

COUNCIL – 5TH NOVEMBER 2018

ITEM 10 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

10.1 Councillor Draycott – Charnwood Lottery

Could the Cabinet Lead Member inform full Council of how the first draw of the Charnwood Lottery went please, including how many tickets were brought, by how many people, how many prizes were paid and the amount of the main prizes?

The Leader, or his nominee, will respond:

The first draw of the Charnwood Community Lottery took place on Saturday 29th September. There has been a positive response to the lottery from both good causes and residents, with 571 tickets (299 individuals) entered into the first draw. 14 prizes were won, with the main prizes for this draw being an iPad and a Great Central Railway dining experience.

Over 30 local groups had signed up by the time of the first draw and are therefore benefitting from monies raised through the lottery, with local residents supporting them as specific good causes.

The number of ticket sales continues to grow weekly as does the number of local good causes joining the scheme. The Charnwood Community Lottery will continue to help raise money for local good causes, charities and voluntary organisations.

10.2 Councillor Draycott – Introduction of Universal Credit

Could the Cabinet Lead Member inform full Council of how the current phase of Universal Credit being introduced in the Borough is going please? Also:

- (i) How many Council tenants received warning letters about arrears during their transitional waiting time?
- (ii) How many have been threatened with eviction during their transitional waiting time?
- (iii) How many have been evicted as a result?
- (iv) And what has been the financial effect on the housing department during tenants transitional waiting times?
- (v) Finally, how many tenants in total are in arrears due to Universal Credit?

The Leader, or his nominee, will respond:

The Performance Scrutiny Panel received a detailed report on Housing Rent Arrears and Universal Credit (UC) at its meeting on 9th October 2018 and this is available via the Council's website.

- (i) *The Council issues approximately 450 to 500 rent arrears letters per week and has identified 304 tenants as claimants of UC of which 242 are in rent arrears. Due to the high volumes involved, it is therefore not possible to answer the specific request to identify all arrears letters issued during the waiting time for UC.*

Tenants falling into arrears will receive an arrears letter in accordance with the Council's procedures. The Civil Procedure Rules Pre-Action Protocol for Possession Claims by Social Landlords states that the landlord should contact the tenant as soon as reasonably possible if the tenant falls into arrears. The Council offers assistance to tenants around claiming UC, and all of the Council's rent arrears letters provide information to tenants around where they can obtain advice and support.

- (ii) *Whilst eviction is viewed as the last resort in the majority of cases, officers routinely advise tenants of the consequences of non-payment of rent. It is not possible to identify every contact with a tenant where eviction was discussed in their waiting time for UC.*

We can advise that of the 304 tenants identified as being on UC, 40 tenants in the five week period from their claim date have the last action taken by the Council noted on their rent account as relating to the issue of a notice of seeking possession or a subsequent legal action.*

Claimants of UC may have pre-existing rent arrears or have to pay other sums not covered by UC. Although balances will have changed since the action on each rent account was taken, the current average rent arrears balance of the 40 tenant cohort identified is £763.74, well in excess of 5 weeks' rent arrears.

**The service of a notice of seeking possession is the first legal step in obtaining possession of a property.*

- (iii) *No tenants have been evicted as a result of the waiting time for UC.*
- (iv) *At the week ending 28th October 2018 the level of rent arrears for all current tenants was around £16k higher than at the corresponding time last year. Not all of this increase may be attributed to UC as there have also been delays in housing benefit processing.*

Any arrears built up over the waiting time should be cleared by the tenant on receipt of their UC payment, however on some occasions this is not the case.

