamire accepted the position as had been put to the Parish Council that the Police are reluctant to do anything unless there has been a serious accident.

Councillor Blamire understood the Councillor's frustration and replied that in her role as responsible member for road safety she had asked if a safety audit could be carried out on this route. However she emphasised that the road represented, the best, if only route from the end of the Salt Ayre cycle track to Overton.

**2 QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR PETER ROBINSON TO COUNCILLOR ABBOTT BRYNING**

What is the Council doing to attract a new developer for the Luneside East Project?

Councillor Bryning replied that the Council's lead developer CTP Ltd / Development Securities plc could not proceed at the present time because of adverse market conditions which are now holding back investment and development across the country. For the Luneside East project this means that the Developer has been unable to date to find a housing developer willing to contract and take on the housing elements. The Council and the Developer are working with English Partnerships and the NorthWest Development Agency to find a way of unlocking this situation so that Developer CTP Ltd / Development Securities plc can proceed. Officers hope to report in the early autumn on the outcome of negotiations and all parties are targeting a works start by the end of this year.

He re-iterated that the aim was to get the site transferred as soon as possible and everyone remained confident in the Luneside East project.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Robinson stated that he understood that the Luneside East project was already over budget and given the state of the housing market, asked what the impact might be on this and other projects which would not now be getting funding from the NWDA as a result, like Central Park in the West End.

Councillor Bryning confirmed that talks were taking place with the NWDA about additional funding but he was unable to comment on any Morecambe schemes.

**3 QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR PETER ROBINSON TO COUNCILLOR ROGER MACE**

Since the Council Budget meeting in March, fuel costs have doubled. What is the implication of this rise in fuel costs on:

- a) the Revenue Budget during this financial year and for the ensuing two years and,
- b) the Corporate Priority to keep Council Tax at 4% and below?

Councillor Mace replied that there was no cause for panic. In relation to the revenue budget, the escalation in fuel costs was a worry for all councils, local businesses, and indeed every one of us. Initial work had begun on estimating the financial impact of these increasing costs to council services and these will be reported into the first quarter Performance Review Team meetings and the Budget & Performance Panel. In turn, this information will feed into the 6-monthly review of the MTFS, which will be completed over the summer.

Any increase in the year over and above approved budgets will be managed in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations, and any changes to pay and price inflation assumptions for future years will be considered as part of the 2009/10 budget exercise.

In relation to the impact on the Council's Priorities, he replied that the Cabinet had an agreed procedure for delivering Corporate Plan priorities and for bringing forward budget and policy framework proposals to Council each year. This is a tried and tested procedure and has meant that council tax increases have been kept within the limits agreed by Council each year. This process manages the competing demands of any increased growth, in this case any increase in fuel costs, and the continuous drive to identify efficiencies and savings.

The increase in fuel costs is a national issue and one already raised within the Local Government Association as a matter for the Annual Local Government Revenue Finance Settlement discussions with Central Government. The LGA will be arguing on all councils' behalf that any financial implications being faced by councils are adequately resourced within the annual settlement. The Cabinet's proposals for future budgets and council tax increases will reflect the outcome from these discussions with Central Government.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Robinson suggested that the process of finding efficiency savings had already commenced by reducing Neighbourhood Management, judging by the staff currently leaving the West End team.

Councillor Mace responded that in relation to the price of oil, the previous day's FT had recorded a drop of 20 dollars per barrel from the beginning of July which showed that the idea that the country is in an inflationary spiral was not yet proved. We were experiencing a downturn in housing and maybe a commodity price bubble but such predictions are taken into account during the budget process. He confirmed that he would be pursuing efficiency savings as part of the budget process but not necessarily in the way Councillor Robinson was suggesting.

#### **4 QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR STUART LANGHORN TO COUNCILLOR JON BARRY**

What is the energy efficiency rating of the Council's buildings?

Councillor Barry replied that at the moment we did not know. But we would know on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008 when the Council will require a Display Energy Certificate (DEC). This certificate assesses the actual energy efficiency of a building and applies an energy rating. Property Services have recently conducted an estimate exercise to appoint a Specialist Contractor to complete the DECs.

