



**Democratic & Central Services**

Governance Services

4<sup>th</sup> Floor (West)

Civic Hall

Leeds LS1 1UR

Contact Name: Kevin Tomkinson

e-mail: [Kevin.tomkinson@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:Kevin.tomkinson@leeds.gov.uk)

Direct Line: (0113) 2474357

Fax: (0113) 3951599

Your ref:

Our Ref: A61/kjt/quest

Date 27 November 2014

To: All Members of Council

Dear Councillor

**COUNCIL MEETING – 12<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2014**

At the above meeting, the thirty minutes of Question Time expired with questions 13 to 26 unanswered. Council Procedure Rule 11.6 requires that each Member of Council is sent responses to such questions.

**Q13** Councillor J McKenna - Please can the Executive Member update Council on the woeful performance of the Elland Road Park and Ride site?

**A** The performance is far from “woeful”. The site opened in time for the Tour de France and was used by some 1200 visitors on that Saturday alone. Patronage has grown steadily since the opening. Over 3000 trips are now taking place each week. Evidence from around the country, including York, shows that typically Park & Ride sites take 3 years to reach their full demand, and the current level of patronage is above that forecast at this stage by the service operator and ourselves. Customer feedback is excellent with 99% of those surveyed saying they would recommend the service. With increasing numbers using the facility, consideration is now being given to resurfacing an element of the overspill car park later next year. Following feedback, the car park is now open longer in the evening (until 21.15) and park and ride travellers are now able to use (free of charge) the City Connect bus to access other parts of the City. The site has been well used by visitors to the city on University Open Days. Elland Road Park & ride provides a cheaper and easier alternative to city centre parking, reduces congestion in the city, and along with further planned sites will allow the regeneration of cleared site car parks in the city. The second Park and Ride facility for the City will open in the Leeds City Region Enterprise Zone in early 2016.

**Q14** Councillor R Gettings - The row of empty shops underneath the Grand Theatre have been empty for nearly ten years. Could the Executive member responsible for Asset Management update council on our plans to get these shops into use and thereby generating income for the city.?

**A** As Councillor Gettings will be aware, the shops below the Grand Theatre are in a poor state of repair. The shops are currently in an unlettable state, and simply marketing them would be unlikely to generate any interest from potential occupiers without investment by the Council. Due to the weak property market in this location in recent years, this problem has been compounded. Now that the economy is improving, officers are currently exploring options to raise the potential finance required to deliver a viable scheme. Once the source of funding has been established, it would then be appropriate to commence marketing the Grand Theatre shops by way of inviting 'expressions of interest' this would allow the Council to gauge the level of interest from potential occupiers, the likely level of contribution the Council may have to offer tenants in order to convert/refurbish the retail units, and would also allow the Leeds Grand Theatre and Opera North to bring forward their own proposals for the space, should they wish to do so.

**Q15** Councillor S McKenna - Can the Executive Member responsible comment on the success of the recent Light Night Leeds?

**A** Light Night 2014 was produced by the arts and venues team within Culture and Sport.  
68 Activities were presented by over 300 artists and contributors in 18 venues and 8 outdoor locations across the city including; Millennium Square, Town Hall, Victoria Gardens, Headrow, Briggate, Trinity Leeds, Corn Exchange, Quarry Hill & the University. With the majority of the activities taking place between 5-10pm.

For those of you who were not able to attend, as in 2013 the centre piece was a digital projection onto the outside of the Civic Hall. This was an amazing project and once again formed a focal point for Light Night both in the media and to the public.

We estimate the total audience figures for the night was around 45-50,000. A number of the food concessions actually ran out of food.

The City's operating budget for Light Night was only £24,000. This unlocked a grant of £65,000 from the Arts Council.

Feedback was gathered from the audience on the night and afterwards with an online survey about their experience, this is what we learnt:

- 84.6% of respondents rated the event 4 or 5 out of 5.
- 88% said they came into the city centre specifically for Light Night and would not have normally come into town on a Friday night.
- Average spend per attendee was £20.38 (based on spend on travel, food, accommodation & shopping)
- If this is extrapolated across the estimated audience number of 45,000, it represents an aggregated secondary spend in the City of £917,100
- 36% of audience members attended with children and young people, of those who brought children 42% were aged 5-9. This completely changed, for one night only, the Friday night culture of Leeds City centre.

Light Night is therefore an exceptional example of the service working in an entrepreneurial manner, working in partnership with the whole of the city centre cultural sector with a remarkable civic spirit to create a free event with both high artistic values, broad cultural appeal and a significant economic impact.

