

MEMBER QUESTIONS

From Cllr Matloob to the Leader of the Council

In the SBC Best Value Commissioners letter, the Commissioners write ‘It is not evident that SBC systematically takes on board feedback’, with recent clear example of this being the results of the highways consultation for CPZ in Zones BS1 & BS2. Can the Leader advise how he intends to remedy this?

Reply

Regarding the Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) consultation process, it remains consistent with that of the previous administration. It is important to emphasise that this is a consultation process, not a series of local referendums. The aim is to gather public opinions without the strict regulations usually associated with referendums.

A recent consultation in Councillor Matloob's ward received more responses than the estimated number of residents, with many replies coming from outside the area. This underscores the Administration's commitment to consultation.

Following the review of results, a trial period was decided upon, allowing residents to assess the scheme's effectiveness before a controlled zone established.

More broadly on our consultation process, we have adopted the Citizen Space platform for online consultations, surveys, and engagement. As of July 2024, we have completed 41 consultations—29 public and 12 private, with 2 currently open. The "We Asked, You Said, We Did" feature illustrates how resident feedback informs our actions.

Over the next six months, we will implement further actions to build on our consultation and engagement process. These improvements will be included in the Council's updated improvement and recovery plan. For example, one of the initiatives will be to commission a Residents Survey in March 2025.

From Cllr Parmar to the Lead Member for Housing, Highways, Planning and Transport

Please can we confirm the number of applicants sitting on our council's allotment waiting list and what steps are being taken to reduce this waiting list?

Reply

We currently have 1,400 residents on the allotment waiting list, with an average wait time of 3 to 5 years for an allotment. Demand for allotment ownership is high, but there is limited capacity to increase the number of allotments available for rent in the borough.

The allotment service is currently under review, and a report will be presented to the Cabinet in the New Year with recommendations for changes to the delivery of the service going forward.

Additionally, we are in the process of recruiting a full-time, permanent allotment officer, a position that has unfortunately been vacant. Filling this role is crucial to ensure we can promptly let vacant plots.

The new officer will also be responsible for addressing tenants who fail to maintain their plots to the agreed standards outlined in their tenancy agreements. If mal-cultivation notices are issued and no improvement is observed within three months, tenants will receive a 'notice to quit,' allowing the plots to be re-leased to residents on the waiting list.

From Cllr Anderson to the Lead Member for Education and Children's Services

Will the Lead Member for Children's Services please provide an update on future plans for the Children's Centres?

Reply

Chalvey Grove, Penn Road and Romsey Close are being developed into Family Hubs, offering a single front-door approach and "help at the first time of asking" for children, young people, and their families 0-19 (0-25 years with SEND).

Family Hubs will build on the already established children's centre service offer with integrated health/midwifery services at the core, access to community and voluntary support, opportunities for employment skills and training, and information advice and guidance in a localities-based model.

This transition pathway is underway with a team of six Family Hub staff and developing locality boards of critical partners in each area. The team offers outreach across the board, delivering universal sessions for families around key priorities.

Monksfield Way Children's Centre is being developed as a SEND Development Hub for children from 2-5 years, building on the current delivery of early years provision and integrating this offer with bespoke services for children and their families from 0-8 years.

Yew Tree Road will continue to provide early years provision and, when needed, services within its locality through established outreach programmes.

From Cllr Instone to the Lead Member for Housing, Highways, Planning and Transport

Will the Lead Member for Housing please state how many households are being housed in temporary accommodation in the following types of housing; Bed & Breakfast, Hotels, supported housing including refuges, AirB&Bs, Rooms in shared houses, Flats or houses supplied by private sector landlords. Of the above how many are placed within the borough and how many outside?

Reply

The following information is the total number of TA placements from the NEC Housing ICT system.

TA households by accommodation type, 1st Nov 2024	Total
Bed & Breakfast	34
Other Nightly Paid Shared	153
Other Nightly Paid Self Contained	77
Hostel	24
Private Sector Leased	567
Own Stock	22
RSL Stock	17
Other	23
Total	917

107 of the 917 placements are outside of Slough Borough.

The Council is reporting a higher number of TA placements via the statutory quarterly returns called H-CLIC, which reported 1,131 households placed in temporary accommodation in the last published quarter (April – June 2024) and is in the public domain.

We are currently addressing data inaccuracies between IT systems following the recent TA Project Group with the intention to resolve data problems and inconsistencies over the next couple of months. This includes the creation of rent accounts of TA placements onto the NEC IT system and the closing of TA placements on the Jigsaw IT system.

From Cllr Mann to the Lead Member for Housing, Highways, Planning and Transport

Will the Lead Member for Housing please state how many households with children are currently living in Temporary Accommodation within the borough? Including those placed in Slough by other boroughs.

Reply

As per response to Cllr Instone's question, the Council is reporting a variance in the number of households in TA between the two main IT systems, with 917 households

in TA on the NEC system whilst Jigsaw is 1,131 households (April - June 24), which has been reported to MHCLG via the H-CLIC data returns.

The H-CLIC data return for April - June 2024 recorded 681 households (out of the 1,131 total) had children recorded on the homeless application, with 1,492 children residing in temporary accommodation at the end of that quarter.

S208 of the Housing Act 1996 places a duty on councils to inform other councils where placements are made. Whilst Slough officers were aware of placements made locally, it was apparent that not all councils were complying with their duty to inform, and this was recently noted in a ministerial letter to all Councils on 11 November 2024 from the Deputy PM to ensure that councils were being compliant.

