

**CITY COUNCIL**

**WEDNESDAY 3 OCTOBER 2007**

**WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

**To Councillor Mike Cookson, Executive Member for  
Regeneration, Planning and Transport from  
Councillor Greg Stone**

**(Written 1)**

**Question**

What is the official status of the Faber Maunsell "West End Transportation Framework" report dated July 2006?

Has this report been considered by the city council?

If so, is it possible to receive a progress report identifying the status of the recommended actions in its Framework Delivery Plan?

**Written Response from Councillor Mike Cookson, Executive Member for  
Regeneration, Planning and Transport**

The Newcastle West End Transport Framework was prepared by Faber Maunsell to provide the transport context for the Benwell/Scotswood Area Action Plan. Undoubtedly the transport influence on the Area Action Plan extends beyond its boundaries and accordingly this document looked at the transport framework for the wider West End.

The wider West End for this transport framework document was defined as an area bounded by the City Centre to the east, West Road to the north, the A1 Newcastle Western Bypass to the west and the River Tyne to the south.

The document has no official status other than as a background document for the Benwell/Scotswood Area Action Plan.

The Planning & Transportation Strategy Committee at its 21 September 2006 approved the Preferred Options Report for Benwell/Scotswood Area Action Plan, and its draft sustainability appraisal, for statutory consultation. This consultation was undertaken in November 2006, December 2006 and January 2007. The Area Action Plan and background documents including the Transport Framework are currently being redrafted in light of these documents. It is hoped to report the Benwell/Scotswood Area Action Plan Submission Draft to the December

Executive. It is anticipated that the revised Transport Framework for the wider West End will also be taken forward as a Supplementary Planning Document at a later date.

A Business Plan is being prepared to accompany the Area Action Plan, coordinating the investment of a wide range of partners and stakeholders, including developers.

**To Councillor Wendy Taylor, Executive Member  
for Environment and Sustainability from  
Councillor Stephen Psallidas**

**(Written 2)**

**Question**

South Heaton Labour Party's web page states that

"The Lib-Dem controlled council's management of waste collection is going from bad to worse...the council now are unable to collect all of your rubbish in the weekly bin collection. Any rubbish put beside and not in the wheelie bin will not be collected by the refuse teams on the usual bin collection day. This means that bags of waste have been left in back lanes when the bin lorry has just been in your street!"

Can you please state:

- (a) the year in which wheeled bins were introduced by the Council, and the political party in control at that time,
- (b) the year in which the decision was taken to not collect refuse which was left in bags alongside the wheeled bins, and the reason for this decision.
- (c) the tonnage of refuse collected from back lanes in South Heaton Ward, outside the normal weekly collection, for the years 2004-2007
- (d) the number of Envirocall contacts from South Heaton ward requesting clearance of refuse from back lanes, and the proportion that were dealt with within the service standard, for the years 2004-2007,
- (e) the equivalent citywide figure as in (d) for the same year

**Written Response from Councillor Wendy Taylor, Executive Member for  
Environment and Sustainability**

- (a) **The year in which wheeled bins were introduced by the council, and the political party in control?**

Wheeled bins were introduced in 1999/2000. The Council was under Labour administration at the time.

- (b) The year in which the decision was taken not to collect refuse which was left in bags alongside the wheeled bins and the reason for the decision?**

The decision not to remove side waste was taken when the Council agreed to implement the wheel bin system.

- (c) The tonnage of refuse collected from the back lane in South Heaton ward outside the normal weekly collection for the years 2004 – 2007?**

It is not possible to quantify the tonnages collected as the vehicles used for this operation work across more than one ward on a daily basis.

- (d) The number of envirocall contacts from South Heaton ward requesting clearance of refuse from back lanes and the proportion that were dealt with within the service standard for the years 2004 – 2007?**

**And the equivalent city wide figures.**

**Envirocall Service Requests forwarded To Neighbourhood Services - South Heaton ward**

<b>2004/05</b>	No. of Service Requests: Citywide	No. of Service Requests: South Heaton	South Heaton as % of all Service Requests	No. of Requests closed in Service Standard: South Heaton	% Requests closed in Service Standard: South Heaton
Fly-tipping	6761	263	3.9%	234	89.0%
Litter	1332	19	1.4%	15	78.9%

