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MEETING OF 15th SEPTEMBER 2010

Unanswered Questions Letter

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Our Ref: A61/kjt/quest

Date: 20th September 2010

Dear Councillor

COUNCIL MEETING – 15th SEPTEMBER 2010

At the above meeting, the thirty minutes of Question Time expired with 13 questions unanswered. Council Procedure Rule 11.6 requires that each Member of Council is sent responses to such questions.

Q10 In light of the increasing budgetary pressures can the Executive Board Member for Adult Social Care confirm which traditional building-based services she will be cutting and when she will announce that decision?

“Members will recall that an Inspection under the last Government criticised us for having too many traditional, buildings-based services. That is why we are taking a hard look at them to make sure our services are fit for the future. Alongside all of this, we have no idea what the future holds for us and what the new Government has up its sleeve for us.

The problems we face are not new ones and have been around a long time – the current government hasn't just discovered them. We have to drive hard to achieve full value for money and ensure we focus keenly on ensuring good quality services for the public. To do this we are looking at every single aspect of our service, but no recommendations can be made until the government has made our funding clear. And no recommendations or decisions will be taken without careful thought and close consultation.



Throughout, it will be essential that we prioritise need and ensure the right balance of provision across the city and across all providers. But, at the end of the day, it is the services that are important, not the buildings.”

Q11 Would the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing update Council on the outcome of the Council’s recent bid for funding from the HCA?

“The Homes and Communities Agency announced a bid round for investment in Affordable Housing which closed on the 30th July 2010. The resources are the final element of the National Affordable Housing Programme for 2008- 2011, therefore the resource was limited and any proposed schemes had to be on site and in development by March 2011.

Leeds submitted bids in excess of £12 million and have been awarded £5.6M to develop 124 new homes. The successful schemes are:-

1. Waterloo Grove Pudsey by Yorkshire Housing – Delivering 45 new homes, 22 for social rent and 23 for low cost home ownership
2. Holmsley House Woodlesford Phase 2 – Affordable Housing by Accent Foundation - Delivering 24 new homes, 12 for social rent and 12 for low cost home ownership
3. Beverleys Beeston Hill by Chevin – Delivering 55 new homes 28 for social rent and 28 for low cost home ownership.
4. 1 supported housing unit for a family with learning disabilities

This is excellent news and supports the regeneration and provision of new affordable homes in these communities.”

Q12 Would the Executive Board Member for City Development care to comment on claims in a national newspaper that this Council is considering the introduction of a workplace parking tax for businesses in our city?

“There are no proposals for introducing a workplace parking levy in Leeds. The Council is supporting Metro and the Integrated Transport Authority in the development of the third West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan which will cover the period from 2011 to 2026. All areas of transport policy are being examined during the course of preparing the plan which will be adopted by April 2011. As might be expected policies and resources will be reviewed periodically thereafter, but at present such a levy is not expected to form a part of the plan.”

Q13 Will the Executive Board member for Adult Social Care please explain what has been done to prepare for any potential savings planned by NHS Leeds, brought on by Labour’s mismanagement of public services over 13 years, which could directly impact on her budget?

“In this current climate, no public service is immune and both Health and Social Care face enormous challenges.

Officers within Adult Social Care are and have for some time been working closely with NHS Leeds colleagues. They are working hard to ensure that savings which may need to be required by the NHS do not adversely impact on the Council - and indeed vice versa.



Our joint endeavour is to minimise the impact of any service efficiencies that might be required on people in need of Health and Social Care services in this city.”

Q14 Is it still the Labour group’s policy to cut parking charges at Beckett Street?

“Car park charges were increased across the city from 6th September to achieve an overall 3% increase in charge income. In achieving this overall increase individual car parks were considered on a case by case basis with consideration being given to a number of issues such as levels of use, previous price rises and pricing at nearby ‘competitor’ sites. The outcome of this review is that prices at individual car parks may rise, fall or stay the same.

Prices at Beckett street were considered as part of this review and it was decided to hold these prices at the previous years levels. At these current levels they are cheaper than the cost of the NHS car parks nearby.”

Q15 What advice has the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing given to the arms length management companies about dogs kept in multi-story blocks and upper floor maisonettes?

“The Council’s Pets Policy gives the rules concerning when tenants may and may not keep animals. It sets out what property types are unsuitable for certain animals:-

You should not keep dogs, cats or any other animals which need outdoor exercise, in homes where there is a communal entrance, such as flats and maisonettes, and some sheltered housing schemes.

It also says that guide dogs and other support dogs will be allowed.

The current policy came into force in 2006. The Tenancy Agreement states that tenants who wish to keep pets must abide by the policy. A breach of the policy is therefore a breach of the tenancy agreement. The ALMO can ask the tenant to remove the animal, and may offer support to the tenant in re-housing them.

