

Council – 28th September 2016

AGENDA ITEM 16 – QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

1. Question from Councillor Jon Barry to Councillor James Leyshon

In July 2015, a motion was passed at Council which said:

"To improve the IT (email and intranet etc..) service offered to Councillors and reduce costs this council is to investigate a form of BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) with a platform independent remote access solution for this communication ..." Fifteen months later, where is the City Council in implementing a BYOD solution?

ANSWER

- Following the motion of July 2015 the ICT Manager investigated BYOD and reported into Budget and Performance Panel on 23rd February 2016 (Minute item 41) with options for BYOD.
- It was resolved that the Panel supported a BYOD policy that allows councillors to use their own smart phones and/or tablets and or PCs/laptops for council business, using Microsoft Office365.
- Although no date was given for this to proceed the ICT Manager has been working to implement this within 2016/17 and is working towards a go-live date of 12th December 2016. Slightly delayed due to salt ayre, green waste charging systems and staffing issues.
- However, hugely exciting development in how councillors are able to perform their roles, and now we have a date that I'm very much looking forward to!

2. Question from Councillor Dave Brookes to Councillor Karen Leytham

Do air pollution levels in Lancaster city centre comply with legislation?

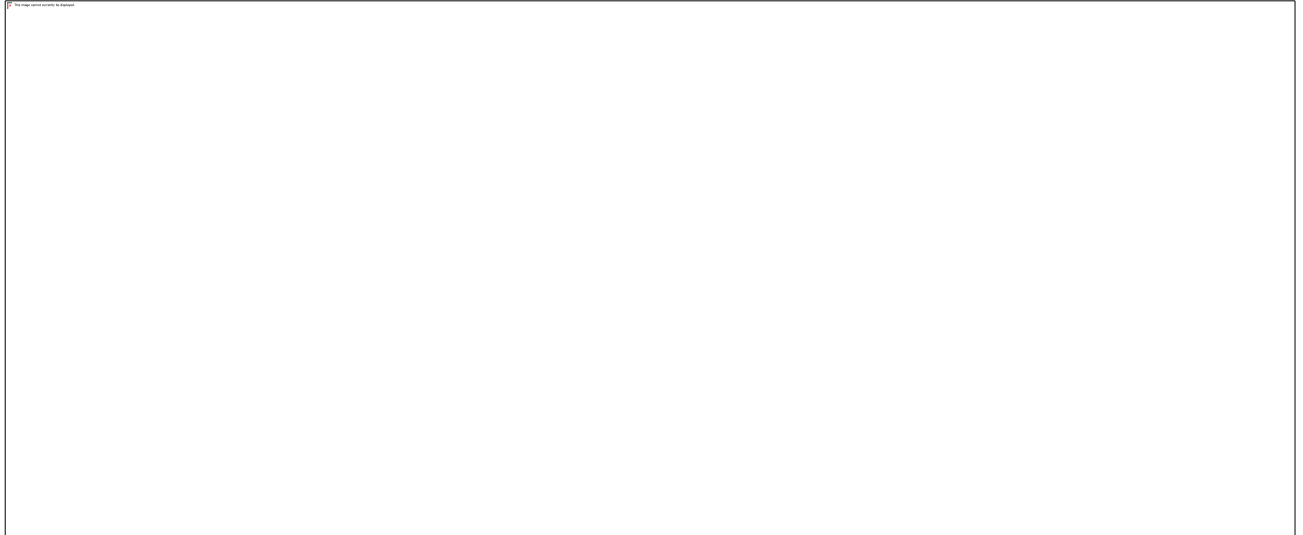
ANSWER

The UK maintains health-related air quality objectives for protection of human health from air pollution such as road traffic exhaust emissions. One of these objectives concerns the air pollutant nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). Annual concentrations of NO₂ primarily coming from vehicle exhaust emissions have exceeded the legal objective (which is the maximum acceptable concentration under UK national policy) at some roadside residential locations along our major traffic gyratories in Lancaster city centre. This is documented in the council's annual air quality progress/status reports submitted to DEFRA and available on our website.

