

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 25 April 2024

Question 1:

To: Councillor Gandy, Adults, Health and Wellbeing

1. Cllr Ben Proctor – Hereford, member for College ward

The council offers a triage phone line for those seeking housing support between Monday to Friday 10 am – 4 pm. Calls to this line are frequently not answered. How does the Cabinet assure itself that this service is adequately resourced to meet demand. What information is collected on call volumes, call patterns, failure demand, rework and latent demand for this service?

Answer:

I would like to thank Cllr Proctor for his question which has drawn attention to an area that we have significant concerns about.

The phone line for individuals is fundamental for our service delivery, but it currently lacks a filtering system. Unfortunately, the current setup does not allow us to track call volumes, patterns, failure demand, rework, or latent demand for our service. However, the team are working closely with Hoople as they are now in the process of migrating the Housing Solutions hunt group to MS365 which will provide auto attendant i.e. press 1 for Housing Solutions / press 2 for temporary accommodation etc. this will mean that the service offer will be greatly improved for the customer and partners. This process should be completed within a couple of weeks.

Question 2:

To: Councillor Swinglehurst, Environment

2. Cllr Liz Harvey – Ledbury, member for Ledbury North ward

The Planning Enforcement Policy was last updated in December 2017. Parish Councillors in my Ward are very unhappy with enforcement of planning in the County. Anecdotally I hear that many Ward Councillors have similar concerns. Breaches of conditions and consents are on the rise and the number of retrospective planning applications that are raised to seek consent for works which would likely not have been approved if sought in advance is worrying.

This council is the Local Planning Authority. Residents and business need to be seeking permission, rather than retrospective forgiveness. I fear that Herefordshire is turning into the Wild West.

When is the much-promised update of the Enforcement Policy going to be completed?

Answer:

We recognise and agree that the Enforcement Plan needs to be reviewed and updated, in particular to reflect the very recent changes government has introduced through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act. New powers such as listed building stop notices commence from the 25th April 2024.

In the meantime we do maintain an effective enforcement strategy. There are currently 418 open cases, 1,047 have been closed in the last 2 years. We are taking a proactive approach in seeking to take action where historic buildings that are in disrepair are having a significant negative impact on local communities.

The revised Enforcement Local Plan will be considered by the Planning Improvement Board. Performance will be reported to the Planning and Regulatory Committee.

Supplementary question:

I thank the Cabinet member for the response that I received to my written question. However it didn't actually answer the question and I know that's not the way you want questions dealt with Leader. So my question is, in October last year Group Leaders were given an update on the progress being made in delivering the transformation plan for the planning service where we were assured that the preparation and implementation of a local enforcement plan was priority. My question asked specifically when this planned date would be completed and Cabinet member, although your answer dances daintily around the subject it does actually fail to address the specific question that I asked. So I ask again, when is the much promised update to the enforcement policy going to be completed?

Supplementary question response:

Thank you Councillor Harvey. What I am going to say, is that it will be in draft by July, end of July, hopefully adopted by the Autumn. I think for October. Because of the consultation process, there are too many other processes between getting a draft out and getting to adoption that I don't want to have to be too definite about that date. As so as I can be more definite about that date I will be.

Question 3:**To: Councillor Price, transport and infrastructure****3. Cllr David Hitchiner, member for Stoney ward**

I asked Cabinet a number of questions at the last Cabinet meeting relating to the information provided concerning the New Road Strategy, including issues regarding significant changes that will be necessary to the existing planning permission for the Southern Link Road, now that it is proposed to be the first phase of a preferred Western Bypass, and the effect of the proposals on traffic in my Ward. I have repeated these in emails. When am I likely to receive replies to these questions?

Answer:

Thank you for your question. We are working with WSP to obtain all the information needed to fully respond to the issues you have raised and once we receive it we will review and provide as full a response as possible. We would then like to meet with Cllr Hitchiner to discuss and follow this meeting with written answers to the original questions.