

COUNCIL – 27TH FEBRUARY 2023

ITEM 10 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

10.1 Councillor Ranson – Nanpantan Cemetery

- When will the new cemetery on Nanpantan Road be open?
- Who can be buried there?
- Is it just for residents of Loughborough?
- When will the Plots become available to be purchased?
- Who do they contact if they wish to purchase?

The Leader or his nominee will respond:

The Nanpantan Cemetery will open on 8th March and plots will be available to purchase from this date. It is available to anyone, regardless of their residency, however the charges are graduated to reflect how the maintenance of the cemetery is paid for. Residents of Loughborough will have the lowest fees.

The cemetery has been developed in phases with this first phase including space for over 5,000 burials which will last for 100 years on current burial trends. Natural burials will be available for the first time at a Charnwood Borough Council owned cemetery.

Around 200 new trees and 400 metres of new beech hedging has been planted have been planted during this first phase as well as a wide range of plants and shrubs, all of which will combine to provide food and habitat resources for wildlife.

The town can be proud of the new facility which will also provide a place of reflection and offer fantastic views of the Outwoods. Free Parking is available at the Cemetery and Nanpantan Rd Sport Ground Car Park for easy access to the Outwoods via the Public Rights of Way network.

Vehicles can access Nanpantan Road Cemetery via Nanpantan Road. The access road to the sports facility has been extended towards the site.

The Council is planning to hold a formal open day later this year to enable local residents to visit the new Nanpantan Road Cemetery and find out more about the facility.

Plots can be purchased after the 8th March. Enquiries should be made to the Cemeteries Team at Cemetery@charnwood.gov.uk

10.2 Councillor Draycott – Lightbulb Project

Would the Cabinet Lead for Private Housing explain:

- Why after agreeing in 2017 and continuing this new arrangement in 2018, 2019 & 2021 last year CBC decided to Review the service with Blaby Council, reverting to LCC delivering these functions again?
- How much has been spent from 2017 to date on this unsatisfactory service?
- When were all elected Councillors to be told formally of this change?
- How are residents now being told who to contact if in need of a disabled adaptation?

The Leader or his nominee will respond:

No decision has been made in respect of a change to the delivery model for the service within Charnwood. A review is being carried out in order to inform a decision about the future delivery model for the service within Charnwood from 1st April 2024.

Charnwood Borough Council has always delivered the housing support coordinator assessments, technical assessments, grant approvals and payments. Leicestershire County Council has always delivered the aspects of the adaptations services relating to Occupational Therapy assessments and recommendations. There are currently 2 x Leicestershire County Council employed Occupational Therapists who cover the Charnwood area and work with the Charnwood Lightbulb Team to deliver adaptations services to residents.

The total cost of delivering the service (excluding grants awarded to customers) up to period 10 has been:

<i>Staffing related costs</i>	<i>£1,001,492.78</i>
<i>Internal recharges</i>	<i>£61,371.75</i>
<i>Other costs</i>	<i>£295.97</i>
<i>Contribution to Blaby District Council for Lightbulb Central Hub</i>	<i>£157,468.37</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>£1,220,628.87</i>

No change has been made to the delivery model for the service within Charnwood and therefore it was not necessary to inform elected Councillors. A review is being carried out in order to inform a decision about the future delivery model for the service within Charnwood from 1st April 2024.

Residents should still contact Leicestershire County Council if they require adaptations. Leicestershire County Council triage contacts and

determine whether cases should be allocated to a Leicestershire County Council Occupational Therapist (where major adaptations are likely to be required) or to a Charnwood Borough Council Lightbulb Housing Support Coordinator (where only stairlifts or minor adaptations are likely to be required).

Details of how to request an assessment are available on the following webpages:

https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/adaptations_for_tenants_with_disabilities

<https://lightbulbservice.org/disabled-facility-grant/>

10.3 Councillor Draycott – Disabled Facilities Grant

For the Cabinet Lead for Private Housing-

- Does the Cabinet Lead for Housing accept responsibility for yet another year of underspend of Government monies of £1,396,000.00 plus?.
- Does he accept responsibility for people in such need waiting for "multiple years for work to be carried out?
- Whose fault it is that this work, that can make some one's quality of life so much better, has failed to be delivered?
- Why are the 133 outstanding cases being rejigged so that quick wins are going to be worked on before more complicated cases?

