



Council Meeting Wednesday 22 July 2020

Public and Councillor Questions and Responses



Derby City Council

COUNCIL – 22 July 2020
PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

	Questioner	Respondent	Subject
Public Questions			
A	Charles Bridges	Councillor M Holmes	Managing projects
B	Adrian Howlett	Councillor M Holmes	A38 Derby junction development
C	Reg Hand	Councillor M Holmes	Planting of trees
Councillor Questions			
D	Councillor Repton	Councillor M Holmes	Assembly Rooms costs
E	Councillor Lind	Councillor M Holmes	Covid-19 emergency transport measures
F	Councillor Willoughby	Councillor Roulstone	Impact of Covid-19 on Council finances
G	Councillor Care	Councillor Webb	Vitamin D levels
H	Councillor Cooper	Councillor Smale	Working practices in Derby
I	Councillor Hezelgrave	Councillor Williams	Children returning to school and college
J	Councillor P Pegg	Councillor Smale	New crematorium
K	Councillor Hussain	Councillor Webb	Covid-19 in Derby care homes
L	Councillor Shanker	Councillor Barker	Electoral cycle consultation
M	Councillor Peatfield	Councillor M Holmes	Becketwell Arena
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N	Councillor Naitta	Councillor Wood	Moorways Swimming Pool
O	Councillor McCristal	Councillor Atwal	Roadside checks
P	Councillor Lind	Councillor Webb	Bonsall View
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R	Councillor Care	Councillor Webb	Houses in Multiple Occupation

Public Questions

a) Question from Charles Bridges to Councillor M Holmes

As reported in the local press, the market hall future is being called into question with the project reportedly over budget and behind schedule. As this is now the third project under this administration to face increased costs and delays, the other two being the Assembly Rooms and Moorways Swimming Pool. Will this administration finally admit that they have made major mistakes in the way these projects have been designed, costed and managed?

A response will be provided verbally at the meeting

b) Question from Adrian Howlett to Councillor M Holmes

Can the Council provide information on the carbon impact of the major A38 Derby Junctions development, to include a quantified estimate of the lifetime CO2 impact of the works broken down by source - construction, road use etc.?

The major Highways England project for Kingsway, Markeaton and Little Eaton junctions has continued to progress during the Covid-19 crisis. Over the last few months a number of hearings were held, and local stakeholders have had an extended opportunity to raise concerns or make comments and representations to the Planning Inspectorate who are carrying out the formal examination.

The examination closed on 8 July 2020 and there will now be a period of three months for the Inspectors to write their report and make recommendations to the Secretary of State. The Secretary will then have three months to decide, so we expect that announcement by the beginning of February 2021.

As Highways England lead this scheme, any reports relating to the carbon impact, including an Environmental Impact Study, are available on the National Infrastructure Planning website at:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/east-midlands/a38-derby-junctions/> under the 'documents' section.

c) Question from Reg Hand to Councillor M Holmes

Does Derby City Council support planting 250,000 trees by 2025 as one of many measures required to address the Climate Emergency?

Trees provide an essential life support service in fixing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through the process of photosynthesis. Trees also provide an essential habitat for wildlife, moderate our climate through the action of shading and slow down rainwater during severe weather events.

They also, when thoughtfully placed, contribute significantly to the look and feel of our city both in our parks and throughout the urban environment.

So, broadly, this is of course something I support and that the council is already pursuing in principal. We must, however, ensure we consider the right type and size of trees (when matured) in any given location or project so that they compliment rather than impose or dominate. Considering and agreeing the cost of lifetime maintenance is also important as very significant budget increases for our arborist department will clearly have to be agreed.

Councillor Questions

d) Question from Councillor Repton to Councillor M Holmes

What was the TOTAL costs for pursuing the refurbishment of the Assembly Rooms that has resulted in a delay for a new performance venue of at least two years and if this figure is likely to rise as indicated what additional losses are we potentially looking at?

The total cost is £2.511million (subject to final sign off). Officers have advised that £1.286million of that amount is capital linked to the proposed demolition works.

e) Question from Councillor Lind to Councillor M Holmes

Have the proposals for the currently proposed COVID 19 emergency transport measures, been analysed for the impact on air quality in key sensitive roads?