- (v) *Of the 304 tenants identified as current claimants of UC 242 are in rent arrears amounting to £129k. As stated, not all of the arrears are directly attributable to UC, as tenants may have pre-existing rent arrears or have to pay other sums due not covered by UC.*

10.3 Councillor Bradshaw – Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation

In January the Government announced changes to mandatory HMO licensing, which came in to force on 1st October 2018, for all houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) with 5 or more unrelated people living in them. The Council has given plenty of warning to landlords. Bearing in mind all the information the Council now holds following the work done by the University on HMO numbers, will the Cabinet Lead Member inform full Council of the following information please:

- (i) How many landlords have registered and for how many properties?
- (ii) What percentage have been checked by Environmental Health, now a legal requirement, and found to meet all the required safety standards?
- (iii) A new minimum size stipulation for bed rooms in HMOs that fall within the scope of the licensing regime will require rooms for certain uses ie sleep to be of a certain size. What are the findings so far on this aspect?
- (iv) Are licences being issued from 1st October including a condition requiring compliance regarding storage and waste disposal in line with the Council's requirements?

The Leader, or his nominee, will respond:

Please find details below in response to the above question:

- (i) *To date, approximately 70 licence holders have applied for licences in respect of 250 properties.*
- (ii) *To date 4.4% (11) of those properties have been inspected prior to a licence being issued (due to concerns about amenities, layout, fire safety or room sizes) based on the details provided in the application. Of those 64% (7) were found to be satisfactory.*

Local Authorities have a duty to inspect all licensable properties within the licence period. All remaining properties will be inspected during the licence period.

- (iii) *7 HMOs have been identified to date with rooms below the required minimum size, of these 4 have already completed the work required to increase the room size through internal alterations.*

The remaining 3 properties are required, through a condition on the licence and in line with the Regulations, to increase the room size within a maximum of 18 months.

- (iv) *There is a requirement for licences to include conditions requiring the licence holder to comply with any scheme which is provided by the local housing authority to the licence holder*

which relates to the storage and disposal of household waste at the HMO pending collection.

Charnwood Borough Council's waste collection service does not differentiate between a HMO and any other domestic property, as such there is no scheme with which to comply.

A general condition is currently being considered for inclusion, which will refer to compliance with the Councils general domestic waste collection policy, referring licence holders to the Council's website for information and in particular how to secure additional receptacles if required.

10.4 Councillor Parton – Waste Accumulation Complaints at Houses in Multiple Occupation

Please would the Cabinet Lead Member outline how many complaints have been received by this Council in the year to date regarding waste accumulation at the frontages and rears of Loughborough's houses in multiple occupation (HMO) stock and list them by ward, please? Would the Lead Member please quantify how many of the affected HMOs are (now) subject to licensing?

The Leader, or his nominee, will respond:

The table below details the number of waste accumulations at the front or rear of Loughborough HMOs reported from 25th October 2017 to 25th October 2018.

Fifteen complaints have been received of which five are licensed HMOs, two have licence applications being assessed and the remaining eight will be investigated to see if a licence is required.

Ward	Type of issue	Licensed HMO? Y/N	New Licence Application being assessed	Created Date
Loughborough Hastings	Accumulation of waste	N	N	22/08/2018
Loughborough Nanpantan	Accumulation of waste	N	N	01/10/2018
Loughborough Nanpantan	Accumulation of waste	N	N	25/09/2018
Loughborough Southfields	Accumulation of waste	Y	N	17/10/2018
Loughborough Southfields	Accumulation of waste	Y	N	16/10/2018
Loughborough Southfields	Accumulation of waste	N	N	02/10/2018
Loughborough Southfields	Accumulation of waste	Y	N	18/07/2018
Loughborough Southfields	Accumulation of waste	N	N	04/07/2018
Loughborough Southfields	Accumulation of waste	N	Y	25/06/2018

Loughborough Southfields	Accumulation of waste	N	Y	29/06/2018
Loughborough Southfields	Accumulation of waste	Y	N	05/03/2018
Loughborough Southfields	Accumulation of waste	Y	N	08/02/2018
Loughborough Storer	Accumulation of waste	N	N	17/10/2018
Loughborough Storer	Accumulation of waste	N	N	19/06/2018
Loughborough Storer	Accumulation of waste	N	N	12/06/2018

10.5 Councillor Parton – Loughborough Town Centre Initiatives to Encourage Retail Health

Please would the Cabinet Lead Member provide Council with a list of actions already undertaken by the authority, including partnership with other agencies, to encourage the take up of empty retail space and to assist businesses to remain trading in Loughborough town centre. Would the Lead Member please then explain how these said pieces of work will feed into the new Town Centre Masterplan?

