

COUNCIL

Monday 12 December 2016

Agenda Item 6

Questions from Members

Unanswered Questions – Responses sent subsequent to Meeting

10. Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Cabinet Member for Housing.

Disabled residents under the age of 60 require adapted ground floor properties to enable their independent living. Bucks Home Choice is providing details of properties which are not adapted and properties for those 60 years old or over. Please can you clarify what properties are available for disabled people and whether or not older persons properties are available to the under 60s?

Basically we rely upon the housing associations to supply us with correct details of their properties. If they fail to provide full details regarding adaptations of suitability for adaptations neither we nor the applicant will be aware.

We do advertise properties that are suitable for those with disabilities when they become available and we are aware of them. This includes properties for the under 60's when available.

The Registered Providers will determine if the older persons housing is available for those under 60. The restriction can be due to planning or the policy of the association.

We work with providers to assist clients with disabilities including for new build and for suitable empty units.

Put simply, there is not enough affordable housing supply at present; however we are trying to assist via the new local plan.

11. Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources.

Recently, disabled people have received a declaration form to confirm that they are still eligible for the council tax discount of 25%.

Disabled people with sensory impairment or who have had a stair lift fitted to use stairs appear not to be included in this form which has confused them. The form indicates that the disabled person has to have an extra room or extra space for using a wheelchair.

Not every disabled person has these exact facilities.

How many disabled people receive the discount and how many have not renewed this entitlement?

The Council is responsible for ensuring its records are up to date and, in particular, that all discounts and reliefs are correctly applied. As a result a review of the disabled persons reduction is underway. WDC is currently helping 432 council tax payers by awarding disabled persons relief which takes the form of an on-going reduction to the relevant property band (rather than a 25% discount as assumed in the question). Relief is awarded to the person responsible for paying council tax who is often not the disabled person (who may be a spouse, parent or relative).

The review form explains the legal criteria for relief and asks the council tax payer to confirm that it is still applicable. This statutory relief is only available where certain DWP defined criteria are met, and the Council has no discretion to give disabled persons relief for other reasons. A helpline number is also given should the applicant wish to discuss the relief.

Once WDC has completed the review the number of disabled people who continue to qualify for the relief will be known.

12. Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Cabinet Member for Planning.

The Ancient Monument called St Johns Hospital in Easton Street is now looking much improved following the conservation works there. How will the council ensure that this significant asset is properly maintained and promoted in future?

As I'm sure you'll remember, around this time last year and as a result of you raising the issue with me, our then conservation officer, Martin Andrew, met with the facilities manager responsible for this site and subsequent to this the ivy has been removed from the monument itself.

I'm sure we'll all agree that the monument is now looking much improved following the recent conservation works there.

Anyway, I think that the previous meeting between martin andrew and the facilities manager brought about a shared understanding of the value of regular routine maintenance of this type. Moreover, he was able to emphasise what the site owner needed to do in future to ensure that they would not come into conflict with us or English Heritage.

It seems to us that the site is now in good hands and of course, as always, the responsibility for on-going maintenance rests with the site owner. however should there be a need for further intervention in future, then of course my officers will not hesitate to revisit the matter.

Needless to say we do rely on – and appreciate - the continued input of vigilant members such as yourself as well as members of the public to draw these issues to our attention when necessary. so thank you once again.