

QUESTIONS FROM ELECTED MEMBERS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10

14-18 TO COUNCILLOR CARTER, LEAD MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND TRTANSPORT FROM COUNCILLOR STRUTTON (RECEIVED 09.04.19)

“Can the *Lead Member for Planning and Transport* please confirm that changes have been made to Slough Borough Council’s PCN tickets to include a warning for premium charges on the **0845** enquiry number and also give an explanation for the poorly worded letter that was sent to people informing them that their PCNs had been cancelled due to a system failure at Burnham Station without full clarification of what went wrong and who was responsible?”

Reply

*Confirm that changes have been made to Slough Borough Council’s PCN tickets to include a warning for premium charges on the **0845** enquiry number –*

Changes have been made and this number is not in circulation anymore.

Give an explanation for the poorly worded letter that was sent to people informing them that their PCNs had been cancelled due to a system failure at Burnham Station without full clarification of what went wrong and who was responsible?

I have not seen the poorly written letter either. Letters were sent out to all individuals that challenged the PCN and we stated an error had occurred and apologies were given for any inconvenience caused. Ultimately Slough Borough Council is responsible and we would not go into the details of the error and who is responsible when responding.

15-18 TO COUNCILLOR NAZIR, LEAD MEMBER FOR CORPORATE FINANCE AND HOUSING FROM COUNCILLOR KELLY (RECEIVED 16.04.19)

“Following the Government’s announcement today on the proposal to end the practice of Section 21 agreements with landlords, which I support, and the previous implementation of licensing for ALL landlords who own or run HMO’s.

Would the Cabinet Member for housing support and work with me and other cllrs to create a list of landlords and member owned properties. So we can ensure that all cllrs who own a property directly or indirectly through family/relations (that are rented - single or HMO) are recorded, so all elected members are accountable and transparent if they or their direct family own a second property in the borough.

As a council we should be leading by example and I hope that the cabinet member will agree to enhance an existing list or create a new one.”

Reply

Disclosure of Interests

By virtue of Section 30 of the Localism Act 2011 and the Schedule to the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012, all members must disclose any beneficial interest in land, which is within the area of the Council and

such interests would need to be recorded in the Register of Members' Interests, which is published on the Council's website.

Such interests not only include the Member's own interest but an interest of the Member's spouse or civil partner, the interest of a person with whom the Member is living as a husband or wife and the interest of any person with the Member is living as if they were civil partners.

HMOs

The two licensing schemes, which were approved at Cabinet in March 2019, Additional Licensing that covers all HMOs and Selective Licensing, that includes all privately rented properties in the designated areas of Chalvey and Central, will empower Slough to address not only poor physical conditions in properties but poor management practices and exploitation of tenants. In cases where applications are made it will allow officers to definitively identify a responsible person and check that they are 'fit and proper' and where applications are not made officers can take enforcement action to hold landlords accountable and bring properties into compliance.

It will also allow the Council to be more proactive, rather than waiting for, sometimes, vulnerable tenants, who are anxious about retaliatory eviction, from coming forward for assistance. Where landlords are deemed not fit and proper, licensing gives the Council the power to apply for an interim management order (IMO) that would allow the Council to take over management of the dwelling.

Section 21

On 15th April 2019, the government announced its intention to scrap the Section 21 possession process – the so-called 'no fault' evictions. Essentially, once an assured shorthold tenancy comes to an end, the courts have no option but to give possession, as long as all the requirements have been met.

However, whilst proposing this, the government are also proposing to strengthen the Section 8 possession process of the 1988 Housing Act, so that property owners are able to regain their home should they wish to sell or move into it.

Whilst this is a good move for tenants, it could have the unintended consequences of driving some landlords out of the property market, particularly those at the cheaper end of the renting.

1-19 TO COUNCILLOR SWINDLEHURST, LEAD MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND STRATEGY FROM COUNCILLOR STRUTTON (RECEIVED 28.06.19)

“What effects will the loss of *Akzo Nobel* and potentially the Wexham Parish ransom slip of land, have on the housing strategy plans for Slough Borough Council and the potential loss of monies invested in both sites?”

Reply

Akzo Nobel

The Council had not commissioned any feasibility or capacity studies for the Akzo Nobel site. Whilst SBC did make representations to the owners directly and via their agents and convened meetings with Akzo Nobel, the former owners would not consider selling the site to the Council off-market. Due to the huge risks associated with competing with national and international developers and the significant sums involved in undertaking due diligence, the Council did not compete for this site. Instead, SBC has independently acquired land on the periphery of the Akzo Nobel site, which will give the Council leverage when negotiations commence with the new owners.

Regarding the impact on Housing supply, it must be remembered that whilst the Housing Strategy made reasonable presumptions about the Akzo Nobel site being redeveloped via a housing-led scheme, this was never a certainty. Whilst the site had been purchased for industrial use, negotiations have been taking place between the new owner and the Local Planning Authority (SBC) about allocating a proportion of the site for housing. This has resulted in the owners of the site entering into pre-application discussions with planning officers for a mixed use scheme consisting of residential and commercial development.

Simultaneously Berkeley Homes have entered into the pre-application process for the redevelopment of the former Horlicks site, which looks likely to contain around one thousand more residential properties than the assumptions from the Council's early projections for it - so the redevelopment of this site, in itself, replaces any potential lost numbers that SBC had assumed may have been provided on the Akzo Nobel site when it made its forward housing projections.

Wexham Court Parish Council (WCPC)

The Council entered into an agreement for the early surrender of land leased to Wexham Court Parish Council, initially for a 14 unit development, although this was subsequently increased to 24 units. To date, the Council has paid £235,000 to WCPC and will pay legal fees of £8,000, therefore a total of £243,000. However, it should be stressed that SUR has submitted a planning application and SBC is pursuing legal action to secure this land, therefore it should not be assumed that any money has been lost.