<b>2005/06</b>	No. of Service Requests:Citywide	No. of Service Requests: South Heaton	South Heaton as % of all Service Requests	No. of Requests closed in Service Standard: South Heaton	% Requests closed in Service Standard: South Heaton
Fly-tipping	5788	222	3.8%	211	95.0%
Litter	633	4	0.6%	3	75.0%

<b>2006/07</b>	No. of Service Requests:Citywide	No. of Service Requests: South Heaton	South Heaton as % of all Service Requests	No. of Requests closed in Service Standard: South Heaton	% Requests closed in Service Standard: South Heaton
Fly-tipping	7204	316	4.4%	316	100.0%
Litter	506	5	1.0%	5	100.0%

<b>2007/08 (to end Sept 07)</b>	No. of Service Requests:Citywide	No. of Service Requests: South Heaton	South Heaton as % of all Service Requests	No. of Requests closed in Service Standard: South Heaton	% Requests closed in Service Standard: South Heaton
Fly-tipping	4118	293	7.1%	277	95%(estimate – Sept. figures only draft at this stage)
Litter	60	0	0.0%	na	Na

It should be noted that as part of the Council's ongoing attempts to tackle fly-tipping residents are increasingly being advised to contact Envirocall should they witness this form of environmental crime.

**To Councillor Wendy Taylor, Executive Member  
for Environment and Sustainability  
from Councillor Joyce McCarty**

**(Written 3)**

**Question**

At the City Council meeting in September, you gave assurances to Council Members about the delivery of School Travel Plan works around four city schools in contradiction to the letters received in July from officers in Neighbourhood Services.

Officers are reporting in public meetings that there remain funding issues and that not all proposed works will be able to be implemented during this financial year. Can you please clarify this situation for me?

**Written Response from Councillor Wendy Taylor, Executive Member for  
Environment and Sustainability**

The School Travel Plan Programme for 2007/2008 involves 17 schools. Works have already started on 5 of these schools and works will commence on the remaining 12 during the current financial year.

It is possible that completion of the works at some schools could overrun into the early part of the new financial year as a result of unforeseen operational problems, not funding issues.

**To Councillor Wendy Taylor, Executive Member  
for Environment and Sustainability from  
Councillor Stephen Lambert**

**(Written 4)**

**Question**

The blooms, floral displays and planters have brightened up several parts of the City. Yet some neighbourhoods and major roads such as the Great North Road in Parklands and Hollywood Avenue in Gosforth appear to benefit from the barrier plant programme than other neighbourhoods and roads such as Ponteland Road in Cowgate. Why is this?

What does the Council intend to do to make sure all wards in the City benefit from this programme?

**Written Response from Councillor Wendy Taylor, Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability**

The floral beautification of the City is a very positive and popular activity of the City Council. The core activity is within the City Centre and barrier planting along specific main routes – including the Great North Road junction with Hollywood Ave and further along the Great North Road by the local shops. In addition each ward of the City is allocated seven stand alone planters. The location of these planters is done in consultation with local ward members and tends to be in prominent “gateway” locations. Other barrier and stand alone planters are funded from a variety of sources; including environmental ward stewardship and where applicable, parish councils. All wards benefit from Environmental Ward Stewardship and it is up to the local members to determine the priorities for spend. The barrier planters mentioned in Parklands ward were funded by North Gosforth Parish Council.

Unlike the Great North Road, Ponteland Road also benefits from planting at the various roundabouts along its route.

There are challenges to such beautification activity from a small number of local residents, who do not share the respect for the environment of most people. In an attempt to brighten up the Cowgate area near Ponteland Road, the local Neighbourhood Response Manager was involved in a scheme this summer whereby young offenders from Castington grew plants that she was going to get her team to plant in Cowgate. Unfortunately, half the plants were taken from the Estate just prior to planting. Local intelligence indicates that the plants were taken by a local resident.

**To Councillor Nick Cott, Executive Member for Children and Young People from Councillor Kevin Graham**

**(Written 5)**

**Question**

Following the ill-judged remarks made by David Laws MP, Lib Dem spokesperson on Children, Schools and Families, concerning the take up of school meals and his call for a slowing down of the introduction of new standards, will the Executive Member condemn this position as irresponsible, given the serious implications this has on the effect on childhood obesity rates across the City?

