

Council agrees to give more information on city centre road closures

At the first real meeting of the new coalition administration today there was much to be discussed, but you could have easily missed one of the more important points affecting the city centre. Conservative Councillor Joanna Mowat had tabled an emergency motion about the traffic diversions which are being put in place at the east end of Queen Street related to the ongoing tram works. The motion, which was unanimously agreed, read as follows:-

Conservative Group Emergency Motion

Council is concerned that the decision to close York Place to all traffic from September to facilitate construction of the tram track has been taken and that notification of preparatory works and the subsequent closures was not notified to opposition spokespersons, councillors and residents until preparatory works had begun; Council thus asks for the following information:

1. When was the decision taken to close York Place to all traffic;
2. Which officers took this decision; and
3. What modelling took place prior to the taking of this decision?

Council also instructs the Chief Executive and her officers to ensure that, for any future works:

1. No works related to the tram (MUDFA or Infraco) commence before Councillors have been notified of planned works;
2. No works related to the tram commence before affected residents and businesses have been notified;
3. The press is only informed of planned works after Councillors, residents and businesses have been made aware of these planned works.

Councillor Mowat explained after the meeting the reason for the Conservative Group motion. The City Centre councillor said: -"I attended a tram team briefing meeting on Monday only to be told that York Place is going to be closed completely to facilitate construction of tram tracks. This may be logical but the community had always thought that York Place would not be closed off and that access would be maintained to the Bus Station at all times. They had thought that diversions would be put in place instead but that traffic would still flow there. There has been no discussion of this before the works beginning, and local residents are not being made aware of what is happening.

"Local councillors are also not aware of what is happening, and therefore cannot mitigate the effects of this closure. There will be new crossings going in on Abercromby Place and new priority changing made to traffic lights on Dublin Street. The priority will now be east-west and not north-south. Some of this is sensible but it needs to be communicated to the public and also signed properly, particularly for pedestrians.

"Some parking places will also be removed on Albany Street.

"York Place will be closed from mid-July 2012 to all traffic except buses, and the traffic will be diverted along Heriot Row, Abercromby Place and Albany Street. I will be asking for cameras to be put in place and for the police to monitor speeds in these areas, although the increase in traffic may well slow the traffic down in any case. I spoke about the problems encountered in Northumberland Street at last week's Transport Committee meeting, but I will now have to go back to the committee and ask them to reconsider the area in light of this new diversion. Dublin Street cannot be re-opened but we will have to look at other alternatives."

