

Thank you Chair and the committee for allowing me to Speak this morning

So Why am I here?

Well I Wrote to Anthony Francis, copied to Mark Nicholson and Mr Moore the Chair, asking for an agenda item to be considered around a large number of governance concerns. This was recently rejected on the basis that the Newcastle Charter didn't allow it. I must admit I couldn't find where it was actually prohibited.

I did however find in the Charter's Constitution that it talked about working in partnership with citizens and business, and allowing and **welcoming** citizens to hold to account the actions of the Council. So, if it's not this committee which has that very mandate, where else is there?

My request raised a number of matters of concern around the governance of three areas;

- The Connected clean city grant scheme
- the installation of more CCTV cameras in residential street
- The East Jesmond LTN scheme

Given the limited time today I am going to focus only on The LTN scheme, and the governance and internal controls of the scheme expected to cost between £30-£40m, because consultation is due to close in early September, which is before the next Audit committee.

I'll set out my concerns in a moment Chair but first wanted to share with you a proposed scope of work on Governance for an Internal audit that I think should be carried out as a matter of urgency, reporting back and publishing its findings before the close of the

consultation period to allow enough time for interested parties to consider its findings and comment accordingly.

Ruth to hand over my suggested scope of work

Despite my concerns, I should say at the outset that we all want to breath clean air.

I am concerned about bias and a lack of objectivity and believe the scheme was flawed from the outset once the Council allowed one of their own team, known to be a keen cyclist, to adopt a scheme designed by a very vocal minority group, Space for Jesmond. **The Nolan principle of selflessness seems to have been ignored.**

The Secretary of State for Transport sets out **Statutory guidance** on network management and lays out the standards for consultation to provide a **genuine** picture of local opinion, **rather than listen to the loudest voices**. I can't see how this statutory guidance has been applied at all. I therefore question how good governance was applied to the consultation process at the outset.

Further The council has already recognised that many Residents in the Jesmond area, who are affected by this scheme, were not consulted.

50 Jesmond Businesses who have recently completed a s business survey, all say they weren't consulted. Indeed, its notable that there is very little comment at all in the interim report about businesses and the significant adverse impact on them.

Unsurprisingly, 98% in that survey are against this scheme as indeed are more than 4000 people who have signed a petition to that affect.

When the local press ran a story after the petition had reached 1700 people, the Councillor spokesperson, rather than recognising these legitimate concerns, tried to undermine its credibility by making

claims it contained factual errors, which have not subsequently been backed up with any evidence. **That's misleading the Public.** These people deserve to have their opinions heard and respected.

In fact, further issues of misleading the public related to statement that "the emergency services had no issue with the scheme in its present form". This was despite knowing the Police had expressed concerns as early as May 2, and disclosed to the lead Councillor for this scheme on 12 June. This misleading statement was repeated in the interim report when it was issued knowing that this was factually incorrect. **Chair These are real Governance issues and concerns. They breach more Nolan principles of Integrity and Honesty.**

The interim report itself is littered with cherry picked data, for instance using 2019 as a baseline when everyone knows post covid working practices have changed, people work more from home. **The empirical evidence recommended by the Department of transport's statutory guidance** again doesn't seem to have been followed. **So, I question how the Council has assured itself that it has followed best practice in this area too.** Where is the data pre and post LTN on a like for like basis?

I am concerned about emissions and whether any relevant data exists to compare pre and post LTN levels. Certainly, the nursery on Osborne road has incredibly high emissions, well past acceptable EU levels and almost at illegal UK levels, and yet the monitoring device to measure them has been placed on the opposite side of the road and high up which won't properly register whether these children are being poisoned or not. **Why is that Chair?**

I am disturbed that Commonplace which is a supposed anonymous safe space to post comments, contributors are now receiving rebuttal statements from the Council on areas of challenge. **Another Nolan principle of Openness is being breached. That's really worrying!**

Finally, despite requests for transparency, The Criteria hasn't yet been set on how comments on commonplace will be assessed and it very much looks like the Council are intending to set the rules after all the feedback has already been received to arrive at a desired outcome. This is not acceptable.

-