The Leader, or his nominee, will respond:

Vacancy levels in Loughborough town centre stand at 7.8% which bears favourable comparison with the national average of 8.9%. But that is no grounds for complacency, particularly given evidence of the challenges confronting traditional High Streets across the country.

Loughborough's relative success is attributable in no small part to the efforts and resilience of individual traders. However the Council, working with its partners, can and does play a part in supporting businesses through direct intervention and initiatives designed to drive up footfall.

These have included:

- *Support for the establishment and continued engagement in the "Love Loughborough" Business Improvement District.*
- *Improvements to the public realm including the connection of Wards End to the Granby Street Car Park via Bleach Yard and co-operation with the County Council in the delivery of the Inner Relief Road enabling related improvements to High Street, Baxter Gate, Market Place and Swan Street.*
- *The deployment of the Growth Support Grant to match fund various initiatives including:*
 - *£20,000 to enable the installation of footfall monitors.*
 - *£47,500 to support the reoccupation of vacant premises (delivered in partnership with BID through the preparation of a business support package).*
 - *£42,500 to support the "Get into Loughborough" promotional campaign and other town centre marketing initiatives.*

- £28,900 to assist in the delivery of the “Switch On, Stand Out” project, a social media training programme to help businesses boost on-line marketing and sales delivered in partnership with Loughborough Students’ Union.
- *Events and promotions / markets review*
 - Securing the “Best Large Outdoor Market” award illustrates the quality of the retail market when compared with others on a national stage.
 - Based on the award, funding of £40,000 was allocated to deliver key recommendations in the ‘Loughborough Market Review’ a project that is currently in progress and includes the introduction of a street food and entertainment area along with an improved presentation and layout of the market.
 - £120,000 to support the procurement of new Festive lights and all year round street dressing linked to the town’s heritage and events programme to make the town more attractive to shoppers and residents alike. The Festive lights have been successfully commissioned.
 - The delivery, marketing and promotion of a year-long ‘events programme’ in partnership with the BID that has helped to increase and build footfall to the town.
 - Supporting an ‘events programme’ for a wide range of community organisations and charities delivering on good causes and advancing social cohesion and pride in Loughborough e.g. fun and charity runs.
 - £17,000 to deliver a major events programme in partnership with the BID and other partners, CHARNWOOD 14 -18. This programme of events starts on 11th November 2018 to mark 100 years since the end of World War One. For full details see: www.charnwood.gov.uk/WW1.

The Town Centre Masterplan (2018) identifies four overlapping work streams to support the vitality and viability of the town centre:

- *Improvements to the public realm,*
- *Improvements to the footpath, cycle and road network together with parking facilities,*
- *Identification of opportunity sites for redevelopment and character areas to guide planning and design decisions, and,*
- *“Small interventions:” branding, marketing, events (including markets and fairs), animation (pop ups, temporary uses and public art) and business support.*

The Masterplan endorses much that has already been done to support and encourage trading in Loughborough town centre and sets out a vision to guide future initiatives and interventions. It sets out an ambitious programme which will bring new challenges over a period of financial constraint and uncertainty on the High Street with individual projects being fed into service plans as and when budgets and resources allow. The overall programme will be delivered through partnership working with progress being guided by the Loughborough Town Team which draws upon the skills and experience of a wide range of commercial interests and service providers.

10.6 Councillor Parton – The Work of Community Hubs

In Loughborough there are currently three community centres that have been specifically placed in areas where people are more likely to be higher up the deprivation and social-isolation scale than a majority of the residents of our town.