The RSPCA have a system of Animal Welfare Awards for social housing providers, and the Council was awarded a Bronze Award in 2009 in recognition of the policy.

If the Member is aware of a breach of the Policy, he can refer it to the Director to take up with the ALMO.”

Q16 Can the Executive Member for Environmental Services tell us how much it will cost the council to enforce a two hour parking restriction at Horsforth Library car park?

“The set up costs would be around £2000 to cover the introduction of the Traffic Regulation Order and erection of signs.

Once in place, we would not employ additional resources to police this car park, but, as with any other change in local parking restrictions, the area will be added to the local beat. Offences will be detected alongside other offences noted in the area.”

Q17 Can the Executive Member for Environmental Services tell us where he is going to put his incinerator?



“The last Administration shortlisted Aire Valley Environmental and Veolia Environmental Services to deliver a Residual Waste facility. Both bidders are proposing energy from waste (or incineration with energy recovery). Aire Valley Environmental propose to develop their facility on an area of the Knostrop Sewage Treatment Works, and Veolia Environmental Services on the former wholesale market site on the Cross Green Industrial Estate.

The Council has not identified a preferred site and has taken a neutral approach on sites through the procurement, with two alternative sites remaining amongst the proposals.

The selection of the Preferred Bidder will be based on a rigorous assessment. It is anticipated that the Preferred Bidder will be selected by the Council in Spring/Summer 2011. At this point the location of the proposed site will become clear, but still remains subject to a successful planning application.”

- Q18 Does the Executive Member for Environmental Services intend to retain the current Council target to landfill no more than 10% of the city’s waste by 2020 and if so, how does he intend to achieve this?

“The Integrated Waste Strategy for Leeds 2005-2035 has a vision of a zero waste city, whereby we reduce, re-use, recycle and recover value from all waste, and no waste is sent to landfill.

Key targets of the approved Waste Strategy are to recover value from 90% of all household waste by 2020 whilst addressing the statutory recycling targets set out within DEFRA’s Waste Strategy for England 2007 and the Council’s commitment to achieving a combined recycling and composting rate in excess of 50% of household waste.

The means of achieving these targets continues to be through developing opportunities to reduce and reuse waste and through the implementation of a range of recycling service developments through kerbside collections, Household Waste Recycling Centres and bring site provision, and through a long term technology solution for residual waste, programmed to commence operations in 2015.”

- Q19 How long does the Labour-Green administration think it should take to change a light bulb in an ALMO block of flats?

“ENE is the ALMO that manages properties in the area that Cllr Pryke is a ward member.

Caretakers carry out daily checks to multi-storey blocks and highlight repair issues on the weekly Health and Safety check lists. These are taken to the Tenancy Management Officer to either raise an order or chase up a previously reported item that hasn’t been completed. A defect can be reported by the customer or a local Councillor either by e-mail, phone or in person. The estate officer for the area could pick up the defect on one of their site visits or estate walkabouts.

Orders for communal lighting problems could fall into any of the three priority categories, dependant on danger to block users by the light not being on:-



Emergency – operative on site within 4 hours

Priority – operative on site within 3 days

General – operative on site within 28 days.

Without specific information about the bulb Cllr Pryke is referring to it is not possible to indicate the route of reporting and the level of priority given to the particular case he is interested in.

From reporting the repair it should be carried out within the timescales written.”

Q20 What progress is the Council making on implementing the EU directive on mercury abatement?

“In August 2010, Executive Board agreed to the preferred option to install mercury abatement equipment and replace the soon to be defunct cremators at Rawdon Crematorium. Following on from this approval, it is now proposed to develop an Output Specification to RIBA Stage B that the Council will put out to tender for delivery through a single stage design and build contract subject to further Executive Board approval to a Design and Cost Report. Works are expected to commence on site in August 2011 and be completed by May 2012.”

Q21 Can the Executive Member for Environmental Services provide an update on progress regarding the planting of street trees?

“Stronger policies promoting planting and protection of both woodland and non-woodland trees are being incorporated into the Planning Core Strategy, and other relevant documents such as the Climate Change Strategy and the Revised Natural Resources & Waste DPD.

However resources for street tree planting remain very constrained, and as a result the number of street trees planted continues to be outstripped by the number of trees which have to be felled because they are dead, dying or dangerous.

Non-woodland Trees planted and felled by Parks and Countryside Service

	Planted	Felled
2008	103	898
2009	69	837
2010 (to June)	60	124”

Q22 How many agency staff is the Council presently employing?

“Eight hundred and eighty assignments are currently booked with the Council. The total hours is equivalent to 243 FTE staff <2% of the work-force. These works are engaged to provide cover usually at short notice for sickness absence and other short term demand e.g. to ensure there is adequate cover when providing essential services.”

Yours sincerely

Kevin Tomkinson



