

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS
Council Meeting – 2 February 2023

Question: 1.
From: Mr R

Response by: Councillor Higginbottom (Cabinet Spokesperson for Environment and Highways)

Question:

At a number of locations in Mapplewell, which is part of the Darton East Ward, are road side yellow line parking restrictions in place, and daily you can see motor vehicles parking of them, and on the pavement.

In 2005 the council took on the responsibility for the management and enforcement of these road side parking restrictions, in its first year what was the management structure, and the number employed in each position, and this year 2022, what is in place, where are they all based, and what are their weekly days, working hours.

During 2022, in Mapplewell, what are the weekly number of patrols, and number of penalty fines issued, and how does this compare with other wards in the borough.

Response:

Thank you Mr R for your question.

The staffing structure for our parking enforcement and management team in 2005 was:

- 18 x Civil Enforcement Officers
- 3 x Senior Civil Enforcement Officers
- 1 x Parking Manager
- 1x Parking Manager Assistant.
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The staffing structure for the same team in 2022 is:

- 12 x Civil Enforcement Officers (with 3.5 vacancies)
- 2.5 x Senior Civil Enforcement Officers
- 1 x Parking Operations Manager who reports to a Commercial Service Manager.

Recruitment and retention for these posts is a challenge and this is not unique to Barnsley Council.

The team operates from a town centre base in The Glass Works. We have three teams (Red, White and Blue), each with a senior Civil Enforcement Officer, who operate on a rota that provides a continuous six days of enforcement (excluding Sunday and Bank Holidays) between the hours of 8am and 6pm (10 hours per day).

We conduct patrols out in communities across Barnsley, including Mapplewell, on an ad-hoc basis centred around key areas of risks, like schools and shops. We visit problem areas and areas with new traffic regulation orders multiple times to make sure that the orders are complied with.

We do not keep a league table of parking charges or penalty charges across the borough.

The objective of civil parking enforcement should be for 100% compliance, with no penalty charges. Parking charges and penalty charges should be proportionate.

Our purpose is not to issue penalty fines as these are a last resort. For example, when patrolling school areas, we often find that a Civil Enforcement Officer in attendance will make drivers move on negating the need to issue a ticket.

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Question: 2.
From: Mr R

Response by: Councillor Higginbottom (Cabinet Spokesperson for Environment and Highways)

Question:

For many years at each end of Paddock Road, which is in Staincross, there was a 3 ½ ton weight restriction traffic sign, this has been removed and replaced with a 7 Ton weight sign.

Residents on this road have raised concerns with the council about road traffic, were they made aware, did the council connect with them, and issue a public notification before it made a significant change to the highway, which is a lawful requirement.

Will the council correct this wrong doing, and put back the 3 ½ Ton weight sign, and then consult with residents before forcing a change onto them.

Response:

Thank you Mr R for your question.

As a matter of routine, any old imperial 3 ½ Ton (unladen) restriction signs are replaced with metric 7.5 Tonne (laden) restriction signs when the sign needs maintenance and needs to be replaced, as per a Department for Transport's guidance. This relates to environmental weight restrictions only, there is no significant change to the highway.

We're working with local ward Councillors to investigate the concerns raised regarding road traffic on Paddock Road in Staincross. Once the proposals are finalised, we will publicise these and people will have the opportunity to comment.

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Question: 3.
From: Mr H-B

Response by: Councillor Higginbottom (Cabinet Spokesperson for Environment and Highways)

Question:

Context:

There is a concern that at the junction of Spark Lane, Greenside, Towngate and Blacker Road, otherwise known as Four Ends Lane, in Mapplewell, Barnsley, that because of the removal of all safety bollards around this junction, the council have now diminished the safety of pedestrians within the area. The safety improvement scheme was completed in 2018 in the village centre. Since their inception, concerns have been raised, in 2020 an Article in the Barnsley Chronicle (Ref 1) highlighted these concerns. Their purpose of installation was clear, and this was evidenced in the minutes of the North Area Council Meeting, 16th July 2018, in Appendix 1, Section 3 (Ref 2). Despite this, the council's response was the removal all the bollards in this area in late 2022, 4 years after being installed.

Since the time of their installation, they have been struck several times by typically larger vehicles; usually LGV's or HGV's. Imagine the catastrophe that would have ensued if it had been an adult or child struck! It is believed, though not proven, that the repairs were costly to the council and that this factored heavily into the decision to remove all the bollards. It is argued that a 'safety bollard' has a core purpose of keeping pedestrians safe. The fact that the bollards need repair from being struck, gives evidence to show they are serving their purpose in keeping pedestrians safe. If they are being struck, vehicles are encroaching onto the pathways, putting pedestrians at a heightened risk of injury or death.

