

Appendix 1

Council Meeting, 19 July 2021 Question Time (agenda item 14)

1. Question from Cllr Payne to Cllr Davies, Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Public Transport

Councillor Payne asked the following question of the Leader:

“The A3 bus service from Weston-super-Mare to Bristol Airport, which is a service commissioned by the airport under contract, has been suspended for some months now, which we can understand with the reduction of use of the airport during the pandemic. But are you concerned that the airport is now making no commitment to re-start the service although things are starting to open up and since the airport is actively trying to get people back to flying again?”

The only way people can currently access the airport from the Weston area is by going via central Bristol, and it can't be done at all for early morning flights from the airport. Do you agree with me that this encourages more people to go to the airport by car, which is the opposite of what the airport has told us they are trying to achieve?”

The Leader responded that he had discussed this matter with the Chief Executive and had agreed to look into airport public transport provision. He would ask the public transport team to keep members updated on this.

2. Question from Cllr James to Cllr Gibbons, Executive Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning

Cllr James asked the following question of Cllr Gibbons:

“I read with real sadness the Ofsted and CQC Joint Report dated 16 June. This report highlighted the ‘lack of strategic direction and planning by senior leaders across this authority to implement the SEND reforms through an effective SEND strategy’. This said that attempts to introduce change had been ineffective, insufficient and inconsistent. It also highlighted that stability had been a strength locally, and a blame culture that damages that stability might be unhelpful. How will the council change and what will be different in our approach after this Ofsted report.”

In response, Cllr Gibbons stated that the report findings involved the council's partners such as the CCG as well as the council and that one or two challenges had been recognised and were being addressed as part of an accelerated action plan. She added that the original inspection in 2018 had raised 8 points needing attention with the revisit finding only two had been addressed to date. The remaining points were being worked on via the accelerated action plan.

In response to a supplementary question, Cllr Gibbons confirmed she was confident that the new approach was sufficient to provide trust in the system and address the

damaged reputation. She referred to positivity and a willingness to address the challenges so all partners could do better for these children and their families which was important for everyone.

3. Question from Cllr Bryant to Cllr Davies, Leader of the Council

Cllr Bryant asked the following question of the Leader:

“On Friday last I was privileged to meet with Julian Turner - Chief Executive Officer of Westfield Technology Group and Dr Paul Phillips, Principal of Weston College to examine and experience at first hand an autonomous vehicle or POD. Westfield Technology Group is one of the UK’s leading autonomous vehicle providers and globally they are known for their niche sports cars with over 20,000 sold worldwide. The POD has been developed in conjunction with Heathrow Airport and has now completed over 5 million kilometres in a live commercial environment serving Heathrow Airport Terminal 5, known as POD Parking. The vision is to bring PODs to WsM as an added benefit to the Town and an attraction to its many visitors. Initially it would operate a service from the new bus terminal currently being built, extending into the Town and along Marine Parade.

This innovative idea has a number of benefits, the first of which is to help and assist in the reduction of global warming. Last but certainly not least the PODs would arrive in modular form, to be built by the College providing a hands-on approach for the mechanical, electrical and electronic engineering students which hopefully you agree would be a huge benefit.

Unfortunately, all creative ideas such as this require inward investment and I ask if the Leader will ask officers to make contact with Dr Paul Phillips and his team to see how the Council can assist both practically and financially.”

Cllr Bell responded to the question, stating that he had participated in a demonstration by Weston College so was aware of the PODs. He agreed this was an interesting idea and he was happy to take this away and discuss with officers. However he stressed this was a costly option, but if an extended trial or a lease option was possible then it may provide an opportunity for the council to achieve something different.