The Emergency Active Travel Funding is part of the Government's emergency response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Local Authorities were asked to put forward schemes to promote cycling as a replacement for journeys previously made by public transport, and to enable social distancing for pedestrians.

This was not aimed specifically at improving air quality although this is implicit if more people are cycling and walking.

f) Question from Councillor Willoughby to Councillor Roulstone

Given the impact of the Covid-19 emergency on the council's finances, much of which was unplanned, what plans does the council administration have to re-visit the budget approved by the council in February, such as in the form of a "mini-budget"?

The Council has responded swiftly to the needs of our community in response to the Covid pandemic. This has necessitated additional spend as well as understanding the impact on our core budgets. The Administration reported on the Council's response to Covid-19 at the Cabinet meeting in June and more specifically on the financial implications to the Corporate Services Scrutiny Board this week.

Government funding to support the Council has been welcomed but is at present insufficient to meet the full impact of Covid-19 we continue to lobby the Government and I remain optimistic further additional funding for local government will be announced. In the meantime, we will look to update the three year medium term financial plan which is scheduled to be reported alongside the Quarter 1 budget monitoring in September. This will highlight options in the short and medium term to maintain financial sustainability and provide an update to Cabinet on any further support government will be providing to local authorities.

In addition, the Chancellor announced only yesterday that he intends to set out a comprehensive spending review in the Autumn.

g) Question from Councillor Care to Councillor Webb

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) provides advice on the importance of Vitamin D, encouraging the promotion and recording of Vitamin D supplements, see:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph56/chapter/1-Recommendations#recommendation-8-ensure-health-professionals-recommend-vitamin-d-supplements>

This advice includes:

"Directors of public health should:

- Ensure a consistent, multiagency approach is adopted to improve the vitamin D status of the local population."

What do we know about the Vitamin D status of people in Derby and what actions are we currently taking to improve it?

Vitamin D status is not measured on a population basis and NICE do not recommend testing in those without symptoms, but we can extrapolate from research evidence. We know that during the summer months (April to September) normal exposure to the sun is sufficient for many to make sufficient Vitamin D. Those with darker skin, who cover their skin or who spend most of their time indoors may benefit from taking Vitamin D supplements in the summer. During the winter months the NHS advises that we should all take Vitamin D supplementation.

Promotion of Vitamin D supplementation is part of the universal advice offered to all pregnant women and parents of young children. This is delivered through our commissioned 0-19 nursing service.

We are currently planning our communications for the autumn, preparing for winter, and promotion of the benefits for bone health from taking Vitamin D supplementation, along with influenza vaccination, will be included in that campaign.

h) Question from Councillor Cooper to Councillor Smale

Recent events in Leicester have highlighted despicable working practices and human exploitation taking place in the textile sector in the East Midlands.

Such is the seriousness of the issues being uncovered that The National Crime Agency, at the request of the Home Office, are investigating.

The Home Secretary has called for local authorities to do more and so what assurances can the Cabinet Member give the public that Derby City Council has carried out or will carry out urgent checks to ensure that no business in Derby is exploiting or mistreating its workers / complying with Covid-19 working practices?

As member of the Derby & Derbyshire Modern Slavery Partnership, the Council is committed to improving its practices to identify and combat this crime.

The Council leads the Derby & Derbyshire Modern Slavery Partnership Bringing together public, private and voluntary organisations to disrupt perpetrators and support victims of human trafficking & modern day slavery in our area and further afield.

The Council works in partnership with a wide range of agencies to prevent abuse and neglect, to detect and report occurrences and to support victims.

The Partnership has adopted an over-arching plan for the implementation of the Modern Slavery Act, Statutory Duties and delivery of the Government's Modern Slavery Strategy. This is achieved by focusing on the four strategic themes – Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare which are in line with Government's Modern Slavery Strategy:

Reducing Threat

- Prosecuting and disrupting individuals and groups responsible for modern slavery (Pursue / Prevent).

Reducing Vulnerability

- Protecting vulnerable people from exploitation and reducing the harm caused by modern slavery through enhanced support (Protect / Prepare).

