

COUNCIL – 30TH NOVEMBER 2023

MEMBER QUESTIONS

Received from Councillor Instone to Lead Member for Transport, Housing, Highways, the Environment and Environmental Services

Can the Councillor please provide an update on the review of the bus lanes as agreed by council? Can she please also provide some reassurances that partners will be consulted as part of this review as it is of some concern that some of our strategic partners, including those who will be directly impacted, have not yet been and were not aware that this review was taking place.

Reply

Thank you Councillor Instone for your question. I just want to be very clear, this review is not to remove any services from residents, some of whom heavily rely on the various bus services within Slough to get about as their only means of reliable travel. Since we have taken over as an Administration, it has become increasingly apparent that we need to review many of the decisions of the previous Labour administration, to ensure that they are correct, in resident interest and value for money. The bus lane review, is not with the mind of removing anything that impacts on the services directly but rather, a review to see if there can be further improvements made on operating hours, exemptions for Slough operated taxi's and electric vehicles. There is no risk to service providers who continue to operate as before. Anything significant will be communicated with providers, so I can give you that reassurance. The review will be data driven, and the findings and recommendations will be reported back in early 2024 for member scrutiny.

Received from Councillor Hulme to Leader of the Council

Could the Leader please provide an update on the work undertaking on the Local Plan since May of this year and an updated target date for adoption?

Reply

Thank you Councillor Hulme for your question. Work has been continuing scoping out the evidence base that will be required for a new local plan, and ways to do this in the most cost efficient way. However, given we are now less than a year away from a General Election which whatever the outcome, is likely to result in a further change in national policy, we are keeping options open as to how best to proceed before committing to a particular approach.

Received from Councillor Matloob to Lead Member for Leisure, Community Cohesion, Regulation, Enforcement & Planning

Following your answer to the initial question in July, can you please update members on what steps you have taken to meet with the developers of the town centre and make progress with their scheme?

Reply

Thank you Councillor Matloob for your question. The Leader has met with the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) and impressed upon them the need to either bring the approved scheme forward or sell the site to someone who can advance redevelopment. At the moment they are still working with their development manager to find ways to make the approved scheme viable in the light of cost inflation and other economic factors. The Leader has impressed on ADIA that the planning consent will not be extended unless they have a clear plan to exit or move forward by the start of the New Year.

Received from Councillor Mann to Lead Member for Transport, Housing, Highways, the Environment and Environmental Services

Can the councillor please provide an update on the impact of the recent acquisition of Osborne Property Services by Cardo Group, including how was this significant change communicated to councillors, residents and importantly tenants, whether she met with the new owners and what mitigation measures have been put in place to ensure that contractual terms are being met?

Reply

Thank you Councillor Mann for your question. Osbourne Property Services as a whole business was transferred through a share sale from Geoffrey Osbourne Group who are a family of construction companies, to the Cardo Group (a company who specialise in social housing maintenance) on 4th September.

While the ownership of Osborne Property Services changed, the Managing Director and Senior Team remain the same, as does the structure of the company. The Council's contract is unaffected by the change of parent company and the contract remains with Osborne Property Services.

The change in ownership of Osborne Property Services does not change the Council's responsibility for repairs and maintenance of its properties, and has not affected our determination to robustly ensure the contractor delivers the service it was appointed to provide.

The ownership or indeed nature of any housing maintenance contractor should not make any difference to tenants as it is the Council's responsibility to ensure a high standard service is provided whether this be done in house or by contractors.

Historically, the Council has failed to effectively specify its R&M and to manage the current contractor, something that is now being done and will be resolved finally with the procurement of a new contract next year.

Received from Councillor Gahir to Lead Member for Transport, Housing, Highways, the Environment and Environmental Services

Can the leader member of housing provide an update to how many 'ad hoc' regulatory and compliance checks have been undertaken by the council of properties registered under the landlord licensing scheme within the last 12 months? as it was not possible to calculate the number of properties inspected due to technical issues and access to the database?

Reply

Thank you Councillor Gahir for your question. I will refer you to my reply to Councillor Mann's question at September Council regarding this issue for a wider context. However, at the time of preparing this response, it was not possible to calculate the number of properties inspected due to technical issues and access to our database. I have asked the relevant officers to provide you a response as soon as they have the information.

Received from Councillor Ajaib to Lead Member for Leisure, Community Cohesion, Regulation, Enforcement & Planning

You had mentioned a community cohesion plan is to be updated to support and celebrate LGBTQI+ in Slough. Can you provide an update on the plan?

Reply

Thank you Councillor Ajaib for your question. As I have said previously, we are committed to developing a community cohesion plan which celebrates the diversity within our town. This will of course include steps we can take as a local authority to support and celebrate our LGBTQI+ community in Slough. In recent months I have met with community stakeholders, and will be announcing developments in the New Year.