

COUNCIL

Monday 11 April 2016

Agenda Item 6

Questions from Members

Unanswered Questions – Responses sent subsequent to Meeting

10. Question from Councillor M Asif to the Cabinet Member for Housing

How much is the rent for a two bedroomed flat in Castlefield

- a) in social housing
- b) in affordable housing and
- c) in commercial housing in the private sector?

How much is the rent for a two bedroomed flat in Castlefield

- a) in social housing - **the weekly rent depending on Registered Provider is between £101-108**
- b) in affordable housing - **No flats have become available at affordable rent in the Castlefield area. Affordable rents for two bedroom flats in the district are between £134 -£182 per week depending on location within High Wycombe**
- c) in commercial housing in the private sector? - **we do not keep specific data however current market prices for two bedrooms flats are between £196 – £208 per week within High Wycombe.**

11. Question from Councillor K Ahmed to the Cabinet Member for Housing

When will Wycombe's housing waiting list be significantly reduced and WDC not need to help families and individuals who are homeless, or at risk of being made homeless?

I cannot predict when the waiting list for housing in the District will be significantly reduced, as demand for housing and for housing assistance is dependent on a large number of factors.

As you are aware a New Local Plan is being devised to assist in meeting housing need, and I am confident that this work alongside the excellent work being carried out by Officer's at WDC, plus that of all the agencies will continue for those that require assistance for as long as it is needed.

As to the second part of your question: WDC no longer being needed to help families and individuals who are homeless, or at risk of being made homeless?

If I had a 'Crystal Ball' I could possibly be in a better position to answer this question. It is evident looking at the last Census that the Population is increasing and I cannot foresee a time when homelessness will be eradicated in the UK.

12. Question from Councillor R Raja to the Leader of the Council

Now that the racist EDL has paid High Wycombe a visit will WDC be undertaking an impact assessment on the disruption caused to local businesses and the travelling public by the unwelcome visitors numbering from 150 to 200? Secondly, would she advise us in due course as to the cost of policing the march by the racist EDL and how much of this cost will have to be borne by WDC?

English law permits the expression of free speech and the police have a legal duty to facilitate peaceful protest. On Saturday we worked closely with the police and partners to minimise disruption. There is no requirement for an impact assessment and, mindful of the need to manage the associated work within existing resources, we have concentrated on supporting the police and our partners. We have asked Thames Valley Police for the information you request about costs.

13. Question from Councillor B Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Planning

Why is it that Red Kite have to obtain planning permission to knock down some existing garages to rebuild them because they are in an unstable condition. These garages once belonged to Wycombe District Council?

Anything which falls within the definition of “development” as set out in the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) requires planning permission.

In this case the construction of new garage blocks is “development” and so requires express planning permission, no matter who owns the site.

14. Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Leader of the Council

Could the Leader kindly provide to members a map of all land transferred to Red Kite Housing Association? I am sure that the Leader can appreciate how time consuming it is for members to have to locate ownership on a case by case basis.

Thank you for your question in respect of the availability of a map regarding the land transferred to Red Kite Housing Association. This information is available to all staff as a layer of the Wycombe District Council i-Share GIS system featured on WySpace the internal intranet.

Unfortunately this information is not available to the public via the website due to commercial confidentiality and data protection issues.

This system can easily be extended to members interested in accessing it, but they would need to log onto the network at the Queen Victoria site to do so. If any member is interested in doing so, I can put them in touch with the appropriate ICT officer.

Unfortunately the system cannot be provided via the members extranet as this is not compatible.

Property Services officers have also indicated that they are, as always, quite happy to confirm, whether or not any property or piece of land was featured on this list /layer regarding sites transferred to Red Kite Housing Association. Any member is quite welcome to ring them with such queries.

15. Question from Councillor R Raja to the Leader of the Council

Does the Leader agree with the statement made by the out-going Chief Executive of Bucks County Council that the existing 2- tier system of district and county councils is not fit for purpose and too expensive and that Bucks should move to a unitary system?

I would refer you to the answer I gave earlier to substantially the same question asked by Councillor Matt Knight (No 2.) (Full wording to appear in the minutes to be published by 25/4/16.

16. Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Leader of the Council

Does the Leader think that Wycombe District Council will become more dependent on income generating schemes in future? This is becoming more of a topic in local authority publications due to the reduced settlement from Central Government. If so does she feel this is an opportunity to consult our talented and entrepreneurial Wycombe residents?

Yes, I agree with you that we will need to continue to generate income, although that is nothing new for Wycombe. We continue to rise to the financial challenges we have and my Cabinet, at its meeting on 7 March received and approved the Council's medium-term financial strategy. In summary, this is currently projecting that by 2019/20 we will have an annual projected deficit of £1.9m, which is why we are pursuing an approach to raise additional revenue from the use of our assets. This approach is detailed in the Council's Corporate Plan, approved by Council in December, which includes a work stream to generate new revenue streams for the Council on the basis that we will be free of Government rate support grant funding by 2019.

We have a strong track record of developing schemes, based on local consultation, to ensure they are successfully delivered and have clear plans in place and are working hard to achieve our target by 2019. We welcome good ideas from whatever source they come, including residents and entrepreneurs, to ensure the schemes we bring forward help to ensure our District continues to flourish and grow, as well as providing an additional income stream to the Council.