

WRITTEN RESPONSES TO ELECTOR'S QUESTIONS FROM THE MEETINGS HELD ON 29 JULY AND 21 SEPTEMBER, 2009

29 JULY, 2009

DIRECTOR FOR DEVELOPMENT

Q1 Could taxi parking bays be provided at the Broadway Car Park?

A1 We would not be able to specifically allocate bays for use by taxi's, however as a trial we would be willing to allow a taxi which is coming to collect a customer to park within the '2 hour's free' area of the Broadway car park.

Whilst acknowledging the comments that Taxifast are seen more than other taxi firms we have to treat all taxi firms fairly and consistently, so this would be available to other taxi firms.

If the above is found to benefit the customer, and not lead to an large increase in taxis resulting in reduced availability of parking bays to customers, I see no reason why this could not continue.

21 SEPTEMBER, 2009

DIRECTOR FOR DEVELOPMENT

Q1 Could a 'keep clear' sign please be erected at the junction of Meadow Park with Hooe Road as it is difficult to exit/enter, particularly when the bus is parked at the bus stop?

A1 Unfortunately the signing strategy has been agreed for the remainder of the financial year and this proposal is not included. However, we will evaluate in more detail the proposal and if it is reasonable we will include the proposal in the prioritisation works for the next financial years plan. We will then consider the suggestion alongside other requests for new signing.

Q2 Could the paving slabs outside the newsagents on the Broadway be re-set. The contractors who have recently completed works there have left a 2" trip hazard?

A2 We will visit the site and inspect the defect. I have raised a job reference E130304 to inspect and make good. We will write direct with the outcome.

Q3a What is the structure, terms of reference, areas of responsibility and accountability of the Highway Authority? And how are these functions scrutinised?

A3a The structure and terms of reference for the Highways service are set out in the contract documents that were signed on the 27th August 2008. The agreement to proceed with the arrangement was made by Council on the 5th August 2008, cabinet minute number 45. The contract itself is based on the New Engineering Contract 3 (NEC3), which is a standard form of service engineering contract.

The service is under the management of Clive Perkin, Assistant Director for Transport within the Department of Development and Regeneration. The Portfolio Holder for Transport, Councillor Kevin Wogens, is responsible for overseeing the operation of the service and has at least weekly meetings with Clive Perkin to keep abreast of the service.

Q3b Why are all public highways enquiries handled by the council's telephone switchboard operators instead of being referred to highways officers?

A3b As part of the Authorities efforts to improve customer service, the handling of highways calls was transferred to the main council service centre on the 1st December 2008. The service centre has a large pool of staff who are currently answering 97.6% of calls. The service centre uses a Customer Relations Management system (CRM) to log and record all enquiries made. This service arrangement ensures that all calls are answered and registered in a consistent way. Once calls are registered they are then allocated to highways officers accordingly. This approach has been accompanied by a regular programme of training and review so that the service staff have a good knowledge of the highway service and current issues and projects on the network. These employees are not 'switchboard operators' but trained staff skilled in handling a range of public enquiries across most council services.

The approach ensures that all callers have their call answered and that these are recorded and handled consistently. Last month the Council was awarded the governments prestigious 'Customer Service Excellence' for its work in developing and delivering this frontline service. The approach that has been taken has been fundamental to providing a consistent and assured service to customers.

Q3c Why are enquiries for information on highways questioned or provided with oblique answers from Amey. What are the functions of Amey?

A3c Amey has been tasked with delivering certain elements of the highways service from operations and maintenance through to engineering and design of schemes. In addition to providing the day to day operations on the network the Amey service also provides design, monitoring and delivery of certain authorised functions.

The authorised functions which Amey perform on behalf of Plymouth City Council are based on the following acts:

- Highways Act 1980
- Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984
- New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991
- And minor duties within the Traffic Management Act 2004

The responsibilities are clearly set out and reviewed in a structured way with the Assistant Director and his representatives.

Q3d Why are the constitutional functions of the Planning Committee on highways not implemented?

A3d Highways are consulted on all planning applications by the planning officer. The advice and recommendations from the Highways consultation are included in the applications and are presented to the Planning Committee.

Q4 How many anti-social behaviour injunctions has the city council issued in the last 12 months (total citywide with a breakdown for each area)?

A4 I can confirm that there were 6 injunctions of this type obtained in the following areas:

Stonehouse 2
Leigham 1
Plympton 1
North Prospect 1
No fixed abode 1

As you may be aware, injunctions are only a part of the enforcement measures the Council uses to tackle serious anti-social behaviour and usually this follows a series of attempts to address the issues including engaging the perpetrators in support. Using this method the Council is successful in resolving most problems without going to court.