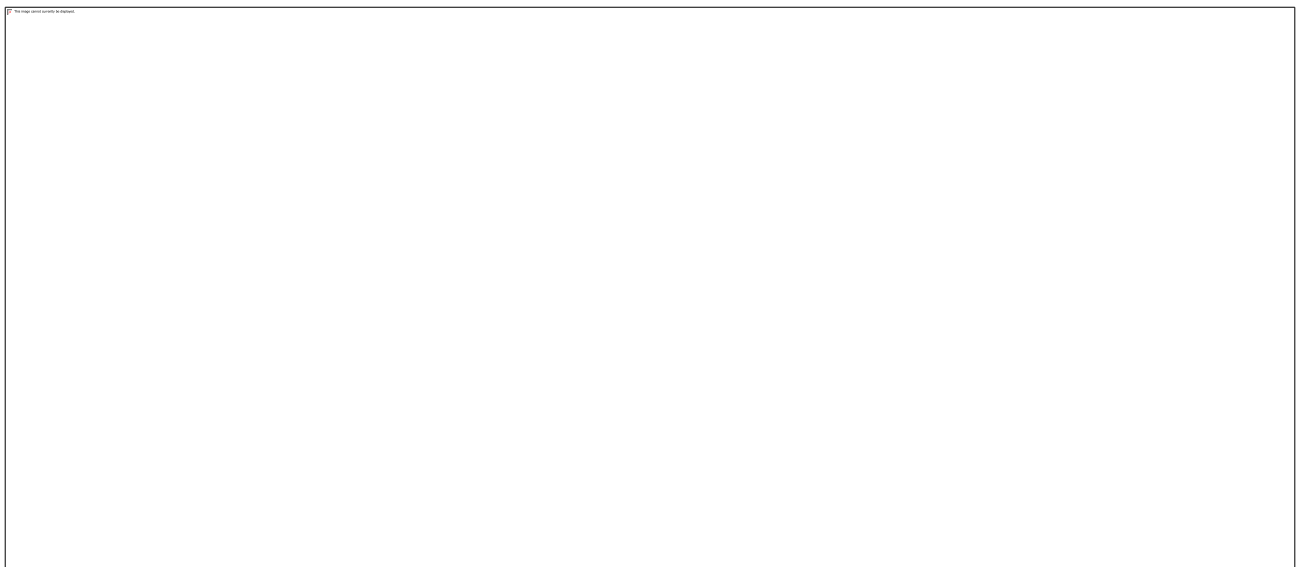
Supplementary: Have they improved or got worse over the past 5 years?

Response: - The city council routinely measures air pollution levels in Lancaster city centre. They tend to vary from year to year according to weather patterns, however

we do monitor trends in measured concentrations. Over the past five years, urban background concentrations of NO₂ (away from a major roads) have shown some improvement (see graph below – dotted line shows trend).



At the city centre roadside locations where we measure air pollution at a number of sites there has been no similar obvious improvement. Other urban locations in the country are in a similar position (see graph below which shows NO₂ pollution levels at the six highest roadside monitoring sites in Lancaster city centre).



The growth in the use of solid fuel burning appliances is having some impact on the levels of particulate pollution (PM₁₀/PM_{2.5}), however monitoring indicates that current objective standards are unlikely to be breached in the Lancaster district (city centre or other locations). The stated strategic aim for both NO₂ and particulate pollutants is to minimise pollution levels even where they meet objective standards.

3. Question from Councillor Dave Brookes to Councillor Karen Leytham

What are City Council officers doing (including in collaboration with County) to ensure that air pollution levels comply with legislation in the near future?

ANSWER

The actions taken and progress are documented in the Air Quality Strategy for Lancaster.