Please will the Cabinet Lead Member outline for Council what work these three centres, known as 'Hubs' perform?

The Leader, or his nominee, will respond:

Loughborough currently has three Community Hubs, Altogether Place on the Warwick Way Estate, Marios Tinenti Centre (MTC) on the Bell Foundry Estate and The Hut on Ashby Road. The Hubs are located within their respective Priority Neighbourhood areas and therefore embedded within the communities they aim to support. All three operate in different ways with Altogether Place and The Hut being run by local voluntary groups and MTC being staffed by a Community Hub Development Worker, funded by the Borough Council and employed by John Storer Charnwood.

Whilst the Hubs are supported by the Council they are promoted as community run venues, their aim is to increase community engagement, provide a venue for activities to take place/develop from and for advice and signposting to take place. The Hubs are reliant on volunteers to operate and local residents are encouraged to join groups as volunteers and helpers. Through John Storer Charnwood we provide volunteer training and development support where appropriate.

The Hubs develop their programme of activities / services in response to community need but examples of work the Hubs deliver include :

- *Support to local residents, including advice and signposting*
- *Access to computers for local residents*
- *Enabling reporting of community concerns and championing community issues*
- *Provision of volunteer opportunities, along with appropriate training and support*
- *Holding community events e.g. annual BBQ, local planting days*
- *Involving community in local developments e.g. Loughborough In Bloom, Bell Foundry Pocket Park, local gardening projects*
- *Community engagement through organising community trips e.g. seaside, pantomime*
- *Weekly activity sessions e.g. craft events, coffee mornings*
- *Venue for groups to deliver activities directly for the local community e.g. youth club*
- *Venue for partner agencies to run sessions and meetings*

10.7 Councillor Miah – Cemetery Provision for Loughborough

A year after the Cabinet made a decision on Allendale Road, Loughborough being the site of the new cemetery it is now proposed that a site in Nanpantan, Loughborough will be the site of the cemetery instead.

Can the Leader explain why he and the Cabinet first unequivocally endorsed Allendale Road? And what led them to change their minds?

Can he explain why the Nanpantan site wasn't put forward as a proposal in the first instance when they made their decision about Allendale Road?

How much extra cost has been incurred to the taxpayers of Charnwood both actual and in cost of officers' time/salary over the past year to reach this final decision?

Can he confirm to Council what lessons have been learnt by this debacle?

The Leader, or his nominee, will respond:

The initial decision identified Allendale Road as the preferred location for a new cemetery. This decision was called-in and referred back to Cabinet for further consideration with comments from the Council's Scrutiny Management Board. Cabinet listened to the concerns raised by Scrutiny Management Board and decided that further work was required by officers on this matter.

Over the last 12 months officers have conducted further assessments on the viability of the identified sites and an extensive public consultation exercise has taken place prior to this matter coming back to Cabinet.

Having been appraised on the further work completed by officers, and having looked at the responses to the consultation conducted in August and September 2018, Cabinet decided that Nanpantan Road is the preferred site for the cemetery. The reasons for this are set out in the Cabinet report of 18th October. It is important to note that all proposed sites were deemed suitable for cemetery provision, with some mitigation also needed for each site. Additional site appraisals were therefore completed on all options including the Nanpantan site at a cost of £11,984. The Nanpantan site was put forward as a potential site in the initial Cabinet report which was considered in October 2017. In the end the project board placed weight on the issue of greater longevity offered by the preferred option.

This is an excellent illustration of the effectiveness of the decision making systems in the Council and the value added by Scrutiny. The checks and balances operated as they should within the Council in a way that led to further examination of the proposals. Following this the proposals were endorsed through public consultation where we listened to our residents' views.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE TO COUNCIL – PROCEDURE

- Councillors are required to submit a question on notice in writing by 12noon on the sixth 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 and/or make a statement 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 and/or make a statement.
- 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.