In terms of what the Council can do to improve things, he advised that there was small budget of £20k for combating Climate Change. It had been agreed to use £14k to reduce energy use in Lancaster Town Hall last year and he intended to use a survey by the Carbon Trust to decide what else could be done. The real money to make big improvements would only be available though when the Town Halls are done up.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Langhorn asked if Councillor Barry did not think it was extraordinary that the Council should review its accommodation needs and take decisions without knowing the efficiency rating of each building.

Councillor Barry responded that the Council did have a fair idea, because it knew the outcomes, i.e. the cost of running the 2 Town Halls. This information had been available when the decision on accommodation had been made, which Councillor Barry reminded Council, was why he had not voted for the current proposal.

#### **5 QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR STUART LANGHORN TO COUNCILLOR JON BARRY**

Is the Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group planning to place a wind turbine next to the Ashton Memorial as he suggested?

Councillor Barry replied that he personally would love to see this, although he thought that any such proposal would be thwarted. He reminded Members that it was for the Williamson Park Board to make any such decisions but in terms of what they could do, there were restrictions particularly in relation to size as the site was quite close to houses.

By way of a supplementary question Councillor Langhorn asked if Councillor Barry thought energy efficiency was more important than heritage.

Councillor Barry replied that alternative energy was still not very mainstream and he thought that landmark schemes which would serve to educate people were a good idea. It would

not in his view ruin the heritage, it was for people now to create new heritage. He suggested that people may have thought the Ashton Memorial was ugly when it was first erected and yet now we cherish it.

**6 QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR STUART LANGHORN TO COUNCILLOR EVELYN ARCHER**

Could you provide a comparison of the Council's energy and fuel bills in the last quarter and the same quarter last year?

Councillor Archer passed the following table to Councillor Langhorn and highlighted the reduction in costs for electricity and small increase in the cost of gas. She stressed however that although the figures showed a reduction in usage overall, the cost reflected the market for the utilities not necessarily reductions in use.

		GIA sq. mts.	Electricity		Gas	
			Kwh	Full total £	Kwh	full total £
Quarter 1	08/09	24,908	701,361	64,405	1,176,073	35,488
Quarter 1	07/08	24,908	712,933	64,522	1,192,254	35,128

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Langhorn asked if similar figures were available for petrol usage.

Councillor Archer did not have this information available and offered a written response which could be supplied to all Councillors.

**7 QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR STUART LANGHORN TO COUNCILLOR EVELYN ARCHER**

What is the area of land affected by the town green application at Lawson's Bridge?

Councillor Archer provided a plan of the affected area, described as comprising the open fields to the south of Rays Drive which lie between the West Coast main line, and the A6, terminating at its southern end at Burrow Beck Bridge. (A copy of the plan is attached to this appendix.)

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Langhorn asked if some of the land was in private ownership and was currently pastureland.

Councillor Archer confirmed that this was so.

**8 QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR STUART LANGHORN TO COUNCILLOR EVELYN ARCHER**

Will the sale of land at Lawson's Bridge be delayed by the application for the area to be designated a town green? How will such a delay affect the Capital programme?

Councillor Archer replied: 'It would appear that an application has been made to the County Council to obtain Town Green status, for the land at Scotforth. This application is still awaiting consideration by the County Council and, as part of this process, it is required to serve a notice on every owner, lessee, tenant or occupier of the land affected by the application and on any other person likely to object to the application, and to publish a notice of the application. The notice requires anyone who wishes to object to send a statement of the facts on which the objection is based within the prescribed period which is 6 weeks. The City Council in refuting any such claim will need to demonstrate that the current use of the land would not support such a registration. The land is currently let on a

short term tenancy to the adjoining landowner and has been used for cattle grazing for many years.

'The City Council has a resolution to dispose of the land for retail purposes, and following the conclusion of the tendering process a development agreement is being prepared by the Council for completion by the successful tenderer. In addition, a planning application will shortly be submitted by the developer, in accordance with the terms of their tender bid.

'The application for Town Green status puts no formal charge on the land in question and therefore the City Council is not estopped from proceeding with the disposal.

I would say therefore that this application should not affect the Capital Programme, but I can't be certain.'

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