The Public Health Time bomb created by the Council’s Highways Department

AUGUST 31, 2017 | AWJREYNOLDS | 1 COMMENT |

The rest of the world is waking up to the huge impact the way we have designed our roads is having on the health and wellbeing of our residents. We really cannot ignore how the attitudes that pervade our Highways Department has resulted in ‘car only’ schemes like the Two Headed Man junction improvements (https://cyclebath.org.uk/2017/07/26/the-knock-on-effect-of-just-making-infrastructure-for-cars-the-marksbury-a39-example/) getting funded.

Refocusing Highways

It is time for the council to recognise its role in delivering a better environment. It is no longer acceptable for this council to deliver ‘car only’ schemes. It is absolutely vital that Highways department’s core roles be re-appraised and improving public health become one of the core remits for the department.

The Role Of Councillors

Significantly, this vital role of improving public health, needs to be recognised by councillors and they must do their best to explain to their residents why certain schemes must happen and that the objections of residents, say on grounds of loss of on-street parking etc., are secondary to the building of healthy, active streets.

The Reality

Currently 10,000 Bath residents drive to work in Bath. 5,000 kids are dropped at school. That’s 40,000 car journeys EACH day. The recent stats from BaNES council states that a A36 / A46 bypass would ONLY remove 2,000 cars off London Road, yet this is the call to arms (http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/our-plan-to-get-bath-moving) the current council are using as a way to solve Bath’s transport problems.

Political Failure or It’s Not Us It’s Them!

We need council officers to recognise that political parties have the inability to deliver good, public health driven, transport policies as it might scare away voters and will only support schemes that ‘blame outsiders’. Even the use of 12% through traffic (http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/our-plan-to-get-bath-moving) statistic by the council shows a political dogma aimed at preserving votes. What about the 88%? That’s where the change needs to happen.

Public Accountability
This needs to change but the change starts with the Highways Department core remit being public health and, going forward, being publicly accountable to residents for their failings to deliver healthier active streets.

The role of councillors must support the council in delivering this remit, not fight it tooth and nail to preserve votes. They must be part of the solution.

**Benefits**

We need the council and councillors to recognise the benefits of active transportation as listed in the letter (http://activetransportationcanada.weebly.com/uploads/9/5/5/8/9558360/canada_needs_an_activetransportation_strategy__f_.pdf):

- make physical activity part of our everyday lives, increase fitness levels
- reduce risk for many chronic diseases, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, some types of cancer, osteoporosis, cardiac and respiratory disease
- control health care spending
- reduce carbon emissions, support transit, improve air quality
- reduce traffic casualties
- increase transportation options and improve housing affordability
- create communities where seniors can age in place, maintain mobility
- improve accessibility for everybody
- create more prosperous communities
- attract creative employees and build the innovation economy
- create vibrant communities with a sense of place, distinct character

**Addendum**

One of the interactions on twitter asked me what powers officers have to veto political ‘ideals’. They have none. In fact officers often present options that they know align with political ideals as was discussed in one of my previous articles (https://cyclebath.org.uk/2017/05/22/the-attack-on-20mph-schemes-in-banes/) on the attack on 20MPH zones in Bath.

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**steppedinjam @DavyM9**

Replying to @awjre and 4 others

Great article, particularly the political failures. It'd be interesting to know how much power officers have to veto the political 'ideals'

**Adam Reynolds @awjre**
None. The council officers present options to the councillor that they feel have a chance of passing political dogma cy-clebath.org.uk/2017/05/22/the… pic.twitter.com/0PqSEJHCJg
9:46 AM - Aug 31, 2017

Cllr Anthony Clarke:

As you know, the present Administration does not support 20 mph, except outside schools and other exceptional circumstances. I will not support 20 mph in Granville Road, and at most would only allow advisory 20 mph on the estate, with green roundels, and even that would require a degree of coercion.

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This is also why things like the Two Headed Man junction improvements are happening now. The previous administration rejected the proposals twice. Not, however, with this administration that wildly embraced it. Officer have their own agendas and are happy to wait until the right administration is in place to act on them. Yes they play the long game. A very long game.

Public Health must become a legal requirement.

One thought on “The Public Health Time bomb created by the Council’s Highways Department”

1. Roger Symonds says:

SEPTEMBER 2, 2017 AT 6:00 AM  □ EDIT

Officers give councillors advice and there is always pressure to accept this advice. Officers remain in position through different administrations and often have their own agenda. “Traffic flow” is a favourite. Any councillors who suggest aids to this has a good chance of success. Political groupings will never champion people riding bikes. There are not enough votes there for Cllrs. Now of course the car lobby……The other thing that drives many Cllrs is their own promotion within the group. Seldom are their enough who favour bikes over cars.