Additionally will the Executive Member give an assurance that this knee-jerk and irresponsible approach, advocated by the Lib Dems nationally, will not be implemented or followed by Newcastle City Council?

**Written Response from Councillor Nick Cott, Executive Member for Children and Young People**

I am unaware that the Liberal Democrat Shadow Secretary for Children, Schools and Families has made any ill-judged remarks concerning schools meals since he has rightly highlighted a national problem and has asked for the Government to address it as is his prerogative as Opposition spokesperson.

There is a national problem with uptake of healthier food options and uptake of school meals which I am sure that you will be concerned about and wish parliamentarians to be discussing.

In terms of the local context, I can assure you that the Council and its partners in children's services are focused on promoting and taking up healthy food options. Our school meal providers are producing meals high in quality and nutritional value at present but remain committed to the food standards and nutrient-based guidelines via the School Food Trust to which I think your question refers.

Happily, our school meal providers are achieving higher levels of take up than the national average across all educational ages and it is good to know that many children are accessing quality healthy meals.

Your question focuses exclusively on school meals but there are many other areas of focus to consider. The Council, schools and partners, it should be said, are working on other ways in which obesity can be countered with an emphasis on promotion of healthy lifestyles. I have listed some thoughts about the ways in this is being done:

- Work in schools has ensured that the number healthy school awards are well above the national average. 62% of all schools have achieved healthy school status;
- Chocolate bars, fizzy drinks, crisps etc. have recently been removed from school meal menus and vending machines in schools following collective agreement by the schools and the Council. This follows the School Food Trust standards;
- The Council and its partners are actively supporting the ongoing work being undertaken in tackling obesity levels for pupils under the age of eleven by the Lean East project and also the related Food for Life project;
- The new Fusion project which provides free entitlement to leisure provision for young people across the City.

These are a few examples and I would be happy to discuss this matter with you further if you would wish to pursue it.

**To Councillor Pauline Allen, Executive Member  
for Culture, Heritage, Libraries and Sport  
from Councillor Nigel Todd**

**(Written 6)**

**Question**

What is the Council's policy regarding making charges for community groups to use parks? Does this policy differ according to the amount of park use? (i.e. a small area or the whole park)

**Written Response from Councillor Pauline Allen, Executive Member for  
Culture, Heritage, Libraries and Sport**

The Parks & Countryside Service actively encourages use of the City's parks by the public and community groups. Most use by non-commercial organisations is allowed free of any charge providing there is no need for staff to be taken away from normal duties within the park to provide assistance with an event.

When a request to use a park is made, a permit for the use of the land is issued that clearly states the responsibilities of any group holding an event. The normal cost of this permit is £75, but is usually waived if it is a local, voluntary group holding an event that benefits the wider community. However, depending upon the size and complexity of the event being held, additional permission may be necessary if the event contains any of the following licensable activities, under the provisions of the Licensing Act 2003:

- The supply of alcohol
- The provision of late night refreshment (the supply of hot food & drink, 11 pm to 5 am)
- The provision of regulated entertainment (plays, films, indoor sporting events, boxing or wrestling, playing of recorded music, live music or performances of dance)

An Application form would have to be completed and returned to the Licensing Authority for its approval. The Authority has been pro-active in obtaining premises licences under the Licensing Act 2003 for most parks alleviating the necessity for community groups to make a formal application. This cost for "licensing permissions" may vary from £21 for an event with a likely attendance

of under 500 people at any one time up to £315 for an event with over 500 people, plus a rate of £20 for every 250 persons or part thereof above 500. This fee covers officer time to provide a safe event.

The policy does not differ according to the amount of land to be used; the only real consideration with regard to this issue is to ensure that there is sufficient land available for the type of event to be held safely and for the number of people attending.

**To Councillor Ged Bell as a member of the  
Joint Committee for the North of England  
(Beamish) Open Air Museum from Councillor Neil Hamilton**

**(Written 7)**

**Question**

As one of the Council's representatives on the Beamish Joint Committee, what is Councillor Bell's view on the current structures and management arrangements in place at Beamish Museum to enable the new director of the Museum, when appointed, to properly discharge the duties of that position.

