

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

QUESTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROTOCOL AGREED BY COUNCIL ON
5TH MAY, 2010

QUESTION FROM: MR. A. FARQUHARSON

TO: DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND
REGENERATION

LLANCARFAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

You have previously stated publicly that the “Llancarfan (School closure / transfer) wouldn’t be happening if Welsh Labour were running the Council”. Please could you clarify, therefore, which party is currently running Vale of Glamorgan Council, as the electorate are confused by recent actions of the new Leader in respect of the School’s future as they seem to follow the views of former Leader. Further, please can you clarify what role, as Cabinet Member for Education, you played in the ‘informal review’ undertaken by the Leader?

REPLY

At the time decisions were being considered and taken I said that this would not be carried out in the way it was. I stand by that statement.

However, the final decision with regard to primary provision in the Western Vale was taken under the previous Administration in March of 2019, it was also agreed within the Capital Programme that was agreed by Council with only 2 Members voting against that Programme.

As you are aware the Vale of Glamorgan Council’s Administration changed in May 2019, with the Labour Party becoming the majority political group, working in coalition with the Vale Independent and Llantwit First Independent Groups.

As Council has been informed previously, the Leader of the Council conducted his own informal review regarding the matter and concluded that there were no further decisions required by Cabinet.

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QUESTION FROM: MR. A. FARQUHARSON

TO: EXECUTIVE LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR PERFORMANCE AND
RESOURCES

LLANCARFAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Please can the Leader clarify what his “own informal review” consisted of in respect of the Llancafarn School decision that led to his Party’s apparent u-turn on their pledged support to keep the School in the village?

REPLY

I will confirm that I carried out a personal review of all available information relevant to the matter. I also held a meeting with members of the Llancafarn School Action Committee to listen to their views.

As, Leader of the Council and with responsibility for placing items on the Cabinet Agenda, I concluded that all the relevant evidence had been considered previously at both Cabinet Level, but particularly at Scrutiny meetings, (some of which I attended). I also read the relevant documents and reports. I also took into account that much progress had been made on the matter since the decision of Cabinet and that design briefs for the new school had been prepared. Given all the above there was no reason to place the item on a further Cabinet for discussion. Neither do I agree that any pledge was made by me or my Council colleagues to keep the school open as suggested.

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QUESTION FROM: MR. A. FARQUHARSON

TO: EXECUTIVE LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR PERFORMANCE AND
RESOURCES

LLANCARFAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

At a meeting of the Llancafarn School Governors held on 15th May, 2019, correspondence from you was read that stated you had been told by officers that the process could not be stopped. For the avoidance of doubt in any future cases, please outline at what point in the process Cabinet decisions become irreversible? Does this point change if there is a change of Cabinet Members, leadership, or ruling party? And does this all correspond with the advice given to you by officers mentioned above?

REPLY

Thank you for your question, however on 15th May, 2019 I was not the Leader of this Council and I have never written a letter to the Governors of the school.

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QUESTION FROM: MR. A. FARQUHARSON

TO: DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND
REGENERATION

LLANCARFAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

If the transfer of Llanccarf Primary School to Rhose goes ahead / is successful in its Business Case, the Vale Council will lose its only school defined as 'rural' by Welsh Assembly Government. Is this something the Vale of Glamorgan Council feels comfortable with seeing happen?

REPLY

The Vale of Glamorgan operates under a cluster model for schools, which includes a Rural Cluster comprised of six schools. The Council firmly believes that labels do not define potential for its schools nor should they limit opportunity.

All pupils across the Vale are entitled to equal opportunities for education, and each of our schools brings with it its own unique contribution, regardless of its designation by Welsh Government.

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QUESTION FROM: MR. A. FARQUHARSON

TO: DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND
REGENERATION

LLANCARFAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Does the Vale Council consider an excellent standard of education to be primarily driven by the facilities (new buildings etc.) provided to students, or the staff delivering the education itself?

REPLY

There are, of course, a number of elements which work together in supporting and driving excellence in schools. The facilities available to staff and pupils form part of this. Strong leadership and high-quality teaching and support are absolutely fundamental to pupils' wellbeing and achievement.

The proposal to move Llancafarn School recognises this by providing a school building fit for the 21st Century and the evolving curriculum. The staff and Governing Body will transfer to the new building which will ensure standards of leadership, teaching and support are maintained.

