

Public Document Pack

15. **Question Time** (Pages 3 - 8)
 - (a) Answers to Written Questions – Booklet 1



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Council Meeting

14 January 2025

Booklet 1

Answers to Written Questions

1.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor J Gardiner

TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor R Brown, Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources

TEXT OF QUESTION:

“Councillor Assistance to Vulnerable Pensioners yet to claim Pension Credit. Since Sept I ‘ve been asking for Councillors to have access to the addresses of the 300 pensioners in our city who are known to us to be on such low incomes as to be likely entitled to pension credit and therefore winter fuel payments, but still do not claim it despite the Council’s extensive direct mail and social media awareness campaign.

These pensioners are missing on average £3k annual income and so are especially vulnerable to the impending loss of winter fuel payments. This extreme poverty combined with a demonstrated self- neglect surely makes this a safeguarding issue. When there is a safeguarding issue data can be shared with trusted partners. Yet the Council has thus far refused to share the data with Councillors who are well placed to visit and assist in a pension credit claim.

On 21st November I was informed a definitive legal judgment was being sought by officers which I have yet to receive. Please could the Cabinet Members for adult social care, finance and governance chase this up as a matter of urgency and let me know the response, hopefully so that Councillors may yet help our most vulnerable pensioners claim what is rightfully theirs and safeguard their wellbeing?”

ANSWER:

“Officers have confirmed that personal data about residents cannot be shared with Councillors for the purpose of pension credit take up. The Government, the Council and other partners have worked to promote and encourage take up of pension credit as widely as possible – including targeted campaigns. We cannot assume that those not claiming pension credit present a safeguarding issue and we have a duty to protect their personal data in line with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act.”

2.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor J Blundell

TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor P Hetheron, Cabinet Member for City Services

TEXT OF QUESTION:

“In 2023, when you approved the scheme (Binley Cycle Way Clifford Bridge Section 7) it was on the condition it would only be if the outstanding safety concerns were addressed. In your recent Cabinet meeting Officers advised that the Stage 2 independent safety review had yet to be completed. Why did you then approve the scheme at this time when the review has not been completed?”

ANSWER:

“To ensure safe design, the scheme has been designed in accordance with national design standards, been subject to an externally led design review and a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit has been undertaken. These documents are either publicly available or have been provided to members of the public, and the documents are referenced within the 09 December 2024 Binley Cycleway – Section 7 (Clifford Bridge Road) report.

A Stage 2 Road Safety Audit (RSA) will be undertaken prior to construction commencing. The RSA2 will be completed by an external company and any recommendations raised in the RSA2 will be considered and responded to by the Council’s design team.

The Strategic Lead for Policy and Innovation has Delegated Authority to approve or reject the Designer’s Response to the RSA. The process the Council is following is a standard and best practice approach nationally and is no different to that followed for every other significant transport scheme within the Council’s capital programme.

It should be noted, collisions involving personal injury have significantly reduced across the previously completed sections of Binley Cycleway.”

3.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor J Blundell

TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor P Hetheron, Cabinet Member for City Services

TEXT OF QUESTION:

“In 2023, you asked officers to complete a review of the above scheme for disabled road users. At your recent cabinet meeting, officers advised that they had done this but had not submitted any reports from the disabled groups. When asked why these reports were not included with their report, we were told that they would be made available under a FOI request. Following on from the FOI, it was discovered that the groups spoken to were the following.

- Access Development Group
- Gosford Park Residents Association
- Stoke Park Residents Group.

As none of these groups are specifically disability groups, it was then ask what disability groups had been consulted and furthermore, given that the consultations for the above groups took place in 2020, you were ask again why you approved the scheme in December 2024, given that your original concerns had not been resolved?”

ANSWER:

“The safety of all road users, including those with additional need is paramount and has been considered. For this reason, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken for the scheme.

The July 2023 consultation employed a mixed approach to engage local

residents and businesses. This included:

- **Widespread distribution:** 1,200 copies of "Street News" were delivered to local homes or businesses.
- **Public meetings:** A well-attended public meeting with 140 participants facilitated open dialogue and feedback.
- **Accessibility:** A drop-in session, attended by 100 people, offered a less formal opportunity for engagement.
- **Online engagement:** A "Let's Talk" online survey, supported by dedicated email and phone contact options, ensured accessibility for those unable to attend in-person events.

Various stakeholder groups were specifically invited to participate in these activities. While the survey maintained respondent anonymity, 9.9% of respondents self-identified as disabled. This indicates that the consultation successfully captured the perspectives of disabled users and relevant groups.

In addition to the July 2023 consultation, the Council engaged with the Access Development Group through the 'Let's Talk' online survey, launched in September 2020. Due to COVID restrictions in place in 2020, no in-person meetings were held.

Responses to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were responded to on 07 November 2024 and 10 December 2024, subsequent follow-up responses were responded to promptly by Officers.

In November 2024 an online meeting took place between Officers and representatives from the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. Whilst no formal report was taken from the meeting, items raised did lead to minor detailed design changes being introduced such as additional tactile paving at junctions.

The Council's highly experienced design team are fully qualified and utilise best practices, including Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20, Inclusive Mobility, Manual for Streets and other relevant highway design documents, to ensure all schemes meet required safety and accessibility standards.

This includes specific considerations for vulnerable and disabled users, informed by their training and consultation with relevant organisations. All Design Team members attend Active Travel England (ATE) webinar training sessions monthly which focus on active travel and the latest improvements to the transport sector, and in 2024 attended site visits with the Thomas Pocklington Trust to discuss challenges faced by visually and mobility impaired users negotiating bus stop bypasses and floating bus stops.

The team have regular contact and design reviews with TfWM and ATE. They have worked closely with specialist consultants who are advisors to ATE and developed LTN1/20 guidance. The final design will comply with all legislation and guidance, including the Equality Act 2010.

A Stage 1 RSA, in accordance with GG119, has been undertaken on the scheme, GG119 specifies auditors must consider the safety of all road users including vulnerable users. As stated earlier, the RSA2 will be completed by an external company.

A route check has been completed by ATE and a joint design review panel with TfWM and ATE, these checks and reviews include assessment and metrics to ensure designers fully consider and account for the needs of all users including those with a disability.”

4. **QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor J Blundell**

TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor P Hetheron, Cabinet Member for City Services

TEXT OF QUESTION:

“A resident has completed an extensive safety review and has designed an alternative route that has not been considered. When asked at your cabinet meeting to consider the report you refused and furthermore the resident asked for his report to be included within the minutes the meeting, you refused the request. Can you please explain why you refused to both review the report and then to not allow it to be submitted within the minutes?”

ANSWER:

“The questions and points within the resident’s review were raised and answered through various separate communications in the weeks and months prior to the meeting, along with the numerous comments and suggestions submitted by other residents.

In addition, the 9th of December Cabinet Member Report directly addresses the resident’s suggested alternative route in the main report and in Appendices F and G. Alternative routes were also discussed within the meeting itself, at which the resident was present and spoke.

The alternative route suggested by the resident is the same as the pink route analysed within Appendix F, of the report, and scored 0 across 5 critical categories. This review was undertaken by TfWM and a specialist contractor external of the Council.

Finally, the minutes of Council meetings do not record every word said or include copies of documents circulated or considered. They are a record of the decisions made at the meeting and a summary of proceedings and as a result the briefing note was not included.”

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