

COUNCIL – 21ST JUNE 2021

ITEM 10 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

10.1 Councillor Bolton – Easing of Ban on Evictions

The ban on evictions started to ease on 1st June including bailiff enforced evictions and will continue to ease as we move forward. What measures have Charnwood Borough Council put in place to deal with the potential homelessness issues that may start to arise as a direct result of this?

The Leader or his nominee will respond:

The Council has seen an increase in Housing Register application during 2020-2021 due to increase in housing issues and homelessness resulting from the factors associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, such as loss of employment, tenant rent arrears and landlord mortgage arrears.

The Council has used MHCLG Homeless Grant and Contain Outbreak Management Funding to recruit an additional two Housing Options Officer and two Assistant Housing Officer to ensure that there are sufficient resources within the Housing Needs Team to manage the anticipated increase in applications.

In addition, two new roles for Charnwood have been introduced into the CBC Lettings Team, one a CBC Landlords Officers who will provide advice, assistance and support to private sector landlords and tenants in order prevent the breakdown of private sector tenancies.

The second a CBC Lettings Officer who will identify, advertise, and allocate private sector rental properties, and provide advice, assistance and support to housing applicants, private sector tenants to prevent and reduce homelessness.

Introducing a new discretionary Eviction and Repossession Prevention grant, with a pot of funding to assist people with rent or mortgage arrears.

10.2 Councillor Bolton – Tenants' Repairs

Could you please tell me how far behind Charnwood Borough Council is with its repair schedule and when it anticipates being able to catch up and get back on track?

The Leader or his nominee will respond:

The Council, like many other landlords, paused the delivery of non-urgent repairs when national lockdowns were in place. Urgent and emergency repairs were still delivered over these periods, with our

front-line repairs staff entering people's homes at the height of the pandemic to keep our tenants and their families safe. Over these periods, our staff were arguably at greater risk of harm from Covid-19, and I hope that you will join me in thanking our staff for their work over what was a very challenging time.

There is no backlog of urgent and emergency responsive repairs.

The below table shows non-urgent repairs that are out of target.

Repair Type	Count of Repairs Over 28 Day Target	Count of Repairs Over 90 Day Target	Count of Repairs Over Target by Work Type -Total
Clearance / Cleaner Labourer	0	1	1
Electrician	9	4	13
Inspector / Surveyor	10	8	18
Joiner	37	4	41
Painter / Decorator	3	6	9
Plasterer	4	5	9
Plumber	11	2	13
Plumber / Gas fitter	1	0	1
Roofer / Bricklayer	8	10	18
Grand Total	83	40	123

It is expected the number of repairs over target will reduce significantly by the Autumn of this year. Our overall customer satisfaction rate for repairs in 2020/21 was almost 98%.

In many instances, access to undertake planned maintenance work in tenants' homes over the last 15 months has been refused by tenants due to (for example) shielding. Material and supply chain shortages have also impacted on delivery.

The below table shows the number of planned replacements / works carried forward from 2020/21.

Work Stream	Number of Planned Replacements / Works
<i>Bathroom / Level Access Shower Replacement</i>	70
<i>Communal Area Improvements</i>	6
<i>Cyclical Painting</i>	21
<i>Doors</i>	81
<i>Estate Works</i>	2

<i>External Wall Insulation Repair</i>	11
<i>Heating</i>	23
<i>Kitchens</i>	54
<i>Major Adaptions</i>	90
<i>Roofing</i>	8
<i>Structural Works</i>	17
<i>Windows</i>	6
<i>Total</i>	389

The Contract with Fortem Solutions Ltd ended on 11th June 2021. A procurement process for new contractors to deliver the works previously undertaken by the contractor is in progress. Major adaptations and structural works will be prioritised. Mobilisation of new contractors is expected to take place in Quarter 3 of 2021/22 with delivery in Quarter 4. The existing backlog is expected to be cleared in early 2022. Works will be prioritised by need and date. All tenants pending works have been provided with a written update and a named point of contact for any queries.

10.3 Councillor Draycott – Electric Vehicles and Charging Points

Would the Leader agree it is timely for the Council to increase the number of electric vehicle charging points across the borough, with such vehicle ownership on the increase?

When will the Council start to inform households how to install an electric charging point and the importance of following the regulations in order to safeguard pedestrians?

How is the Council going to accommodate resident's requests for charging points to be installed near to their homes i.e. on Council owned residents parking bays?

What advice will be given to vehicle owners who want a charging point with in their own property boundary?

