

15<sup>th</sup> March 2006

## **Bye the Bye**

Sometimes I wish that I had not started the debate on charging for parking on Paignton Sea Front. All I asked was to hear people's views and so far you have been pretty busy sending letters and e-mails.

Naturally, those against the idea have been more robust in the clarity of their messages than those in favour. For example, my (unpaid) personal political advisor has made it very clear indeed that any future requests for a shirt to be ironed are likely to be met with a firm 'no' if I go any further with this idea, unless elderly silver grey Metros can somehow be excluded.

So please let me re-state the original suggestion. I believe that it would be worth making a moderate charge, say £1.00 or £1.50 if that money could go directly into the improvement of the loos, shelters, pathways and floral displays on Paignton Sea Front. The beaches and green are really the jewel in the crown and deserve to be upgraded if we are to make Torbay a top quality resort.

I would never suggest allowing parking there in the summer months as it is a perfect safe place for families and children to play.

In an ideal world, of course, there would be enough money to pay for improving the loos, and so on, without charging for parking. However, after

having to find £6 million savings for this year's Budget, we are now down to the bone in many essential areas.

My next Mayoral Roadshow, by Tesco's in Paignton on April 20<sup>th</sup> (I shall be there from 10am until 12 noon), will be dedicated to hearing your views on this subject. Come and say 'hello.' I shall be the one wearing a tin hat and armour plating.

From little things to big things.

Some of my most articulate critics have expressed their disappointment, so far, in my failure to deliver 'the vision thing.'

I have some sympathy with them and I would say that it is too easy to get bogged down in the Town Hall with the Budget, service delivery, day to day decisions and all manner of events that blow you off course.

However, my commitment last October was to work with the community to work on a of regeneration, making the most of our natural charms as we create a quality resort for residents, tourists and leisure. I believed then and I still believe now that we simply do not make the most of our beautiful Bay.

Since last October we have held two visioning events with a wide range of community partners and stakeholders. There is clear agreement that economic prosperity should be at the centre of our vision. I have worked

closely with Elizabeth Raikes, our Chief Executive, on this project and she has devised an ingenious wheel that represents this vision with economic prosperity at the centre, supported by Pride in the Bay, Learning for the Future, Safer and Stronger Communities and the New Economy. All our partners have been asked to identify how they fit into this vision.

The next stage is to re-shape our Community Plan and the Council's Corporate Strategy, (long words I know, but this is what these things are called), so we are all clear of what, exactly, this vision comprises and how we can all work towards it. Already the Council's existing plans have been modified so that instead of eight different competing themes and priorities, they are now placed in order, with the economy now put first.

Of course, I could have arrived in the Town Hall last October with all this worked out. However, to make my vision 'stick' (and to get its way through the Council's political process), it is better to take a little time, build a consensus and end up with something that we can all sign up to.

**Nick Bye**

**Mayor**