**Written Response from Councillor Ged Bell as a member of the Joint  
Committee for the North of England (Beamish) Open Air Museum**

The wording of the question would suggest that the current structures and management arrangements of Beamish Museum would not allow the proper discharge of the duties of the Director. That is absolutely not the case, indeed the legal structure of the Museum, in conjunction with external advisers, has only recently been reviewed to maximise the Museum's financial position and these arrangements have been approved by all of the constituent authorities.

It is my view that the structure and arrangements in place actually facilitate the purpose and direction of the Museum.

The following question was submitted last month and it was agreed that the response would be circulated in time for the October meeting. Details are set out below.

**Written Question to Councillor Wendy Taylor,  
Executive Member for Environment and  
Sustainability from Councillor Nick Forbes**

**(Written 19  
from 5  
September  
2007)**

1. Please set out the costs of a) establishing and b) operating the Council's Sustainable Travel Plan and Travel Bureau.
2. How many pool vehicles were purchased as a result of the plan? What was the cost to the Council in purchasing these vehicles, and what are the annual running costs?
3. Please set out average usage figures for the pool vehicles (e.g. average hours per week or month).
4. Please state the total cost of taxis and mileage payments to staff and councillors for each of the last 3 years.
5. The Sustainable Travel Plan anticipated £56,000 being raised in revenue from the introduction of parking charges at the Civic Centre. How has this revenue been raised instead?
6. Please set out the number of parking passes issued at the Civic Centre for each of the last 3 years.

**Written Response from Councillor Wendy Taylor, Executive Member for  
Environment and Sustainability**

The development of the travel office as part of the sustainable travel plan is an important part of setting an example by encouraging our staff to travel in the most efficient and sustainable manner.

In addition to services already provided through this office, further work is ongoing as part of the development of this initiative, to consider providing all occasions where staff need to travel as part of their work (air, road, rail and sea and any associated accommodation) through this office to enable better and more sustainable choices.

Current services include:

- Corporate taxi contract to help provide value for money

- 14 pool cars to provide more sustainable choice
- Shuttle vehicle service between Council sites
- Priority /rapid access parking at the Civic Centre
- 1 day public transport passes
- Annual transport passes for staff and paid for monthly through salary deduction at negotiated reduced cost
- Car sharing scheme
- Cycle salary sacrifice scheme regarding 'bike to work' initiative
- Management information to inform corporate consideration

### **Questions**

- 1. Please set out the costs of a) establishing and b) operating the Council's Sustainable Travel Plan and Travel Bureau.**

With regards to the Travel plan and office, all costs of the operation have been annualised (i.e. cars repaid over three years for example) and as such the establishment costs are included in the annual running costs over the three year plan. In a full year of operation (2007/8), the anticipated costs are as below. Work is also ongoing to evaluate transferring all staff travel functions as part of the planned development of the Travel Office.

Expenditure / Income Head	2007- 08 Projection
Expenditure	
Salaries	69,350
Vehicle Hire (shuttle) & Running Costs	33,250
Vehicle Borrowing Repayments	31,350
New Cycle Sheds	15,000
Office Running Costs	30,000
Vehicle Tracking System (Installation & running costs)	15,000
Proposed purchase of further vehicles	20,000
'Rent' for Car Park	551,000
Total	759,950
Income	
Directorate Clawback	(250,000)
Car Park Passes Recharge	(529,490)
Total	(779,490)
(Surplus) / Deficit	(15,540)