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QUESTION FROM: MS. K. NICOL

TO: THE CABINET MEMBER FOR LEGAL, REGULATORY AND PLANNING
SERVICES

GASSIFICATION PLANT IN BARRY

Can you tell me what the status is of the gasification plant in Barry? When will it be operational and why is it not already?

REPLY

First of all, as I understand it, the current status of the Biomass plant is currently undergoing its Commissioning Stage.

However, I need to clarify that commissioning the plant does not fall within the remit of this Council – it is a matter for the owners / operators and Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

NRW has confirmed that the plant recently recommenced its commissioning programme from 18th November using diesel as a base fuel to raise steam for cleaning and refractory dry out purposes. NRW has also confirmed that the site has not as yet fired using waste wood inputs.

I understand that the site will be operational by Christmas, but this detail is still being finalised by NRW who regulate this stage of the process under the Environmental Permit. .

I reiterate, the Council had no input into this commissioning process as this is a matter for NRW. Answers given to other questions raised by other members of the public deal with this Council's response to the commissioning.

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QUESTION FROM: MR. R. PATTENDEN

TO: THE EXECUTIVE LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR PERFORMANCE
AND RESOURCES

STRATEGIC TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS IN DINAS POWYS

I would be grateful if you would make a public statement regarding the impact of the previous Administration's Cabinet decision to exclude further consideration of the 'Blue' by-pass route from the Stage 2 Arcadis Consultants study of transport options through the Dinas Powys corridor between Barry and South Cardiff (15th April, 2019 Cabinet minute C656 refers) and that, as the new Council Leader, you are happy with the process by which the decision has been made. Specifically will you please answer the following questions:-

1. The 15th April, 2019 Cabinet decision was made following a recommendation from the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 7th March, 2019 that 'the Head of Neighbourhood Services and transport progress with Stage 2 works for the Green and Pink route exclusively.' I was present at that meeting. The Officers' report on the study made no recommendation to stop work on the Blue route. The matter was raised by a local Member, Councillor Andy Robertson with the support of the Committee Chair, Councillor Vince Bailey, and, with almost no informed discussion, a recommendation was passed. This reversed the Cabinet's undertaking to Dinas Powys Community Council (of which Councillor Robertson is also a Member) to widen the study scope to allow for the Blue Route alternative. Do you agree, as Leader of the new Administration, that this was effective scrutiny?
2. Are you prepared to review the 15th April, 2019 Cabinet decision and reinstate the Blue route to enable proper and full consideration of all options in accordance with WelTAG? This would ensure that complete information is provided for Public Consultation before the Cabinet decide which option or options should proceed to Stage 3.
3. Is the Council aware that in the absence of the Blue route, it will essentially be considering a single route option without any comparison as required by WelTAG since the Green and Pink routes are essentially variations on the same route?

REPLY

By way of background I can advise that the resolutions of Cabinet of 15th April, 2019 are a matter of public record, and I will not repeat them here.

I would also confirm that I do not comment on other Council Members' opinions and that is a matter for them to decide upon. Many of us in this Chamber may have different opinions and are entitled to air those views. That is what democracy is all about. I will make no further comment on that reference in your question.

Subsequent to the consideration and decision taken by Cabinet in April, work by officers on the draft Stage 2 WelTAG in accordance with that decision is advanced and the wider modelling of the possible transport improvements for the Dinas Powys area is due to be commenced shortly.

As the funding for this Study was NOT made available by Welsh Government the Council is funding the remaining Stage 2 study work from its own resources.

In my opinion, this matter was properly scrutinised and considered at both Scrutiny Committee and at Cabinet.

I can confirm that I will not be requesting another report to Cabinet to consider the "blue route" any further. However, it is open to any member of the public to comment at the public consultation stage on this matter, which will follow receipt of the Draft Stage 2 WelTAG Report.

In answer to the specific questions, I would respond as follows:

- (1) Yes I do consider the matter of the Dinas Powys WelTAG work was properly scrutinised. As you may recall I was a member of the scrutiny committee at the time.
- (2) I will not be reviewing this Cabinet decision and therefore not including in the current ongoing Stage 2 WelTAG work, the "blue route".
- (3) Yes, the Council is aware that the two transport road routes still under consideration are the pink and green routes and which follow a similar corridor of interest. The Study however, is about far more than just road infrastructure and will consider transport improvements related to public transport and active travel.

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QUESTION FROM: MR. M. LOCK

TO: THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND
REGENERATION

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Can the Council tell me since declaring a climate emergency what projects or decisions have had a positive environmental impact, excluding all plans and projects that were in the pipeline BEFORE this declaration was made.