A key area of work has been engaging people who work in high risk occupations. The Partnership has developed and delivered a multi-language leaflet “Working in the UK” – explaining what people are entitled to when working in the UK and information about signs of modern slavery and contact numbers for reporting concerns / accessing help. Leaflets have been distributed to a range of partners, community organisations and businesses.

Other key areas of work to date include:

- Establishment of a multi-agency tactical intelligence group involving Police, HMRC, DWP and the Gangmasters Labour Abuse Authority.
- Supported adult and child victims.
- Delivered a pilot project to support survivors of modern slavery.
- Commissioned the provision of essential emotional support, advocacy and short-term accommodation for victims of modern slavery and exploitation.
- Key partners have developed Modern Slavery Transparency Statements ensuring ethical procurement practices for their business and supply chains.
- Developed and delivered a range of modern slavery awareness initiatives such as posters, newsletters, celebration events.
- Supported national initiatives such as Anti-Slavery events, Freedom Week and Car Wash App.
- In conjunction with the Clewer Initiative and Just Enough Group facilitated the delivery of free lesson plans for Primary and Secondary schools.
- Establish the Derby and Derbyshire Modern Slavery Practitioners forum.

As we move forward, we will be providing refresher training to regulatory staff who enter business premises to improve identification of potential cases of exploitation. We will continue to work with partners to identify high risk employers and industries to proactively raise awareness and test working practices.

i) Question from Councillor Hezelgrave to Councillor Williams

What provisions have you made and will you make for September to protect the mental health of our children returning to Schools and Colleges across the City?

The Council is working closely with school leaders and health partners to support them to protect the mental health of children returning to schools and colleges across the city in the following ways. We work with our schools to help them to deliver services with support at school level and to ensure it is accessible to all.

- Our educational psychology service has developed a bereavement support package which is free to schools to support pupils who may have in some way experienced bereavement during this period. We will continue to provide support as required and in dialogue with head teachers through regular virtual meetings about what they feel is required.
- The Emotionally Healthy Schools Programme is being led by a dedicated member of staff at Redwood Primary School and funded by the city-wide partnership Derby Opportunity Area which the council is a member of and the budget holder for. The following support is accessible directly and through the emotionally healthy schools website - the list is not extensive but gives a flavour:
 1. Clear Harm - a free app to overcome anxiety
 2. Combined minds - a free mental health app
 3. Kooth a free online face to face and group mental health counselling service
 4. BUPA free mental health for staff and pupil's seminar series
 5. Trained mental health co-ordinators in all primary schools through this programme which has cost over 500k over the past two years
- The Council is working alongside the head teacher partnerships on building the Recovery Curriculum. At the Derby PSG meeting on 6 May 2020 it was agreed to create support for schools' recovery plans and curriculum. The subsequent working group meeting identified a preference for a school-to-school platform to enable the sharing of resources. It was recognised that, because each school/MAT might need to place different emphases, a facility where schools can offer resources and borrow from others would be most helpful. The areas of support available from the platform are in:

1. Addressing gaps in learning
 2. Friendships and relationships
 3. Experiences and feelings
 4. Restoring confidence
- We also believe that supporting staff to support pupils with their well-being is essential and so have extended the council's free employee support helpline to all staff in maintained schools during this period.
 - Feedback from schools at this point is that demand for mental health services is low but we are continuing to monitor this and will take any issues through to our Predicting Demand board within the council to enable us to address any increase in need that requires additional resource.

j) Question from Councillor P Pegg to Councillor Smale

For many years it has been recognised that Derby needs a new purpose built Crematorium to serve our communities. Can you please tell me what progress has been made?

As part of the Council's transformation programme, work to review the current facilities at Markeaton Crematorium and its future has been initiated. However, given the priority of responding to the Covid-19 emergency over the last four months this work has been 'on hold'. This work will be restarted shortly.

