

Public Question Time

Monday 17 May 2021 at 6.00 pm

These notes are not verbatim

Question 1

Over the past four years we have wanted to be part of what is going on in the town and we have been blocked at every opportunity from Councillors in wanting to do good for our town. I have read the Mission Statement for BTC which states the council wants to work with residents' but that does not seem to be the case and I would like to see us work together this time around. We have a new forum called "1 Blyth! To help with what is going on in our town centre and we want to be part of the decision making, we want to make the town better. We have seen the development plan for the town centre and cannot understand why, when millions has been spent on the market place that the Council want to move the bus station and pedestrianise the market place.

Answer

In terms of revitalising the market place, this is led by NCC but BTC are consulted. As a Town Council, we have four representatives on the Town Forum and two councillors on the Town Deal board which is funded separately. There have been two major consultation events so far which involved schools, a number of questionnaires going out to residents. As the scheme progresses there will hopefully be more opportunities for people to get involved. We will make sure we let residents know what is going on through the BTC website or other means. BTC are in the middle of looking at our strategic objectives for the next few years and we could look at how we listen to residents and how we can do this better.

Question 2

I came four years ago full of hope. The two question rule came into force and I don't know why, everyone, including myself is frustrated about this. We have ideas as a community and have to wait for Full Council to ask questions.

Answer

The Council agreed the two question rule because it was found that few people attended the Council meetings and the ones that did asked a lot of questions. The rule is in place to give everyone the opportunity to speak. As far as ideas are concerned if an individual submits an idea to the Town Clerk he will ensure that it goes to the relevant Committee. There are 16

Councillors who are here to steer the town and will listen to ideas. Residents have the opportunity to put questions into the Town Clerk or elected members.

Question 3

Are all meetings going to be public now or will it be a mix of public and electronic as attendance from the public seems to be better at electronic meetings?

Answer

The Government decided that we can no longer hold Committee meetings via zoom. We could not use the Council chamber because of social distancing. For the foreseeable future we will be holding Committee meetings at a venue like this but will continue to hold other meetings via zoom. We can look at other ways of ensuring more public participation, for example, via YouTube.

Question 4

There are 6-7 objections to the new play park on Broadway field – this has been started without any consultation to residents. We were not invited to the meeting on 29 April 2021 and would not have been made aware unless the Conservative candidate had told us about it.

We want to know why it has been sited in front of our properties Will the Council be responsible for an anti-social behaviour and damage to properties, cars etc, what is wrong with the existing play park, why

Answer

There were problems with existing park due to the sap from trees causing slippery surfaces, and there were also some problems with the original suppliers of the equipment. The new play are will have equipment that is more inclusive for disabled users and is further away from the main road. BTC negotiated with NCC and they approved the site as suitable for a new play area.

It was discussed at a special meeting on 29 April – this was not a public meeting and the decision was taken to proceed at the new site for the reasons given above.

BTC have apologised to residents because of a failure to consult and it is a lesson learned and the Council will ensure in future that residents and ward Councillors are consulted.

In terms of the council being responsible for anti-social behaviour, we are going to put a cctv on the site. Although residents are concerned this may be intrusive, the cameras will be directed to the play area.

Question 5

Do you have any kind of plans for youth engagement as this is good for reducing anti social behaviour?

Answer

We have a community grants programme where we support local community centres and community activities and organisations are able to apply for a number of different activities. During the pandemic we set up a special emergency covid fund, reaching out to people who need our help.

Question

Do you have any future plans for those types of activities for example youth centres etc.

Answer

Youth services have been reduced over the years. I would like to see BTC doing more in terms of activities and summer schools.

The Mayor thanked the public for their participation.