The Leader or his nominee will respond:

There are various challenges associated with the delivery of disability adaptations, including factors beyond the Council's control such as vacancies within the Leicestershire County Council Occupational Therapy service, and internal recruitment and retention challenges relating to the Charnwood Borough Council Technical Officer role.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the principal factor behind the current cumulative underspend is a backlog created by the Covid-19 pandemic, due to issues such as risks relating to home visits. This is illustrated as follows:

<i>DFG funding brought forward from 2021/2022</i>	<i>£1,577,000</i>
<i>DFG funding award 2022/23</i>	<i>£1,063,000</i>
<i>Total DFG funding available 2022/23</i>	<i>£2,640,000</i>
<i>DFG expenditure to Period 10</i>	<i>£346,000</i>
<i>Projected DFG expenditure at year end</i>	<i>£707,000</i>
<i>Projected DFG expenditure as a proportion of 2022/23 grant</i>	<i>67%</i>

Whilst delivery of the DFG programme generally, and the reduction of the underspend backlog in particular, is challenging the above figures demonstrate that current disabled adaptations are now being delivered much more in line with funding being received.

There are some aspects of delivery which are outside of Charnwood Borough Council's control, for example changes to applicant's condition and adaptation needs, variation between recommended works and applicant preferences in relation to works, which result in a need for reassessment and ultimately impact on the timeline for the completion of the adaptation works.

There are currently 127 outstanding cases. (Please note that a further 90 cases are awaiting an initial assessment by an Occupational Therapist and have not yet been referred to the Charnwood Lightbulb Team).

The status of the 127 cases are:

<i>Awaiting assessment by CBC Technical Officer</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Awaiting reassessment by LCC Occupational Therapist</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Awaiting quotes from customer</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Awaiting supporting documents from customer</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>DFG approved (awaiting works / invoices)</i>	<i>32</i>

The waiting times for the 127 cases (from referral receipt date) are:

<i>Less than 6 months</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>6 to 12 months</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>More than 12 months</i>	<i>27</i>

Average DFG completion time during 2022/2023 (from referral receipt date to absolute completion date) is 19 weeks..

It is not realistic to assign blame to any individual or service for issues arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, or issues arising from key staff vacancies and capacity issues across organisations.

It should be noted that during 2022/2023 Charnwood Borough Council have approved the following numbers of grants and made the following number of final grant payments for completed works:

<i>DFGs approved</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>DFGs paid</i>	<i>64</i>

It is not the case that more complex cases are being deprioritised. Cases are prioritised in date order based on referral receipt date, with some discretion applied to prioritise the most urgent cases (for example where a customer is terminally ill).

Cases can only be progressed when all of the necessary information has been received from Leicestershire County Council's Occupational Therapy service and from the customer. All of the outstanding cases have been reviewed in order to identify those cases where there is sufficient information available to progress.

More complex cases will normally take longer to fully complete as they often involve multiple works, major works, planning applications and/or more detailed assessments.

10.4 Councillor Grimley – Rent Collections and Rent Arrears

Can the Lead Member confirm what the current rent collection rate is for our housing stock, whether tenant arrears are rising or falling and what measures are in place to help residents who find themselves in rent arrears?

The Leader or his nominee will respond:

The current in year rent collection rate is 98.87%. The value of rent arrears and rent arrears expressed as a % of the total annual projected rent roll have fallen year on year. The positive trends are set out in the tables below.

Year	Arrears % and Value
2022/23	2.99% and £644K
2021/22	3.39% and £717K
2020/21	3.41% and £719K
2019/20	3.63% and £688K

Rent Collected (in year)	
22/23	98.87%
21/22	98.80%
20/21	98.77%
19/20	98.23%

The Council has a dedicated Tenancy Support and Financial Inclusion Team. Support with welfare benefits, debt, and charity applications forms the core work of the team. The team is on course to generate over £100k (£91k generated to the end of January 23) worth of additional rental income this year, helping tenants to live successfully in their homes.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE TO COUNCIL – PROCEDURE

- Councillors are required to submit a question on notice in writing by 12noon on the eighth working day prior to Council, the title of the question is published on the Council Agenda.
- Questions and responses will be published at the end of the previous working day (usually the Friday prior to a Council meeting on a Monday) and will be available at the Council meeting for Councillors, the press, and the public.
- After the questions and responses are published **Councillors may indicate that they wish to ask a supplementary question by noon on the day of the Council meeting.**
- The Mayor will invite those Councillors who have indicated that they wish to do so to ask a supplementary question.
- The Leader (or relevant Lead Member on behalf of the Leader) or Chair of the Committee is able to respond.
- The total time each person can speak on a single question is time limited.