

**COUNCIL – 19 OCTOBER 2022****QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC****Questions to Portfolio Holders**

(A) Question from Mr Jim Borchers

“Stevenage Borough Council has a duty to encourage the use of sustainable travel rather than car usage in the Town. For this to be done residents need to have confidence that the network of cycle paths and footpaths around the town are being looked after and kept clear of hazards.

In June 2022 there were areas of the Cycleway network that still had leaves on them that fell in the Autumn of 2021, these areas had obviously not been swept in over six months.

On a recent occasion I had an email 10 days after reporting glass on the cycleway, letting me know that “This case has been closed because it will be resolved soon by the already planned programme of works” – case reference RIC448883495

As I understand it the system in Stevenage for maintaining the footpath and cycle path network involves mechanically sweeping the cycle paths every 8 weeks, litter picked once per week, and reports of problems like glass being resolved within 48 hours.

I also understand that it is policy to start to clear fallen leaves from the network from 1st November unless they are reported. I understand that there is a map showing the locations of persistent leaf fall that the Council uses to manage its work on clearing leaves.

Many residents and visitors to Stevenage use the FixMyStreet system to inform local authorities of problems. A benefit of the FixMyStreet system is that users can see other reported problems (unlike the Stevenage Borough Council system). My understanding is that Stevenage Borough Council does not subscribe to FixMyStreet.

From the examples I have given there is clearly a mismatch between what is supposed to happen and what does.

Can you give details of what plans Stevenage Borough Council has to improve the reporting and resolution of problems on the footways and cycleways so that less people are discouraged from using them?”

***Answer (Cllr Simon Speller):***

*Cycle tracks are swept approximately every 12 weeks. There are though many variables that can impact this schedule such as staffing, weather, seasonality and vehicle / equipment performance. Unfortunately, due to staff vacancies and some technical issues with the new Sweeper vehicles which we are striving to resolve with the manufacturer, the service has been affected in recent months.*

*Litter picking takes place fortnightly. The leafing programme starts 6 weeks before Christmas and continues 6 weeks into the new year.*

*All cycle tracks are on the schedule. It is possible that the leaves could have been missed due to the current challenges as previously mentioned. In addition, leaves accumulate in wind traps throughout the year, so may not have been in situ for as long as might appear.*

*We have a list and maps that are issued to the leafing teams. These maps identify known hotspots. Leaf accumulations can change yearly depending on the wind, therefore the programme is supported by a reactive team. We welcome feedback and if problem locations are encountered please provide the details and this can be cross checked with our operational information.*

*Regarding broken glass on footpaths, reports are received via the Council's 'Report It' system, and are then triaged by the business support team. Priority works are raised and issued and we aim to complete them within 48 hours from when the report is processed by the business support team, Monday to Friday. A challenge with glass reports is the information received is often not detailed enough to locate the exact location, and on most occasions no contact details are provided. Including the 'what 3 Words' location identifier to narrow the area to a 3m square can be very helpful in pinpointing these locations. Automated emails are sent if contact details are provided, once the works order is processed and closed.*

*The Council no longer uses FixMyStreet. 'Report It' is the system that is used and this is where reports should be directed: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/report-online>*

*We continually review and adapt our service offers to seek to optimise them.*

(B) Question from Mr Paul Dawson

“The United Nations and World Health Organisation both mandate the setting of a maximum 30km/h (20mph) speed limit wherever vulnerable road users mix in a frequent and planned manner with motor vehicles, except where strong evidence exists that higher speeds are safe.

St Albans District Council, Watford Borough Council and 11 other Parish and Town Councils across the county have already passed motions in favour of wide area 20mph speed limits in Hertfordshire. In addition, North Herts District Council and Royston Town Council, representing two of the three Hertfordshire Sustainable Travel Towns of Letchworth and Royston, have also passed 20mph motions.

Stevenage remains the only Sustainable Travel Town in Hertfordshire that has not passed a similar motion. Will Stevenage Borough Council, therefore, follow the lead taken elsewhere and propose a motion in favour of the implementation of a wide area 20mph speed limit on urban and residential roads in Stevenage and across Hertfordshire where pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users mix with motor vehicles?”

**Answer (Cllr Simon Speller):**

*Thank you for the question, and for your shared commitment to tackling the climate crisis we all face.*

*We recognise the importance of sustainable travel, from walking and cycling, to use of buses and trains to help not only address climate change but to help improve health and wellbeing.*

*We are proud to be a Sustainable Travel Town, and benefit greatly from a fantastic network of separate and segregated cycleways from our proud New Town heritage.*

*Broadly, our approach is to promote 20mph zones where there is evidence it will protect public safety and we make the case for this to Hertfordshire County Council Highways who ultimately make the decisions.*

*We continue to work with our residents locally to identify which streets and neighbourhoods are most suitable for 20mph protection. We will also continue to engage with Hertfordshire County Council through the existing Sustainable Travel Towns forum, to understand their views, before determining whether a motion or any other form of action is appropriate.*