How will the Council deal with requests for charging points from residents who live in terraced housing or council owned flats/maisonettes?

Would they agree a Planning Advice Note on installing electric vehicle charging points is needed urgently? That it be made widely available across the borough and inform Council what the timescale for such to be produced?

The Leader or his nominee will respond:

The Council supports the increased take up in electric vehicles in the borough but does not have any control over their numbers. It is however working to introduce charge points in its own car parks at Sileby and Anstey using government funding through the On Street

Residential Charge Point Scheme (ORCS). This project has been set up to provide charging points for residents who don't benefit from off street parking and who live within a short walk from a car park. It has also set out Policy CC6 in the new pre-submission local plan, which seeks to secure electric vehicle charge points for dwellings and parking spaces and this demonstrates the Council's commitment to increasing provision across the Borough.

The installation of electric charge points must be undertaken by appropriate contractors and it wouldn't be appropriate for the council to produce guidance on how to do this or on how residents should operate them.

The Council will produce a guidance note for its tenants on electric vehicle parking and charging points, which will be available in July 2021.

10.4 Councillor Needham – Tree Planting

In 2019 a pledge was made to plant 100,000 trees across the Borough by 2023. Two years on, how close are we to achieving that target and what are Charnwood doing to ensure that target will be met?

The Leader or his nominee will respond:

The Council has so far secured the planting of at least 65,500 trees. It is continuing to offer trees in the garden giveaway and is seeking to secure trees as part of landscaping schemes as appropriate when granting planning permission for new development.

In addition to the above. Officers are working on a woodland creation project in Hathern and have secured Forestry Commission funding for the planting of approximately 14,000 trees on former agricultural land owned by the Council. It is hoped that the planting will take place during quarters 3 and 4 of this financial year. We are also working with the environmental charity Earthwatch to deliver a Tiny Forest comprising of 600 to 700 trees in the area the size of a tennis court at Holt Drive Loughborough. More information on the Tiny Forest concept can be found here: <https://earthwatch.org.uk/get-involved/tiny-forest>

Further opportunities to plant trees on open spaces across the borough are being explored and members will be updated as any schemes progress.

10.5 Councillor Ward – Council Accommodation Banding

I have a resident who is a council tenant who wants to transfer to another property, due to various factors, including overcrowding, anxiety caused by ongoing ASB from neighbours, and most importantly the fact that she has a registered physical disability. They are currently housed in a first floor flat with no lift. Their disability means it is difficult for them to negotiate the stairs, particularly when they have to carry

their child downstairs in the pushchair. Amazingly, none of these factors, not even their physical disability, put my resident in the highest band of housing need. On the contrary, they are languishing in the lowest band, and are likely to stay there for some time, until they reach the top of the bidding list for their band.

Why isn't someone with a disability or additional needs, who needs rehousing in more suitably adapted accommodation considered to have more urgent need than the lowest priority band?

The Leader or his nominee will respond:

I am unable to respond to the example given as it does not provide all the details/information the Council would require to make an informed assessment of the case.

Cabinet approved the Council's Choice Based Housing Allocation Policy in October 2017. There is a statutory requirement for a Local Authority to produce an Allocation Policy, this provides a framework for assessing and prioritising housing need and determining who will be nominated for housing. The Policy takes into consideration all legal requirements outlined in the Housing Act 1996, Part VI; and related regulations and guidance.

The new Policy reduced the Bands from 4 to 3 so that only applications with a confirmed housing need would be registered. Applicants who have a confirmed housing need will be placed into 1 of 3 Housing Need Bands:

- *Band 3 – applicants who have a housing need*
- *Band 2 – applicants who have a high level of housing need*
- *Band 1 – applicants who have an emergency level of housing need.*

Housing need relating to overcrowding, anti-social behaviour, mental and physical health are all taken into consideration in the banding framework.

The Council's Allocations Team assesses all completed applications and the supporting evidence provided and will decide whether the applicant qualifies for the register, which Banding is applicable to their circumstances and the type of properties they are eligible for.

There are a number of different factors that would be taken into consideration when these decisions are made.

Band 1 (the highest) is for applicants who a confirmed emergency level housing need to move, for example persons who are fleeing domestic abuse.

Applicants who have a confirmed housing need that is not of an emergency level would be placed in Band 2 or Band 3. Applications within the same Band are prioritised in order of waiting time, however, an applicant's banding would not be increased based on waiting time.

If an applicant does not agree with a decision made by the Council in respect of their application, they have the right to request a review of the decision., which is set out on Page 29 of the Policy.

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 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.