Officers are also working with the county on the Transport Masterplan for Lancaster (in process of being finalised and will lead to the adoption of a new Air Quality Action Plan for Lancaster)

Successful in obtaining the Cleaner Bus Fund grant award (£288,180 to reduce emissions from buses, particularly those passing most frequently through the city centre – due 2017)

Developed new Planning Advisory Note on charging facilities for electric vehicle.

4. Question from Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox to Councillor James Leyshon

To ask the portfolio-holder for an update, with timescales for action, on the rationalisation of the city council's office space in order to effect revenue budget savings?

ANSWER

- The rationalisation of office space will be considered as part of a wider strategic review of assets that the council will undertake. This strategic review of assets will include taking a more commercial approach to managing property assets
- Looking at the potential return that a capital asset can provide and includes establishing the parameters to guide decisions on assets. We are going to use the process of reviewing all of our property portfolio to introduce new processes for the disposal of assets.
- Regarding timescales, it is planned for this work to take place in 16/17 & 2017 to inform budget decisions impacting in 2018 and beyond.
- This piece of work will take place alongside the formulation of ideas from across the council on income generation, savings and efficiencies more generally. Tied into the look to commercialise what we do. Also, situation with the disposal of assets at County Hall is changing rapidly, and so we are having to be very aware of developments that may affect the decisions we are making at a City level.
- I am keen that councillors will be involved in this process through pre scrutiny and I will ensure that officer's work with the different political groups to hear ideas that members have in regards to savings.

Supplementary: To what extent is Palatine Hall being used?

Councillor Leyshon replied:

It is partially occupied with the Housing Team who vacated Cable Street.

5. Question from Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox to Councillor Janice Hanson

What actions has the city council taken to ensure that the Moor Hospital s.106 monies are spent on the purposes set out in the s.106 agreement dated March 2012 before the 5-year limit set out in the agreement expires next March?

ANSWER

This is a case where the City Council holds section 106 contributions associated with the approved development yet is reliant on Lancashire County Council to use those moneys to mitigate the impact of the development. A range of mitigations to encourage sustainable and safe means of travel to and from the development have been agreed with the County Council and designed physical works are in a phased process of being implemented. The City Councils Planning officers are applying regular pressure on the County Council to complete and invoice for all these measures before the deadline for the expenditure of the allocated funds runs out. Progress on implementation has unfortunately been exacerbated by changes in personnel and restructuring issues within the County Council. However physical works are now taking place associated with them and officers remain diligent in pursuing invoicing. Of the £500,000 secured in section 106 payments actual payments so far amount to £15,000 for design work. Approximately £350,000 of physical works to highway related improvements are taking place awaiting invoicing. The remainder of unspent monies are to be pooled with contributions from other development sites to pay for improved bus services.

Supplementary: When will the improved bus service be running?

Councillor Hanson replied:

I can't answer that. I will have to send a written answer.

6. Question from Councillor Roger Mace to Councillor Eileen Blamire

Paragraph 3 of the approved resolution in Minute 5 of the Cabinet meeting on 28 June 2016 says:

That a more detailed review of longer term management options is undertaken but that, in the meantime, the City Council requests that the two year notice period, as detailed in the existing Museums Service Partnership Agreement, is reduced to one year;

The Leader's report for the Council meeting on 28 September includes the following sentence:

On the 29 June, Councillor Darren Clifford and I met a County Working Group on Museums at which we gave notice of our withdrawal from the management agreement with County from next year and the County accepted the request.

The latter statement is inconsistent with the decisions of Cabinet on 28 June, and inconsistent with proceedings at the Museums Advisory Forum meeting on 19 July.

In the light of these inconsistencies, what is the true position of the Museums Service Partnership Agreement?

ANSWER

Following the clarification received from Councillor Blamire during consideration of the Leader's Report, Councillor Mace withdrew this question. (Minute 44 refers).