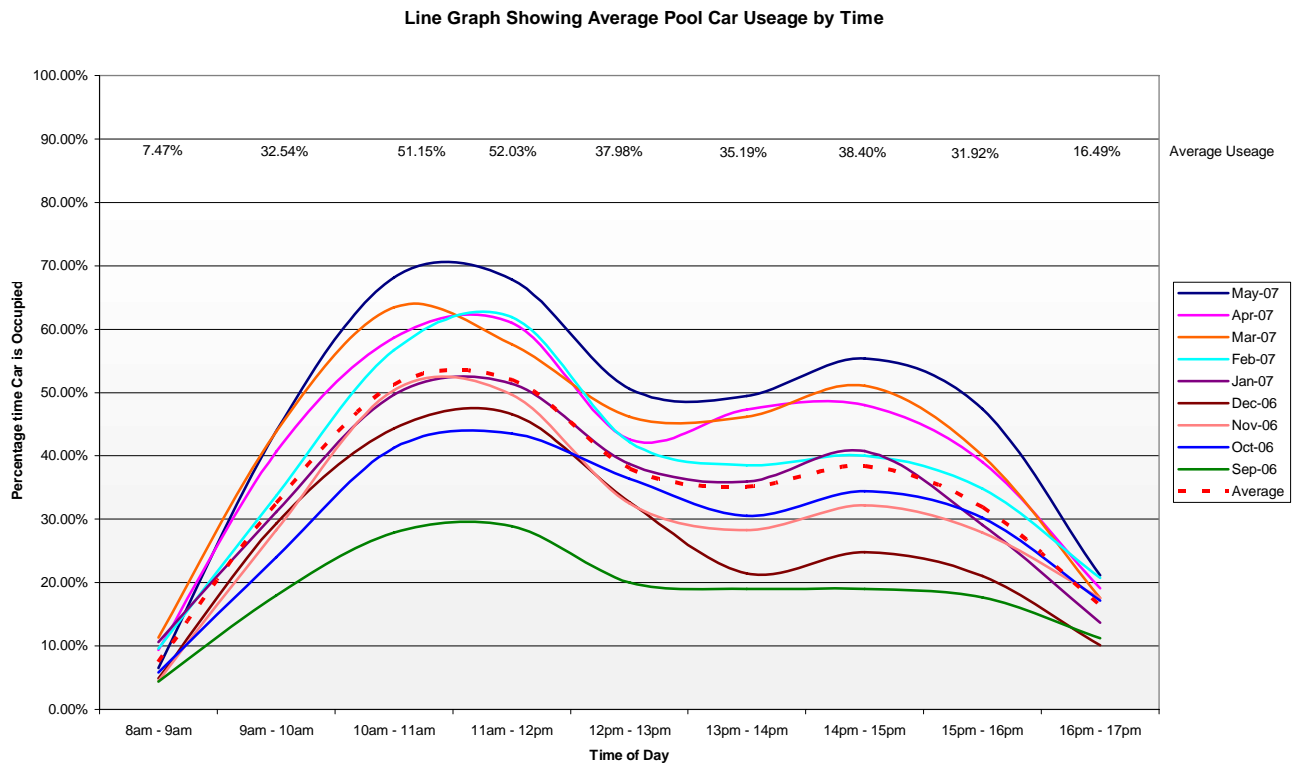
- 2. How many pool vehicles were purchased as a result of the plan? What was the cost to the Council in purchasing these vehicles, and what are the annual running costs?**

The 14 cars were purchased using prudential borrowing over three years and running costs are £31,350 borrowing repayments and £16,500 running costs.

**3. Please set out average usage figures for the pool vehicles (e.g. average hours per week or month).**

The average over the 1<sup>st</sup> 9 months has clearly risen for each month, demonstrating the anticipated increasing usage by staff. The percentage use of the vehicles, from the total hours available, has risen to over 70% for morning business and over 50% for afternoon. For further information, there have been only 6 occasions where a car was not available on request and alternative travel choices were provided.

Please see below for details of the improving trends over the first months of operation.



**4. Please state the total cost of taxis and mileage payments to staff and councillors for each of the last 3 years.**

Staff car mileage claimed as follows:

04/05 £1 251 250  
 05/06 £1 154 459  
 06/07 £1 298 985

Members claims from statutory notice as follows:

04/05 £13 275  
05/06 £15 975  
06/07 £11 380

Taxi Fares – Staff Work Related

04/05 Data not available  
05/06 £59 903  
06/07 £77 923

Taxis Fares – Members

04/05 Data not available  
05/06 £30 517  
06/07 £23 267

**5. The Sustainable Travel Plan anticipated £56,000 being raised in revenue from the introduction of parking charges at the Civic Centre. How has this revenue been raised instead?**

The business plan accommodated a provision to fund development of further sustainable travel initiatives which has been utilised to fund the shortfall. However this is the first year of operation and how we deal with charging staff is under review.

**6. Please set out the number of parking passes issued at the Civic Centre for each of the last 3 years.**

The figure for parking passes in operation prior to the travel plan (September 2006) was 440. Following the reallocation exercise, this stands at 386. This reduction has in part allowed for the new Blue Bays to be provided allowing rapid access and priority parking whilst also allocating passes to Blue Badge holders without charge to Directorates.