

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

COUNCIL held on 18 March 2021

ITEM 9 – PROPOSAL OF NOTICE OF MOTION (RULE OF PROCEDURE 16)

STATEMENT from Mrs Christina Porter, a Derbyshire Dales resident on the proposal of Motion.

“Dear sir/madam

I do not wish to speak at the meeting on Thursday but I would like to comment on Cllr Jason Atkin suggestion to use the Covid 19 additional burdens money received from central government to be shared with all staff at a rate of £150 each.

This money should not be used for a staff payment. This should be used for the purpose it was given and only used for that.

There is still money to be spent relating to Covid 19, we are not out of this pandemic and the money must be available to be used for that purpose not to top up wages for staff.

Staff are paid to do their job and whilst I appreciate many have worked extremely hard during this pandemic so has everyone else in lots of other jobs.

If the money is not required currently it should be protected and rolled over to the next financial year and if that is not possible it should be returned to the government.

Christina Porter”

ITEM 16 – LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND’S RECOMMENDATION FOR NEW ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS AND WARD BOUNDARIES IN THE DERBYSHIRE DALES.

QUESTION from Mr Peter Dobbs, an Ashbourne resident, on the draft recommendations impact on service delivery.

Ref Item 16 LGBCE Draft Report

Para 2.4 in the officer report reads;

2.4 Officers have reviewed the draft recommendations and have not identified any implications which would impact negatively upon service delivery.

I am concerned therefore that the consequences of the following aspect of the LGBCE proposals may have been overlooked. I do appreciate that this is a long and complex report with many important documents on the LGBCE website and not in this report itself, so the following comment is made in order to achieve accuracy and is not a criticism.

In the Ashbourne Town Council warding arrangements (p24 of the draft report) LGBCE are suggesting halving the number of Town Councillors for the largest and fastest growing ward (Hilltop). This is currently represented by 4 Cllrs for a current electorate of about 2,726. LGBCE suggest 2 Cllrs for a projected electorate of about 2,800 by 2026.

This makes no sense and would, I believe 'impact negatively on service delivery' although I would appreciate a clarification on what is meant by that.

Qn. *Would it be possible for Council to note that the broad statement in 2.4 might be a little premature, and that perhaps a review of data supplied to LGBCE should be undertaken when staffing permits?*

ITEM 17 – PEAKS AND DALES RAILWAY – MANCHESTER AND EAST MIDLANDS RAIL ACTION PARTNERSHIP

STATEMENT from Mr Nigel Lee, a Derbyshire Dales resident, on the views sought from DCC and the PDNPA.

As a Derbyshire resident, admirer of Derbyshire Dales District Council's (DDDC) excellent information by email service, and member of the public with, as far as I can recall, no prior knowledge of Peaks and Dales Railway (P&DR) and its proposals, I was interested to learn from you that "There's an interesting report at our full council meeting this Thursday (18 March) advising Members about proposals being advocated by P&DR to re-open the railway line from Matlock to Manchester".

Clicking through to the meeting agenda I first noted:

Agenda Item 17

PEAKS AND DALES RAILWAY – MANCHESTER AND EAST MIDLANDS RAIL ACTION PARTNERSHIP

To note a report of the views of Derbyshire County Council and the Peak District National Park Authority, over the proposals being advocated by Peaks and Dales Rail to re-open the railway line from Matlock to Manchester

and then the aforementioned report itself, in particular its sections,

- **PURPOSE OF REPORT**
- **RECOMMENDATION** - *That the views of Derbyshire County Council and the Peak District National Park Authority are noted.*
- **VIEWS OF NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL**

My immediate thought on reading the DDC report was that councillors are being asked to note the views of Derbyshire County Council (DCC) and the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA), as so authoritatively set out in section 3, with almost no attempt to provide any traceability. No references are given as to whom in DCC

and PDNPA has expressed such views, when they did so and in what form they did so. No background papers (section 8) are provided and the sole attachment (section 9) is P&DR's own report. There only traceability at all of any of the stated views is, going back to October 2020, the P&DR report saying "DCC is currently unsupportive of the reinstatement, but has not offered any evidence in support of its position and for the environmental damage cited as its concern".

My next thought was to wonder if the DDDC report excludes citations for the views it attributes to DCC and PDNPA because these views are so unequivocal, so well reported and so well known among DDDC councillors and the general public (myself sadly excluded) that the author believed such enlightenment to be unnecessary. The facts appear to be the opposite though. As far as my searches reveal:

- DCC's website (where I used its search engine and also read recent council meeting agendas and minutes) is silent on the matter (it's hardly relevant that one can find a report on Derby/Matlock-Manchester rail reopening commissioned by DCC back in 2004).*
- PDNPA's website (where I used its search engine and also read meeting agendas and minutes) is silent on the matter, other than for a feature (evidently written when the Monsal Trail improvement opened) entitled "Monsal Trail - Effect on the Railway Line" which starts "The new route has no negative impact on plans to reinstate the railway in the future. In fact it helps preserve the line. Current and future planning policies safeguard the route of the railway".*
- DDDC's website has no further information on DCC and PDNPA views.*
- The web as a whole has no more relevant information than BBC reports saying that:*

A spokesman for the Peak District National Park Authority said any proposal would need to ensure that a rail line was "not detrimental to the landscape features of the national park", as well as providing a cycling and walking trail'

and,

Peak District National Park Authority's conservation and planning director John Scott said the railway line and the trail were "incompatible". "It's hard to see how you can have the railway back and have the trail experience as it is at the moment," he said.

Please be clear that here I am not criticising the nature of DCC's and PDNPA's views on P&DR's proposals. My criticism is that DDDC is seeking to note the views of DCC and PDNPA without giving any citations to its descriptions of those views. I would expect councillors to seek such citations before agreeing to note anything. Any citations that DDDC can share with me would be welcome please.

Related observations

It would serve democracy better if any views that DCC and PDNPA do have on P&DR's proposals or on the re-opening of the Derby/Matlock to Manchester rail route more generally are shared with the public via their websites.

The search engine on DCC's website is not fit for purpose and should be replaced. My search on "rail" produced a 19-page list of items the majority of which clearly have nothing to do with rail. My close inspection of one of the silliest ones, namely "Banana Loaf Recipe" (one of many recipes flagged), failed even to find the letters "rail" embedded within any of its words.