Evidence of struck bollards seen from photos posted across various social media local groups and as seen in articles in the Barnsley Chronicle shows severe damage done to the bollard, particularly by larger vehicles turning onto Greenside from Blacker Road. Pedestrians on the left-hand side of Blacker Road heading towards Spark Lane are now at risk of being struck by moving vehicles turning down Greenside or worse, being pulled under these larger vehicles. The Bollards previously installed ensured residents were moved away from the edge of the road which was a mitigation in improving the safety of this junction.

In addition, the bollard removal has further diminished the safety of pedestrians along Greenside outside Landon's Diner and Harmony Hair Salon. Motor vehicle drivers, not being willing to wait for another car to pull out, are now banking the curb the turn left onto Blacker Lane when cars are stationary, patiently waiting to turn right onto Towngate. This has increased the risk of injury or death to persons using this junction because there is an increased possibility of being hit by a moving car. Other 'near misses' have also happened from the various directions at the junction.

A recent survey put out onto the 'Darton, Mapplewell and Staincross Community' Facebook group had 146 respondents. Of these, 83% of respondents supported the need for further safety measures at the Four Ends Lane junction. The outcome of the survey, as of 22nd December 2022 was:

Yes – All or some of the bollards should be reinstated: 58% (86 Respondents)

Yes – Something alternative should be put in place to improve safety of residents: 25% (36 Respondents)

No – It should be left as it is with no additional safety measures: 17% (24 Respondents)

Question:

I therefore would be grateful if the relevant officer/s and official/s could answer the following questions:

- What was the evidence base that informed the decision to remove the bollards completely?
- Who was involved, consulted, and approved the removal of these safety bollards?
- What measures are now being considered to RESTORE safety at this junction within Mapplewell?

References:

1. <https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s37093/Notes%20from%20the%20Areas%20Ward%20Alliances.pdf>
2. <https://www.barnsleychronicle.com/article/20059/safety-concerns-in-centre-of-mapplewell>

Response:

Thank you, Mr H-B, for your question.

The TRAFFIC TEAM have been working closely with ward Councillors and local community representatives to find a solution to the issue of the bollards being struck. As has been noted, the bollards are struck and damaged regularly, which leaves hazardous and unsightly broken bollards in the footway. Officers agreed that, on balance, removal of the bollards (together with other minor improvements to the zebra crossing and its approaches) was the most appropriate solution in the short term. We will continue to monitor the situation and, should circumstances change, we will revisit it.

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Question: 4.
From: Mr F

Response by: Councillor Sir Steve Houghton CBE (Leader)

Question:

I would like to ask The Leader of the Council Sir Stephen Houghton, how he arrived at the figure of 500,000 visitors to Barnsley Town Centre which he stated in the Barnsley Chronicle on 25th November 2022.

My understanding is that the only counting in the Town Centre is in fact a footfall count carried out on May Day Green. If that is the case, why does the Leader's quote this figure as visitors. In a reply I got from the Leader's office in reply to a question stating that 'the number of unique visitors would need to be counted in a very different way'.

Response:

Thank you Mr F for your question.

We have several footfall counters located around the town centre including additional counters at various town centre premises. The counter located on May Day Green is the most central footfall counter which is why this one is used to report corporately for the council, and this is the data, which was provided, and where the figure came from.

Data aggregation is also used to summarise data for analytics, it helps to provide statistical analysis for lots of different reasons, such as activities and events., giving insights about pedestrian counts, movements, and supporting individual area performance in the town centre.

All our data is monitored and recorded from each of our footfall counters on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis, it is compared against existing and previous data to ensure its accuracy. Counts are recorded when people visiting the town centre cross the footfall sensors, which account for use of the term 'visitors' to describe the footfall figure.

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Question: 5.
From: Mr F

Response by: Councillor Sir Steve Houghton CBE (Leader)

Question:

The Leader also states that the estimated income from the GlassWorks is £5.4m per year. When will this figure be achieved? Does the Income figure include the total business rates the Council collects, or half of it, as the other half I understand has to be handed to the government? And at the present time there has been no valuation to calculate Business Rates, so how can he take this into account.

Can the Leader tell us how much the Council will have lost between, when it first opened and when it breaks even?

The Leader states that the GlassWorks will have supplied 1100 full time equivalent jobs. Does this include jobs that have merely been transferred there when a retailer/etc has moved from one Barnsley site to the Glass Works?

Response:

Thank you Mr F for your question.

Income from The Glass Works, which includes the council's estimated 50 per cent share of business rate income, is expected to be achieved in full during the next financial year.

Nothing is 'lost' as result of the phased opening of units. This is entirely to be expected and consequently the anticipated impact of this has been factored into the overall development budget.

The 1100 full time jobs created include a combination of new jobs, existing jobs and temporary (construction) jobs.

The Glass Works is an unrivalled success with the many fantastic retail, leisure, and hospitality additions to the town centre, driving increased footfall and visitors and an extremely positive reaction from the vast majority of people.