REPLY

The Council's declaration of a climate emergency in July 2019 marked an important step for the Authority. As stated in that debate, that declaration builds on many years of work to reduce our environmental impact. That work includes significant reductions in CO2 as a result of introducing the pooled car scheme, which has reduced mileage undertaken by staff to the region of 135,000 miles over the last 4 years, the conversion of 15,793 (67%) of our streetlights to LED, the installation of solar panels at 12 sites, and the implementation of changes to waste and recycling arrangements.

We continue to promote biodiversity by designated conservation zones along highway verges and increasing the planting of wildflowers to aid pollination. The most recent significant example of this is the planting of 10,000 trees as part of the Five Mile Lane works, with a further 7,000 to follow and added to that 1,850 trees that were planted last year in Cosmeston. 10 drinking fountains have been installed across the Vale of Glamorgan to aid the reduction of single use plastics and by the end of 2020 a further 11 will have been installed.

Since the declaration was made, in addition to those schemes I have already outlined, I am pleased to say that a significant amount of further work is underway. We are currently preparing a Council-wide strategy to coordinate our activity and to set out what more can be done, both as an organisation and as a leader in our community. I say this, as climate change affects us all and we all (both as organisations and individuals) need to change our practices and the way we go about our daily lives if we are going to be successful in meeting the challenges of climate change. Responding to climate change will not be possible if we act alone or are if we have the mind-set that it is someone else's responsibility. That said, our work is progressing well, and it is our intention to have our Council-wide strategy in place for adoption in early 2020. The Council's draft Corporate Plan has also taken account of the climate change challenge and has a series of commitments associated with reducing our impact on the environment.

Some examples of the decisions taken since the declaration include the Cabinet's adoption of the Public Services Board's Staff Healthy Travel Charter, which I was delighted to see receive commendation from the Wellbeing of Future Generations Commissioner, Sophie Howe. That Charter sets out ways in which organisations will support staff to travel in more sustainable ways, and reduce the carbon emissions associated with it.

The consultation currently underway in Penarth regarding Nextbikes is a further example of work to promote climate reducing forms of transport and shows how innovative use of funding from developments, a concerted effort to reduce carbon emissions and a commitment to improving healthy travel choices can work together. The consultation response so far has been very positive.

By the end of 2020 we will have converted a further 3,713 streetlights to LED which will increase our total quantity of LED units to 91%.

Changes have been made to tender documentation to ensure that a commitment to reducing single-use plastic is incorporated. For example, the four procurement exercises we have run for food products in the Catering service since July 2019 have included commitments to use recycled packaging where possible. The Council's procurement policy makes links to sustainability and the Corporate Plan.

A workshop was held last week (5th December) with the Public Services Board and representatives from the Vale Youth Forum and other youth groups to identify further opportunities to work together on this important subject. This is further evidence that we need to work across organisations if we are to meet the very significant challenge that faces us all.

We are also planning a similar Public Service Board event with the 50+ Forum early next year, so we are able to consult with all ages, all of whom are having to meet the climate challenge.

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QUESTION FROM: MS. C. OCKERBY

TO: THE CABINET MEMBER FOR LEGAL, REGULATORY AND PLANNING
SERVICES

CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER

Can you make public the 24 hour telephone number for Barry residents to call when they have a noise, air or light pollution complaint? If there is no number in place for the 55,000 residents of Barry, please can you tell me why not and ensure one is put in place?

REPLY

As you can imagine, a 24 hour telephone requirement would be quite resource intensive and the Council budget as it is, that is just not going to happen. But what we do have is during normal hours you can make a complaint and the Environmental Health Officer will actually consider monitoring out of hours, so it is on a case by case basis. I will say that we have had some staff absence in the last six months or so, due to illness, but that has now been resolved and so any future complaints will be responded to as required.

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QUESTION FROM: MS. C. OCKERBY

TO: THE CABINET MEMBER FOR LEGAL, REGULATORY AND PLANNING
SERVICES

INCINERATOR

Regarding the recent developments at the Incinerator, who made the decision to keep the information from the public and why wasn't notification given by the Council?

REPLY

I am afraid that I am unable to answer your question, as the decision to allow the plant to be recommissioned was one made between Natural Resources Wales and the operators of the plant. The Council had no involvement and would not be in a position to make such a notification.

I understand that the operators 'Biomass Barry' issued a letter to residents on 13th November, 2019 informing those that received it that the commissioning would commence on 18th November, 2019.