During the height of the emergency, however, a temporary standalone cremator was purchased, installed and commissioned in May 2020 and is fully operational. This will provide the service with greater resilience while the review is undertaken.

k) Question from Councillor Hussain to Councillor Webb

You will know from your own briefings that care staff and their residents were left to fend for themselves. Patients from hospitals were sent without being tested for Covid-19, PPE was in short supply and worst of all, tests were not available to residents or staff until May. Vulnerable people who needed most attentiveness received least attention. Around 20,000 care home residents have died nationally including 90 in Derby. Can you assure us that the Council is doing everything we possibly can to avoid any further unnecessary deaths due to Covid-19 in Derby's Care Homes?

The Council acknowledges that care homes have been particularly hard hit by the Coronavirus pandemic, in terms of their residents being particularly vulnerable should any of them have contracted the disease. The Council began supporting care homes in mid-March in a variety of ways and we published an open letter and provided a copy to all care homes that details how the Derby health and social care system has proactively worked with and supported care homes since the outset of the pandemic. It's worth noting that as part of the process this letter was externally quality assured, and we received positive feedback.

<https://www.derby.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid19/impacts-council-services-facilities/social-care-health/>

One of our Directors, Kirsty McMillan, Chairs the Derbyshire wide Strategic Care Homes Group which continues to focus activity across the sector with NHS partners. This regularly reviews some of the issues referred to such as the availability of PPE, the support for homes for testing and reviewing any new guidance or actions that may emerge from Public Health England on infection prevention and control.

Every death of a care home resident is a tragedy and has an impact on the person's family, friends and also all the staff within the home who have been dealing with very difficult circumstances.

As we now prepare for the onset of winter, we will continue to support homes with our NHS partners, but all risks cannot be fully reduced as this virus particularly affects older and vulnerable people. Whilst ever the virus remains active in communities, there will remain a risk of transmission despite all our best efforts to reduce this.

I'm aware that there is a session planned in the near future at the Adults and Health Scrutiny Board and as Chair of that Board you will have the opportunity to shape the nature of the support the Council continues to provide to homes.

I) Question from Councillor Shanker to Councillor Barker

Could the Cabinet member share with the Council and City the response from the electoral cycle consultation exercise that concluded many months ago?

The Electoral Cycle Consultation Report has now been finalised and will be published in due course.

m) Question from Councillor Peatfield (i) Councillor Naitta (ii) to Councillor M Holmes

(i) Can you confirm that the public and Councillors will be given the opportunity to review and scrutinise the detailed plans and Business Case for the Becketwell Arena prior to any Contracts being signed with the Developers?

(ii) Can we ensure that we have a proper consultation on the project?

The proposal for the Becketwell Arena will deliver a fantastic boost to Derby's economy and vibrancy. It will be forward funded by the council with a long-term operator secured.

The indicative financial parameters have already been shared with all opposition Group Leaders, Cabinet Members and other councillors in the exempt papers (containing commercially sensitive information) at last week's Cabinet meeting.

We believe in transparency and openness, but there will clearly be some aspects of the business case and contracts that will be commercially sensitive and therefore restricted.

Various consultations have been carried out that demonstrate there is strong desire and demand for a large-scale entertainment venue in the city centre.

The regular Overview and Scrutiny, Cabinet Member and Cabinet processes apply, and the developer will submit a planning application also subject to due process.

n) Question from Councillor Naitta to Councillor Wood

Are you confident that the moorways swimming pool complex is running on time and on target financially?

This is a very exciting project for the city and at the beginning of the year, the construction of the new 50m pool and water park commenced at Moorways Sports Village. There may well be impacts of Covid-19 to deal with in the future, however the project is proceeding very well, and we currently hope to complete as scheduled. The project also remains within the £42 million budget.

o) Question from Councillor McCristal to Councillor Atwal

Roadside checks carried out by Council officers and the police have repeatedly identified serious defects with many licensed vehicles in Derby.

What measures do you think Derby City Council's Licensing Committee can consider to resolve these ongoing issues?

There are a number of measures already in place to address these issues. Dates for the introduction of age and emission limits for licensed vehicles have been agreed and vehicles are subject to annual/six monthly inspections. A number of vehicle proprietors have already replaced their vehicles and we want to encourage more to do this. Roadside checks continue to be carried out and immediate action is taken when serious defects are found.

