

COUNCIL MEETING – 27 SEPTEMBER 2018

QUESTIONS FROM ELECTOR UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 9

1. From Ms Sharon O'Reilly to Councillor Nazir

“What rights do Council Tenants have to emergency locksmith services from Osbourne’s as they do not provide this service to council tenants at all without a Crime Reference Number or if entry & exit doors are jammed on property’s this is a Health & Safety Issue should fire break out or ambulances need to gain entry to the elderly. Council Tenants Pay for these Services In with their recently increased Rent they should not have to Contact Independent Locksmiths. Increasingly my Company is being Contacted because Osbourne’s Refuse To Come Out despite being repeatedly Called.”

Reply

The health and safety of our residents is of paramount importance, therefore, all communal areas/main doors to housing blocks are always repaired. There is a rapid emergency response period of two hours, at all times, so any issues with regards to jammed or blocked doors are dealt with as a priority one response. In addition, emergency services have their own specialist key for access to all blocks in emergency situations.

With regards to tenants own properties, the tenancy agreement and handbook have always been clear that individuals have to take responsibility for their actions and certain repairs. Tenants are responsible for their own keys. Any costs associated with the loss of keys, which require gaining access, fitting new locks and any remedial repairs are the responsibility of the tenant (detailed in the tenants handbook, page 15), thus they are recharged or they may seek their own solution.

Certain vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, disabled, victims of harassment, domestic violence and some medical conditions are exempted from recharge payments. Osborne ask a series of questions to identify whether the Council’s Recharge Policy is to be applied. If the tenant does not fall within any of the exemption categories a recharge will be applied for undertaking the work and the sum is advised to tenant who may then decide to seek their own solution elsewhere. Where the tenant has been the victim of criminal damage, Osborne will request the crime reference number and the Council will seek to recharge the culprit if apprehended and prosecuted.

Osborne have provided information that since the start of the contract (1st December 2017), they have completed 21 lock changes, only one of which was an agreed recharge. A further 18 enquiries were made by tenants where the works did not proceed once they were informed that a recharge would apply. The Osborne Out of Hours centre does not currently offer a recharge service and will only go out if there is a Health & Safety concern and residents are vulnerable or elderly.

Individuals who are responsible must take responsibility; Osborne can provide a rechargeable service - this service is not paid for within rent payments made by tenants

2. From Manraj Hullait to Councillor Anderson

“In the year 2016-17 according to numbers from DEFRA, Slough was ranked 332 out of 350 English local councils for its waste recycling rate at just 26.3%, and over the last 3 years the rate has fallen 10% against an increase of +2.7% nationally to 44.9% and +5.3% in Berkshire councils to 42.8%. Given that the target for council recycling is 50% by 2020 as set out by the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011, what is the councils plan to meet this target and avoid potential fines (as allowed for in the Localism Act 2011)?”

Reply

Our Municipal Waste Strategy 2015-2030 provides a commitment to recycle 60% of waste by 2028. The target to recycle 50% of waste by 2020 is a National Target as set out by the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 to which Councils are expected to contribute.

Our recycling service of weekly mixed dry recycling and fortnightly green waste collection currently sees around 28% of waste recycled. In 2010/11 the same services used to achieve a recycling rate of 31.5%. Performance has fallen to as low as 26% in the years since. The fluctuation is due to a number of reasons which are all related to the quality of recyclate collected and its acceptance as a feedstock to industry. Ever increasing quality standards linked to changes in supply and demand in world markets for recyclate have seen an increasing number of loads of mixed dry recyclate rejected by our Waste Management Contractor as being too contaminated to sort into individual recyclate streams at his Materials Recycling Facility.

We are currently exploring initiatives to reduce the number of rejected loads of mixed dry recyclate but this alone will not see us go much above 30% recycling.

Our preferred disposal option for general waste is Energy from Waste (EfW) as opposed to landfill – we are in the Top 10 Local Authorities for diversion of waste from landfill. EfW contractors demand supply of a consistent volume of waste at a consistent calorific value and this is a factor to be taken into account when diverting material out of the general waste stream for recycling.

Those authorities who have achieved recycling rates in the 45% to 60% range have done so by reducing the frequency of waste collection from weekly to fortnightly or even monthly. This encourages residents to divert recyclable waste into the recycling collection service rather than carelessly discarding it as general waste – if they don't then their general waste bin overflows.

We will be reviewing collection methods, collection frequency and waste disposal options over the next 12 months with a view to making the step change in our recycling rate demanded by our commitment to recycle 60% of waste by 2028

3. From Grzegorz Duda to Councillor Carter

“In light of the recent statement from the Slough Labour Group referring to Slough High Street, and the fact that it has been over a year since the council last made any public announcements, can the council confirm what timelines they are working to for the redevelopment to be completed and whether or not the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority that now owns the two shopping centres is still committed to working with the council on delivering it?”

Reply

The Council remains in constant contact with the owners of the shopping centres at a strategic and operational level.

They remain very committed to Slough and will be working very closely with SBC and other strategic partners over the lifetime of this project. We expect to be in a position to share major news with you later this year.