

COUNCIL – 26TH SEPTEMBER 2024

MEMBER QUESTIONS

From Cllr Mann to the Lead Member for Equalities, Public Health and Public Protection

For months, persistent and serious allegations about the treatment of staff from minority communities have been raised, by officers, former employees and by many members. As the responsible Cabinet Member, what involvement did you have in setting the remit of the LGA Peer Review? Have you met with any of the complainants who have repeatedly expressed their willingness to do so and what steps are you taking to ensure that equality within our workforce is not merely lip-service to but truly embedded into the organisation with a willingness to learn from past mistakes?

Reply

We are taking action to ensure equality is integrated into our workforce plans and actions and our work with communities. In April, we adopted a clear set of Equality objectives following consultation, which include workforce objectives. These objectives will help us achieve greater workforce diversity at all levels and allow us to report on our progress annually.

Cabinet has also agreed to invite the LGA, officers, and Members from different councils to form a Peer Review Team to identify how we can improve our approach. I have asked them to focus on embedding our equality objectives by improving the organisation's culture. The Peer Review will examine how comfortable everyone is discussing race, racism, and racial inequality and what actions are needed to change the institution to reflect the diversity of our community at all levels and become a more inclusive organisation. The Peer Review took place on the 10th and 12th September and included a focus group on race with black and minority ethnic staff. The Peer Review Team reported to the Administration, Chief Executive, Director of Strategy, Change and Resident Engagement, and Director of HR and OD. The LGA will provide a formal report in a few weeks and work with us on our actions to respond to the feedback and progress Equality Objectives. This will be led by the Directors of Strategy and HR and OD. I am committed to providing an update on these actions and progress early next year. A new staff survey will be conducted in the next few months, providing important updates on staff views on the organisation's culture. A Members Briefing on the recommendations and actions is also being organised for early December.

From Cllr Anderson to the Leader of the Council

Can the Leader of the Council please confirm how many complaints he received about councillors' conduct throughout the recent general election campaign. Did any of these complaints refer to members of the Conservative Group?

Reply

The Acting Returning Officer (ARO) and other council officials did not receive any formal complaints during the 2024 General Election period. Consequently, none of the complaints are related to the Conservative Group, and there are no ongoing complaints.

From Cllr Matloob to the Lead Member for Housing, Highways, Planning and Transport

With the recent debacle over the implementation of CPZ's in part of the town, can the member please detail which 5 areas are next scheduled to be coming forward for CPZ's?

Reply

Petersfield Avenue & Mill Street (Zone K1)
Winvale, Vale Road & Windsor Road (Zone N)
6 zones covering Colnbrook

From Cllr Mohammad to the Lead Member for Housing, Highways, Planning and Transport

As the new service delivery model will require greater engagement & buy in from residents, can the leader advise to why he has failed to meet with or even respond to the residents of Baylis and Salt Hill Ward who have written to him with their concerns about the recent CPZ consultation?

Reply

The Leader is aware that several concerns have been raised regarding the proposed CPZs in those areas. The director will review the concerns and will provide a response to all residents in those areas.

From Cllr Gill to the Lead Member for Housing, Highways, Planning and Transport

The CPZ policy agreed by the Council in February 2023 states this needs to be applied consistently, can you advise why the CPZ was scrapped in Seymour Court after residents rejected it, but has been forced through in areas close to Ramgharia gurdwara even after rejection by residents and objection by the ward Councillors?

Reply

There are no Controlled Parking Schemes that have been abandoned. The Chalvey zones (zones L2, P2 & P3) are on hold while we assess the likelihood of future works in the area which may compromise the implementation of the zones. Our intention is to return to that area later in the CPZ rollout.

From Cllr Parmar to the Lead Member for Education

I would like to know what the average waiting time is to carry out education, health and care plans assessment in our council and what mitigation the council has in place for improvement?

Reply

An Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plan is intended for children and young people up to the age of 25 who require more support than what is available through Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) support. In recent years, there has been a growing national demand for EHC plans. Statutorily, local authorities must issue a final version of an EHC plan within 20 weeks. National data indicates that approximately 50 percent of plans were completed within this timeframe.

Between February 2024 and June 2024, a total of 120 EHC plans were finalised, averaging 24 per month. During the same period, 81.7 plans were completed within the 20-week timeframe, averaging 16.34 per month. Although there has been improvement since the end of last year, it is clear that there is more work to be done.

To address this, a short-term intervention team is being established with the goal of making significant improvements by the end of the year, including addressing the backlog of EHC Needs Assessments. Furthermore, a new quality assurance toolkit is set to be launched this month. Current processes have shown an improvement in the overall quality of EHC plans and this has been confirmed through sample checks by the Department for Education.

This Council will continue striving to ensure that all those in need of additional support receive the help they need.

From Cllr Hulme to the Lead Member for Finance

Can the lead member for finance please provide the following information on the number of cases of Emergency support the Debt and Welfare Team have dealt with in the last financial year 23/24 and this financial year (so far), 24/25 - broken down by the category of cases?

Reply

	23/24	24/25(April to June)
Pensioners	=375	=129
Disabled	=601	=188
Without children	=1,878	=277
With children	=2,836	=589

From Cllr Gahir to the Lead Member for Finance

As reported in the local media, SBC is well behind the target on selling the SBC assets, what effect it will cause to the public services and how you minimise that if any.

Reply

The Council reported the position with regard to asset disposals at Cabinet last week.

Asset sales are expected to contribute towards the repayment of the capitalisation of debt incurred up to 2021/22 and to meet the budget shortfall up to 2027/28 when the total level of the capitalisation directive will be £348m.

Until that debt is paid off, the residents of Slough will have to foot the bill at the cost of lost services and community assets.

A target of £400m capital receipts was set in 2021/22, and as of 31 March 2024, £225.3m (gross) and £223.3m (net) were achieved.

In 2024/25, capital receipts have yielded £0.8m (gross) and £0.7m (net) from a budget assumption of £40.5m gross. One further sale is expected to conclude in July 2024, and an assessment is being worked on against the MTFS assumptions.

These assumptions are being revised alongside the action taken to tackle Council's financial gap. They will be presented to Cabinet in November as part of the process to balance the 2025/26 Budget.