The Licensing Committee will continue to review the situation and consider carefully proposals that it believes needs to be implemented to address the on-going issues further.

p) Question from Councillor Lind to Councillor Webb

Families of adults with profound and complex learning disabilities who would usually go to Bonsall View, have had no overnight respite care since March. Please could the Cabinet Member responsible tell us when Bonsall View will reopen or what the expected timetable for reopening will be?

Bonsall View is the Council's residential respite facility for people with complex needs and given the risks faced by a number of people attending the facility, and as we experienced many families deciding to keep their loved ones at home – we took the decision to close the facility in April – this was at the start of the “lockdown” period that the country faced.

Since then, staff who worked at Bonsall View have been involved in supporting other care services that continued to remain open – mainly the CareLink 24/7 community alarm service and also our care services that support the Royal Derby Hospital.

We are aware that many families have had limited access to support over the previous months and that this has been a very challenging time period. We have been making contact with all affected families about the support they need given the coronavirus pandemic is continuing for the foreseeable future. We are very aware that many people have been spending lots more time at home than they would normally have done so and that carers are understandably keen to have a break.

As you would all agree, the health and safety of anyone who may visit and use Bonsall View, and that of our staff is our highest priority.

We are currently carrying out risk assessments to determine when we will be in a position to re-open the service. This is because Bonsall View will need to operate differently to how it has done previously so that we can support people safely and in line with all the national guidance that is available to prevent the spread of Covid-19. This includes considering all the infection control, social distancing and testing measures that will be required. At this stage, we do not have a re-opening date but have told families this is likely to be during September if all preparations go to plan.

q) Question from Councillor Willoughby to Councillor Roulstone

Paragraph 7.19 of the Late Item presented to Cabinet on 15th July acknowledges that “the demolition of the Assembly Rooms Car Park will have a significant impact on the Council’s Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). In 2019/20 the Assembly Room car park generated £446K of income. The potential temporary loss of income is not contained within the MTFP and if demolition (of the assembly rooms car park) commenced would have to be included in the MTFP refresh.”

How does the Council plan to plug this potential gap in the MTFP?

This is an important city centre location and the Council intends to maximise its redevelopment potential subject to planning permission being approved. Investigations were undertaken to determine if it would be possible to retain the carpark and demolish the former Assembly Rooms. However, the investigation established that this is not feasible and it would diminish the re-development opportunities the site provides. The Council is totally committed to redeveloping the Assembly Rooms site.

The decision on the car park demolition is subject to planning permission. The proposed demolition of the car park will necessitate current users identifying alternative parking venues (both Council and Private). It is likely therefore that a significant proportion of this usage (and income) displaces to other car parks in close proximity such as Bold Lane, Darwin Place or Chapel Street rather than it being an absolute loss. Further detailed modelling is taking place and any subsequent cost pressure will be considered (alongside all others) within the MTFP at the appropriate time.

r) Question from Councillor Care to Councillor Webb

Members of the Planning Committee are frustrated by the lack of effective policy to oppose Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) which seem to be requested most often in areas of already high-density housing.

How can policy in this area be developed to make it easier to resist such applications when the Committee (or planning officers) feel it appropriate?

It is difficult to set out a policy to control all HMOs because permitted development rights allow up to six people to share a house without requiring planning permission. Only when a proposal is for seven or more people sharing will planning permission be required for an HMO. Therefore, a large proportion of HMOs do not currently require planning permission and are outside the scope of planning control.

Government planning policy on housing states that we should be seeking to increase residential densities. HMOs therefore serve a purpose in meeting housing needs and contribute to providing required accommodation. This has to be balanced against the impacts this kind of development may have on a local area. Adopted planning policies already allow us to resist proposals for HMOs (more than six beds) on the basis of their impact on local amenity and the character of the area; but, these existing policies are not specific to HMOs and don't address the potential concentration of such uses in specific areas of the city.

However, the move to a new Local Plan, which is on the Cabinet Forward Plan, does address the potential to bring in a local policy to address HMOs, both in the new Local Plan and, possibly, in interim whilst the new local plan is being developed, subject to necessary evidence.