For instance, in terms of numbers: 12,000 people were counted into the City Museum, 7,000 people were clicked into the Art Gallery, 7,700 into the city library and 1,000 people visited installations in St John's Church. There were 15,000 brochures printed and the 14,000 downloaded direct from the website. With over 10,000 Twitter followers we have seen an increase of 40% since 2013, with 1200 twitter interactions alone between 5pm-11pm on the night. Facebook members have also increased by 100%.

Projects such as Light Night are exactly the sort of activity we may want to build on as we move towards a potential bid for European Capital of Culture in 2023. The service is currently exploring links with other European Light festivals and continuously developing the programme with our partners as we learn from each years' experience. (There will be more food next year!)

I would like to pass on my thanks to officers but also to the cultural organisations, artists and volunteers that made Light Night such a success.

**Q16** Councillor P Wadsworth - Is the Executive Board Member for Cleaner, Stronger and Safer Communities satisfied with the quality of the grass cut this Autumn?

**A** In the streetscene grounds maintenance contract operated by Continental Landscapes Ltd there are 4 amenity grass cuts scheduled during September and October as part of an overall programme of 14 cuts. This is in addition to 4 cuts due on premium amenity grass (28 cuts in total), and 1 cut to rough/sight line grass (mainly in rural areas). In general the contractor has met the specification and no formal performance notices have been issued, however there have been requests made to revisit some sites following issues identified via monitoring or enquiries, which is a normal part of contract management.

Grass cutting operations have also taken place within parks, recreation grounds and other open spaces maintained by the Parks and Countryside service for which no significant issues have been reported.

If Cllr Wadsworth has any specific concerns regarding individual sites then please can these be sent direct to the Parks and Countryside service and will be investigated and responded to.

**Q17** Councillor S Bentley - Could the Executive Member for Health please update us on how many children in Leeds have had the flu vaccine so far this year and what proportion that is of total Leeds' children?

**A** The first data for this year's flu vaccination campaign is not yet available. The work is being led by Public Health England and they are still currently collating and analysing data from GP practices. The first monthly data return is expected shortly.

**Q18** Councillor J Dunn - Could the Chair of the WYCA Transport Committee please update Council on the Government's consultation proposals to the arrangements for guards on trains under the next Northern Rail franchise?

**A** 1. The consultation is still outstanding in terms of seeing the Specification and Bidders submissions.

2. I've met The RMT General Secretary and local officers to discuss their concerns regarding the initial consultation.
3. Given the concerns about revenue collection & ticket sales and low number of staffed stations in Leeds & West Yorks there is a real customer service benefit to keeping staff on trains.

**Q19** Councillor B Anderson - Will the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel confirm his plans for the Rosemont Sheltered Housing Complex in Bramhope?

**A** "Rosemont provides bedsit accommodation with shared bathroom facilities. Unfortunately I have been advised by technical officers that to change the building to meet modern standards is not possible due to the layout of the building and the slope on which it is built. This view has since been contested by a number of residents.

I am requesting an independent firm of architects to assess whether the building is capable of being adapted. Hopefully the Council and residents can reach agreement about the facts of what it is possible to do with the building and we can begin a meaningful consultation from there."

**Q20** Councillor S Golton - As the council voted to support the recommendations in the Due North report brought to Exec Board last month, please could the Leader of the Council explain why this administration voted down amendments on providing the Living Wage and Vitamins for Children in this year's Budget, given that the report recommends investment in Early Years health and paying all staff the Living Wage?

**A** Any aspirations to introduce the Living Wage and to increase investment in Early Years Health are currently severely restricted by the ongoing brutal cuts made by Cllr Golton's Liberal Democrat backed Government to local authority budgets.

**Q21** Councillor A Castle - Will the Executive Board Member for Transport and the Economy reassure the Council that businesses on Kirkgate and elsewhere along the route of the proposed new cycleway will not be adversely affected by its construction?

**A** As has been the case with other sections of the City Connect Project, we have been revisiting the designs following the public consultations and the feedback received. Revised proposals will be distributed for comment later this calendar year. The current thinking is that the revised design will show cyclists using the carriageway on Kirkgate and New York Street as far as the NCP car park. A cycle contraflow lane on Call Lane will remain to enable cyclists to exit the one-way system near to the Corn Exchange and the important loading bays in the area will be retained. Generally the businesses in the area are supportive of the scheme because of the investment it brings. In summary the revised proposals will be minimal and have a low impact. During the construction phase, we will do everything possible to minimise disruption to businesses.

**Q22** Councillor J Bentley - Could the Executive Member for Safer, Stronger, Cleaner Communities please confirm that the completed report on the feasibility study into low emission zones for the city will be available by the end of the year as promised in July's council meeting?

