

COUNCIL – 28 MARCH 2024

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL – 28 MARCH 2024

The following questions have been received under Standing Order 13.1. The draft replies, which are subject to amendment, are set out below.

“Councillors are thanked for their questions.”

1. Question from Councillor Kevin Davis

“WBC has a policy that exempts vacant unfurnished properties from Council Tax for one month. In the Performance Monitoring Q3 report the KPI IM3 'Average number of days taken to re-let properties managed by the housing service' is 61.98 days. This figure is reducing according to the trend.

What is the total Council Tax bill for the previous four quarters regarding Council managed properties that are subject to KPI IM3?”

Reply from Councillor Dale Roberts

“The Council has spent £80,748.89 in the 2023/24 financial year to date on Council Tax related to its housing assets. Whilst the largest element of this will relate to void properties, there will be an element that is an ongoing liability – for example, shared accommodation used for temporary accommodation which cannot be split and properties used as guest flats or for other housing management purposes.”

2. Question from Councillor Josh Brown

“Can the Portfolio Holder confirm whether Woking Council will seek to maintain and manage the proposed 15 traveller pitches at West Hall?”

Reply from Councillor Liam Lyons

“A planning application for West Hall has not yet been received, so it is not possible to confirm who would manage the 15 traveller pitches. If and when a planning application is received and determined by the Planning Committee, the case officer’s report will set out details in relation to the 15 traveller pitches and will reflect engagement with the traveller community and Surrey County Council.”

3. Question from Councillor Kevin Davis

“What is the executive pay ratio of the incoming Chief Executive (total package) to the lowest paid employee (FTE and total package) employed by the council?”

Reply from Councillor Ann-Marie Barker

“The pay ratio of the incoming Managing Director Commissioner to the lowest paid employee is 11.5:1. This is based on the ‘daily rate’ received with effect from 1 April 2024.

The ‘daily rate’ has been used because Commissioners’ are paid a **fee** and not a salary. The fees for Commissioners’ are set by the Secretary of State who appoints Commissioners. The fees are common to all Commissioners across different interventions and have been agreed with HM Treasury.”

4. Question from Councillor Josh Brown

“Can the Leader of the Council confirm which current members of the Liberal Democrat Executive voted for the £460million Victoria Place Proposals in 2016?”

Reply from Councillor Ann-Marie Barker

“This information has been publicly available since 2016. You have shared a screen shot of the vote on social media on more than one occasion.”

5. Question from Councillor Josh Brown

“Can the Leader of the Council confirm what progress has been made on ensuring a height limit policy in the town centre?”

Reply from Councillor Liam Lyons

“The current Core Strategy was developed and implemented by the previous administration in 2012, which does not place a height limit on development in the town centre. This has enabled a number of sites in the town centre to achieve planning consent for buildings in excess of 20 storeys. Since 2022, a significant amount of work has been undertaken to develop a townscape strategy, as part of a draft Town Centre Masterplan, which reviewed character areas across the town centre in relation to appropriate heights, and involved a significant amount of public consultation to gain feedback from residents and other stakeholders. Following responses from that consultation, legal advice confirmed that it would not be possible to put forward proposals that would conflict with current policy, adopted in 2012. The feedback provided through this consultation will therefore support the development of a borough-wide design code which will then be brought forward as part of a new Local Plan in 2027, where a policy on tall buildings can be adopted.”

6. Question from Councillor Josh Brown

“Who is the Eastwood Leisure Centre in Sheerwater named after?”

Reply from Councillor Ellen Nicholson

“The Eastwood Leisure Centre in Sheerwater was named in honour of former Woking Borough Council member, Ian Eastwood. Throughout his time on the Council, Ian championed every aspect of sport and served on every committee which had an influence in this area. Ian campaigned passionately for better sports facilities in Sheerwater and up until his retirement as a Councillor, Ian was very much involved in the planning and design of the new leisure centre.”

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REPORT ENDS