I have a copy of the letter if anyone needs to see it.

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QUESTION FROM: MR. M. LOCK

TO: THE CABINET MEMBER FOR LEGAL, REGULATORY AND PLANNING
SERVICES

BIOMASS PLANT AT THE DOCKS

Are the Council aware a biomass plant the size of the one in the Docks will emit the same co2 as 26,000 cars annually and is at least twice as bad/efficient as burning coal? How does this fit in with the climate emergency recently declared and any ambitions for a zero carbon future in the Vale?

REPLY

I note the concern that is being raised, but would respectfully suggest that those concerns should also be raised with the Welsh Government – after all it was the Planning Inspector, appointed and working to the Welsh Government who made the decision to grant planning permission for the plant.

I can only note the calculations and implications you indicate.

In terms of this Council's decision to declare a climate emergency, then we would have regard to issues that we have a direct influence upon and would consider all aspects of any new developments, but I would reiterate that this Council originally rejected the energy from waste plant on this site, when it was considered by the Planning Committee.

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QUESTION FROM: MR. M. LOCK

TO: THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND
REGENERATION

INFRASTRUCTURE

With major developments happening across the Vale there is serious concern from residents that the appropriate infrastructure is not being accompanying development, the new Five Mile canal for example between Weycock and Bonvilston. How can the Council address this so that in ten years' time we are not living in a place with further insufficient roads, schools, drains, transport, leisure facilities and doctors etc.?

REPLY

I would first like to begin by challenging the suggestions that Five Mile Lane is a canal. There was flooding on the lower (and original part) of the road a few weeks ago. This was due to flash flooding that occurred throughout Wales and was caused by storm debris and fly tipping blocking the storm drain adjoining the road. This has now been cleared.

In answer to your question, the Local Development Plan (LDP) sets out the Council's Land Use Planning Strategy for the period 2011-2026. This Plan includes reference to the necessary infrastructure required to deliver sustainable growth. Indeed one only needs to consider the extent of the substantial multi million pound investment through 21st Century Schools to conclude how serious this Administration is about improving facilities and infrastructure for residents of the Vale – both in terms of current and future generations, which includes 13 projects that were designed to be delivered by 2023, details included in this report spelled this out.

Further Supplementary Planning Guidance particularly around planning obligations and affordable housing has also been prepared as part of the process of the adoption of the LDP and this includes guidance for developers on the requirements for contributions towards education provision, drainage, sports and leisure, sustainable transport and community facilities. Our performance in terms of leveraging community benefits alongside new developments is far and away the best in Wales, with significant investment over the years in terms of new infrastructure within the communities that have seen new developments.

Notwithstanding the above, as part of the LDP preparation and adoption process, other statutory partners, such as the NHS, Welsh Water and NRW, were consulted

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and provided advice on the sustainability of plans included within the document. The independent Inspector who undertook an inquiry into the Plan over a nearly 10 month period, was also satisfied that the proposals were sustainable when recommending the Plan for adoption.

Finally, it is important to note that schemes such as Five Mile Lane, the Northern Access Road, in St. Athan and the new Cowbridge to Llantwit Major link road are all being delivered along with other key infrastructure projects including dedicated cycle and foot paths and were all proposals contained within the LDP.

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QUESTION FROM: MR. R. WELLS

TO: THE CABINET MEMBER FOR LEGAL, REGULATORY AND PLANNING
SERVICES

PROPOSAL RE PLANNING SECTION ON THE COUNCIL'S WEBSITE

On the planning section main page of your website, to have a map of the Vale of Glamorgan. On the map you have flags / markers for any planning applications. You can look over the map, and if a plan / area, interests you, you click on that marker, and it tells you what is planned.

The two main reasons to do this are, one, the planning section of the website is very complicated. I've been on the phone to the planning department staff, they have looked at the website, whilst I've been on the phone, and they can't find what I've wanted to know, saying it's complicated. If they can't find something, that they do every day, and is their job, how are the public going to find something? And secondly, for safety sake, some yellow posters are on a dangerous road, or somewhere dangerous to get to. You can roughly remember where the poster is, then when you are in a safe place, quickly go on the planning section of the website, quickly scan over the map, and find the plans.

REPLY

May I begin by apologising if the site was not as user friendly as it should have been and also thank you for bringing this matter to our attention.

As there were issues, as you indicated, the Planning page of the Council's website has recently undergone a redesign to make it more customer friendly and this was relaunched on 25th November.