**A** A report will be presented to the December Executive Board meeting setting out the main findings and conclusions of the Low Emission Zone feasibility study'

**Q23** Councillor B Anderson - Would the Executive Board Member with responsibility for Travellers care to welcome Government proposals in the consultation document, 'Planning and Travellers', specifically those around improving protection for Green Belt land and ensuring fairness in the planning system?

**A** The Council is supportive of developing a consistent national approach which brings the determination of Gypsy and Travellers sites in line with the National Planning Policy Framework. We therefore welcome the opportunity to respond to the Governments consultation paper entitled 'Planning and Travellers'.

The Council has established an excellent working relationship with the local Gypsy and Traveller communities and the representative group Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange (GATE). We are innovative in working both with these communities and with other residents in Leeds. We have worked to create agreed temporary sites and gained injunctions aimed at preventing encampments at certain locations. These actions have led to significant reductions in the cost of responding to unauthorised encampments. Indeed, unauthorised encampments have fallen since May 2014, when the tolerated site at Kidacre Street was established.

**Q24** Councillor S Bentley - Could the Executive Member for Digital, Creative Skills and Culture please advise why there is only a website address provided on the cards for the Money Information Centre, understanding that many citizens do not have access to or knowledge of how to use computers?"

**A** Leeds Money Information (MIC) centre is a website to help people in Leeds with money worries. It has details of organisations in Leeds that can provide impartial, free help and advice on money and debt, household budgeting, reducing bills and affordable loans.

The MIC website was launched in March 2014 and postcards were produced to help promote the website and direct residents to an online resource where they could get money advice. In advance of the launch significant market research was undertaken into what would work best for our residents. The conclusion was that a website would help residents who are prey to online high cost loan companies whilst also providing staff in our one stop centres, contact centre and libraries with the resources to signpost to all the information residents who don't have access to the internet may need.

The Money Information Centre is in fact many public facing MICs across the city including LCC's public buildings and the public offices of our partners. For example, the MIC motif can be found displayed at One Stop Centres, Credit Union Branches, Advice Centres, Libraries and public housing offices. The intension is that over time the MIC emblem will be recognised as a place where impartial help can be offered for anyone who might have difficulties with their personal finances.

We have since produced a secondary piece of printed literature which has been mailed to 82,000 homes in digitally excluded areas. This gives alternative contact information (including phone numbers for Leeds CAB, Leeds City Credit Union and to check for Illegal Lenders) as well as money information and tips in advance of Christmas.

**Q25** Councillor B Anderson - Will the Executive Board Member for Cleaner, Stronger and Safer Communities give consideration to extending brown bin collections into early December this year, in order to accommodate demand arising from increased leaf fall?

- A** Ceasing of the garden waste service at end of November and recommencement from beginning of March looks to balance the competing demands for a garden waste kerbside service at the end of the Autumn and the beginning of Spring, whilst continuing with Household Waste Sort Sites availability, and also providing a street sweeping / leaf clearance function.

The service's budget is based on ceasing the kerbside service for 3 months during the winter period when demand for the service is low. Garden Waste Collection staff are redeployed within the service over this period to reduce reliance on agency and overtime cover and therefore spend. These savings have already been taken account of in the service's budget for the year. Amending the timescale would therefore incur additional operational costs and unnecessary spend to communicate such a revision to residents.

We estimate that the additional cost to the Council of running the 12 garden waste routes for a further two weeks would be £100,000 excluding the cost of any communications that would be necessary.

- Q26** Councillor B Cleasby - Will the Executive Board Member for Transport and the Economy explain what consideration has been given during the planning stages as to how the Leeds Bradford Airport Link Road will connect with the A65 Quality Bus Initiative? Would he also agree with me that these 2 projects together will allow the Airport to become a park and ride facility for Leeds and Bradford?

- A** The progression of feasibility design work for the proposed airport link road is still at an early stage. It is, however, envisaged that the scheme will incorporate bus priority measures on the A65 on the approach to the outer ring road which will complement the Quality Bus Initiative.

The practicality of introducing a bus based park and ride scheme at the airport would need to be assessed in the light of the existing plans to deliver an extensive rail park and ride site at the new Apperley Bridge station in 2015, and the planned NGT park and ride site at Bodington on the A660. Between them these two schemes will deliver in excess of 1100 parking spaces. An additional park and ride site that would compete for the same customers would have to have a very strong business case and also avoid undermining the other two facilities.

The emerging airport Masterplan will consider the whole issue of how the airport will grow and the airport link road is seen as a vital component in facilitating this.

We are also awaiting the outcome of the DfT study looking into transport access to the airport. A statement is anticipated in the near future possibly in the Autumn Statement in early December

Yours sincerely

**Kevin Tomkinson**  
**Principal Governance Officer**