

Questions with Notice under Standing Order No. 6 – Full Council 8 December 2022

<p>QUESTION 1: Councillor Lynda Turner to Councillor Gordon Bambridge, Executive Member for Housing & Homelessness</p> <p><u>DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS (DFGS)</u></p> <p>Can you tell me what action the Council is carrying out to obtain further funding to continue the roll out of the Disabled Facilities Grants?</p>
<p>RESPONSE: We are working hard to increase the funding available for DFGs in Breckland. On a case-by-case basis, we are investigating whether there is other charitable funding available that applicants could access, for example through charities like SSAFA. In addition, with the other Norfolk district councils we have submitted a joint bid to the Winter Discharge Funding for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">. £50k per district to increase the DFG pot to create a ‘get you home grant’,. Additional funds for visiting officers and support to visit people on the waiting list for DFG’s to see if there is anything we can do to support people while they are on a waiting list. <p>We have been successful in securing funding for a Handyperson service of £82k that will complete minor jobs in the homes of Breckland residents who have a disability, have an identified health need or are physically frail. This service is to enable them to remain living in their homes for longer, prevent admission to long term care / hospital by reducing the risk of slips, trips and falls, as well as facilitating timely discharge from hospital. We are in the process of setting this scheme up.</p> <p>We have lobbied MPs to ask Ministers about the additional funding of £580million, nationally, that was promised for 22/23 and to also raise the issue of inadequate funding for DFGs going forwards.</p> <p>We have also raised the issue with County Councillors, the Health and Wellbeing Board, through our Leader and the Local Government Association.</p>
<p>QUESTION 2: Councillor Philip Morton to Councillor Helen Crane, Executive Member for Waste, Environmental Health, Licensing & Sustainability</p> <p>Could you confirm what measures are being taken to ensure the Swaffham leisure centre and the extension at Attleborough comply with our commitments to achieving net zero by 2035 at the latest?</p>
<p>RESPONSE: Breckland will not own the Attleborough building so it wouldn’t contribute to our Breckland 2035 emissions data. However, we understand the impacts leisure centres can have and therefore commissioned an independent sustainability report to provide further information on sustainable options that would improve the facility’s carbon footprint and also provide a possible return on investment and be revenue positive.</p> <p>A similar approach will be taken as the Swaffham Leisure Centre project progresses.</p>
<p>QUESTION 3: Councillor Tim Birt to Councillor Paul Hewett, Executive Member for Property, Projects and Procurement</p> <p><u>COMMERCIAL PROPERTY DEBT</u></p> <p>There is still no timely mechanism to keep members informed about any financial stress within</p>

our portfolio. I request an update on our current position.

(a) Within our commercial property portfolio, what is the value of outstanding debt owed to the Council 90 days after the original settlement date?

(b) Within our commercial property portfolio, what is the value of debt written off in the current tax year to date?

RESPONSE:

a. - £343,102.25

b. – Nil

QUESTION 4:

Councillor Tim Birt to Councillor Philip Cowen, Executive Member for Finance, Revenues & Benefits

COUNCIL TAX DEBT

In light of the cost-of-living crisis, please could we regularly report Council Tax debt as this may provide us with an indicator of the financial pressure of Breckland residents;

(a) What is the current value of Council Tax arrears in the form previously reported, ie number of reminders issued and the value of those reminders?

(b) What is the value of Council Tax debt written off last year 2021/22

(c) What is the value of Council Tax debt remaining outstanding from last year 2021/22

(d) What is the value of Council Tax debt written off, if any, in the current year 2022/23 to date?

RESPONSE:

Council tax debt is only one very small element of what may indicate financial pressure to Breckland residents, so should be viewed as such.

(a) £5,934,633 & 12,137 reminders/final notices

(b) £55,163

(c) £1,510,338

(d) £9,277

QUESTION 5:

Councillor Tim Birt to Councillor Jane James, Executive Member for Customer & Corporate Services

WEBSITE – Licensing Register

My thanks to the licencing team for collating the information requested by residents of my ward. However, it would be far better if users could inspect licence applications and decisions on-line. This was an expected outcome a few weeks ago but has not yet materialised. A 'make do' solution is present but there is no search function, no history nor links to related documents. The current solution is recognised as 'far from ideal', so:

(a) When can we expect to see a fully functional public register system?

(b) Will previous records be migrated to the new system, so we have a full search history?

RESPONSE:

We are in the process of establishing a new platform following the de-coupling from South Holland DC, where there was a joint platform. This includes separating the data and producing a fully functioning online public register. Whilst we are currently testing the systems data, we cannot give a definitive date as to when the public register will go live, but it is anticipated that this will be within 3 months. We do need to be fully satisfied with the data first before we place it in a public register to manage risk and the customer experience. Historic data will be available in the new system, and it will be searchable for all 'live licences.