Members of the public are now able to access the Planning Register or planning maps, within three clicks of the Council's main home page.

The Council is committed to continually updating its planning pages to ensure they remain customer friendly and easy to access for all and where possible improvements will be made as and when resources allow.

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

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QUESTION FROM: MR. R. WELLS

TO: THE CABINET MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES AND
TRANSPORT

CYCLE PATH / PAVEMENT BETWEEN BARRY AND DINAS POWYS

A cycle path / pavement should be made between Barry and Dinas Powys. Lots of people need to cycle and walk this route, there is no quick safe route for them, this should have been done years ago. Other areas you have added cycle paths next to pavements, have already had safe areas. Please install this, before someone is seriously injured, or killed. Years ago I rang the Council, and they said they had problems finding land owners. I'm sure being a Council, you have Land Registry, or easily find out who owns the land. Along most of the road is a river / stream. This could be directed through a rectangular concrete tube, with the pavement / cycle path above.

REPLY

I agree with you that there is a need for a new cycle / foot path linking Barry and Dinas Powys.

The Council's Local Development Plan Policy MG16 recognises the Council's commitment to develop the National Cycle Network (of which Cardiff Road Barry to Dinas Powys is part of) within the Vale of Glamorgan.

National Cycle Network Route 88 links to Route 4 Margam Park in Bridgend, through the Vale of Glamorgan via Cardiff Road to the start of Route 8 in Cardiff Bay.

A feasibility study that identifies an indicative but preferred route was prepared by the Council and is identified on the Adopted Local Development Plan Proposals Map. Some sections of the route have been constructed and the remainder of the route is indicative and is at varying stages of development, such as those along Cardiff Road between Barry and Dinas Powys.

The Council has recently commissioned transport experts to undertake the feasibility and design of an active travel route on this Corridor. Once this Draft Study is completed there will be a public consultation on its recommendations which will include the possibility of an active travel route (walking and cycling) linking Barry Biglis Roundabout with Dinas Powys via Cardiff Road. As Mr. Wells notes in his question, part of this area is floodplain and any such route design will need to take that into account.

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

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QUESTION FROM: MR. M. LOCK

TO: THE CABINET MEMBER FOR LEISURE, ARTS AND CULTURE

BARRY MUSEUM

With such rich history in the area and Barry once being the world's largest exporter of coal, why is there no formal museum in Barry and what can the Vale do to address this? This would be a great resource for the town and provide a tourist attraction not specifically aimed at just the summer season.

REPLY

There are significant costs to be considered with establishing and maintaining a bespoke museum provision. The Council's strategy at present is to pursue more sustainable opportunities, such as the 'Creating a Sense of Place for Barry' project specifically aimed at showcasing the rich cultural past of the area, by widening access to engagement and providing mechanisms for greater public involvement.

To that end, in March of 2018 a successful application made in partnership with the community was made to the Heritage Fund's Great Place (Wales) pilot for a programme called Barry-Making Waves, which is a programme of activities to embed heritage and culture in long term plans and activities for Barry..

In addition to this, Barry County Library holds a local studies collection which contains numerous items including books, maps and photographs. It also contributes to the online digital accessible to everyone archive called the 'People's Collection Wales'.

Finally, and with reference to the specific museum proposals, the Council is more than happy to discuss with any group, organisation or individuals who have specific ideas in relation to any of the above.

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

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QUESTION FROM: MR. D.M. ROBERTS

TO: THE CABINET MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES AND
TRANSPORT

STREET LIGHTING IN THE GARDEN SUBURB, BARRY

Can the Council confirm that they will turn back on all street lights on in the Garden Suburb, Barry during the switch off time of 00:00 to 06:00, to protect the residents and restore public safety following a high level increase in reported crime from burglaries and car vandalism since April 2019 ?

REPLY

The Garden Suburb is well covered by street lighting and full details can be found on the Council's website.

The Council has already removed a significant proportion of part-night lighting in residential areas and lighting on main roads will shortly be converted to LED which will then remain on throughout the night. I anticipate that this next phase will be completed within the next 12 to 18 months.

It is the Council's position, (which has been supported by the South Wales Police), that there is NO specific evidence from other areas, in which similar part time night lighting measures have been introduced, to suggest that levels of crime and numbers of traffic accidents increase as a result of part night lighting.

I would however invite Mr. Roberts to meet with a Council officer to discuss in more detail his concerns to see if we can assist in anyway.