The Council requested under the FOI process to 33 London Councils and 5 Berkshire Councils the current position of placements in Slough. Twenty-nine of the Councils have responded, and a total of 441 placements have been reported. Unfortunately, data on household size is not provided. However, a considerable number will likely be families with dependent children. It is also important to note that the placement length varies greatly, so it could be that a household was placed for one night in Slough and then moved to a different area, as the S208 process does not require councils to inform when households leave an area.

The Council with the largest number of TA placements in Slough is LB Redbridge (128), with the other largest placing councils being RBWM (104), LB Newham (49) and LBs Richmond & Wandsworth (47).

From Cllr Mohammad to the Lead Member for Housing, Highways, Planning and Transport

Will the Lead Member for Housing provide the top 5 reasons for people presenting to the council as homeless?

Reply

- S21 Notice to end PRS tenancy
- Family eviction
- Prison release
- Hospital discharge
- End of Home Office accommodation placement

From Cllr Gill to the Lead Member for Housing, Highways, Planning and Transport

Will the Lead Member for Housing please provide the number of FTE staff employed within SCB housing services, (excluding HRA officers), broken down by grade and status of employment i.e., permanent, or temporary?

Reply

<u>Pay Grade</u>	<u>No. of perm Staff</u>	<u>No. of interim Staff</u>
<u>NJ02</u>	-	-
<u>NJ03</u>	-	-
<u>NJ04</u>	<u>1</u>	-
<u>NJ05</u>	-	<u>1</u>
<u>NJ06</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>NJ07</u>	-	-
<u>NJ08</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>NJ09</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>NJ10</u>	-	-
<u>SML1</u>	-	-
<u>SML2</u>	-	-
<u>SML3</u>	-	-
<u>SML4</u>	-	-
<u>SML6</u>	-	-
<u>No grade against placement on Matrix</u>	-	<u>11</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>33</u>

* This data is subject to a point in time and is being continuously ratified as part of a wider HR Finance data project, therefore subject to change

From Cllr Escott to the Lead Member for Finance, Council Assets and Transformation

Will the Lead Member for Finance please state how many residents have applied for the Household Support Fund so far in this financial year? Also provide the top 5 reasons for the application. Of those applications how many were refused? Provide the top 5 reasons for refusal.

Reply

In the period April to September 2024, the total number of residents who applied for household support was 2,568.

The top five reasons for applying were:

1. Cost of living
2. Low income
3. Loss of benefits
4. Increased housing and living costs
5. Accumulating debt

The total number of applications that were refused was 1,137. The top five reasons were:

1. Did not meet the criteria of the scheme
2. No hardship
3. Multiple applications
4. Information required not provided
5. Capital and savings

From Cllr Carter to the Lead Member for Education and Children's Services

Will the Lead Member for Children's Services please provide an update on the recent inspection of the Youth Offending Service by the HMIP?

Reply

The HMIP Inspection of Slough's Youth Justice Service was announced on 19 July, with 8 Inspectors onsite from the 23-27 September (a delay to the original Inspection week of 19 August).

The HMIP inspection is a partnership inspection and looks at how all of our services, alongside colleagues in health, the police and schools, work together to provide services to young people involved in crime.

The report and outcome remain embargoed until January 2025, and as such, I cannot give full details of the outcome.

A 12-week action plan is now in place to work on areas we need to improve, and the partnership Youth Justice Management Board is developing a full improvement plan.

The Inspectors recognised areas of strength, including notable improvements to the Youth Justice Management Board and its partnership arrangements, the commitment and motivation of our staff team, and positive work in relation to desistance and supporting children involved in weapons-related offences.

Areas for improvement include our response to broader issues of Public Protection, workforce development and ensuring partnership work is fully embedded at all levels.

From Cllr Gahir to the Leader of the Council

What contingency provision is being put in place for residents to contact statutory services, whilst Observatory House is closed between 23/12/24 and 3/1/25. Will this include minimum staffing levels in these services, and if so, what are they?

Reply

Observatory House will be closed during the weeks of 23 December and 30 December. The hubs, along with our library and registrar services, will also be largely closed during this period.

However, we will remain accessible throughout the holiday period. Our main contact centre will continue to operate from home, except on bank holidays. For statutory services, leave must be approved in advance to ensure business continuity. Complete coverage details will be available during the week of 16 December, which will include information about the CLT lead.

Our out-of-hours services will remain operational, and emergency contacts will be available, including on bank holidays.

Building Management will ensure access to the buildings during the holiday period, including bank holidays. This will allow council services to effectively respond to any incidents that may affect the community.

From Cllr Hulme to the Leader of the Council

Will the Leader of the Council please provide the Staff in Post, FTE for grades level 2 to level 11? To be broken down by permanent and agency status. And provide the same information for grades 11 to 16.

Reply

Pay Grade	No. of perm Staff	No. of interim Staff
NJ02	10	-
NJ03	20	19
NJ04	194	41
NJ05	192	20
NJ06	196	29

NJ07	165	47
NJ08	81	2
NJ09	39	4
NJ10	10	9
SML1	11	6
SML2	10	-
SML3	3	-
SML4	9	-
SML6	4	-
No grade against placement on Matrix	-	175
Total	944	352

*This data is subject to a point in time and is being continuously ratified as part of a wider HR Finance data project, therefore subject to change