

COUNCIL MEETING – 28 SEPTEMBER 2017
QUESTIONS FROM ELECTOR UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 9

1. From Mr Kenneth Wright to Councillor Munawar

In his introduction to the new Confidential Reporting Code SBC Leader, Cllr.Munawar stated:-The Council is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, honesty and accountability. It is not prepared to tolerate malpractice or wrongdoing.

In line with that commitment we expect employees, and others that we deal with, who have any serious concerns about any aspect of the council's work to come forward and voice those concerns. Wherever possible, employees are encouraged to use relevant council procedures to report issues in an open and transparent way, because that is the type of organisational culture we are trying to foster./ hope that the improvements made to this process inspire confidence and enable employees and others to feel able to raise concerns so that the Authority can address them appropriately and improve standards within the Organisation.

Could I please ask our Leader to explain why he has personally failed to honour the promises he made when he introduced the Council's new Confidential Reporting Code for whistleblowing complaints?

Reply

Thank you for the question, The Council is fully committed to our confidential reporting code, which by its very nature is confidential and it is neither appropriate nor fair to discuss individual cases in public.

2. From Mr Paul Janik to Councillor Munawar

The Slough Observer newspaper's web site, in an article dated 24th March 2017 by Krishan Davis, states:-

In his introduction to the new Confidential Reporting Code, SBC leader Sohail Munawar said: "The council is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, honesty and accountability. It is not prepared to tolerate malpractice or wrongdoing.

"I hope that the improvements made to this process inspire confidence and enable employees and others to feel able to raise concerns so that the authority can address them appropriately and improve standards within the organisation."

Is it true, as Leader of the Council, you are not fully committed to the council's whistle-blowing policy and procedure and now want to diminish or abolish it? If so, why?

Reply

Thank you for the question, the answer is no it is not true

3. From Mr Steven Gillingwater to Councillor Bedi

With the recent negative press regarding CSE across the country and children being vulnerable, what steps are the Council taking as corporate parents to protect children and how can each Councillor ensure they meet that standard to protect every child in Slough?

Reply

Thank you for your question and for giving me the opportunity to talk about some of the work the council and our partners do to combat CSE.

The Child Sexual Exploitation & Trafficking Sub-Group meets on a 6 weekly basis and report the Executive SLSCB (Slough Local Safeguarding Children's Board). Members of the group represent the key agencies across Slough.

The group have focussed on establishing clear referral pathways, a clear understanding of the CSE profile to implement effective responses, multi-agency partnerships to meet the current needs and demands on services.

The Slough Safer Partnership commissioned independent research to look into the scope of CSE prevalence in Slough, models, themes, support & mechanisms in place as well as understanding experiences of those receiving service, which started over the summer of 2016. Although only in stage 2 of 3, the research has aided a better understanding of the current need, CSE profile and indicates a localised picture of near-peer CSE perpetrators rather than the organised gang model seen in other parts of country.

A Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH Team) has been developed and now embedded with the intention to identify risk and harm and facilitate timely and appropriate referrals. It is based in Slough Police Station.

It is a multi agency team which enables information sharing between Police, Health, Children's Social Care and Primary Mental Health and will work closely with other agencies including Probation, Schools, Adult Safeguarding, Young People's Service and Youth Offending Service.

We have CSE operational group which meets every 4 weeks and has strong multi-agency presence. SEMRAC's purpose is to reduce the risks to children and young people vulnerable to sexual exploitation through multi agency and collaborative working. The group aim to share relevant information to identify, protect & support victims of CSE, trafficking and those young people placed at risk.

PCSO's support primary schools on a regular basis with input requested by each school across all year groups around many safety issues. There are two funded and dedicated police constable school's officers in Slough. There is a focus on early intervention of CSE from year 7 onwards, giving pupils an insight into sexting, CSE, gang involvement and consent.

A 3 tier training process was introduced via the LSCB to ensure understanding on local referral processes, prevalence, models, indicators, support available for children & families as well as giving access to tools/guidance.

The Council runs child safeguarding training annually, and this is supplemented by training facilitated by the LSCB for all parties including councillors – 2 sessions are due to happen in the coming weeks.

4. From Mr Slawomir Kmiecik to Councillor Nazir

When making incentive payments to estate agents and letting agents to enter into leases with families on the housing waiting list, what professional checks on the state of the property does the Council make before paying the money to the commercial agents ?

Reply

Our Housing Standards Team carry out checks, which accord with Section 4 of the Housing Act, 2004 and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) Operating Guidance. These checks identify category 1 and category 2 hazards. This however, does not mean that properties with these hazards cannot be occupied. It does depend but in usual cases, the landlord will be given a period of time to carry out the repairs.