

COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 15 QUESTIONS – QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Notice of the following questions has been received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No 15:

1. Question to the Leader of the Council & Executive Member for Climate Change from Councillor Platt

“In July, the council brought on board it's first climate change officer; a positive and vital step in addressing the climate change emergency that this chamber declared back in 2019.

When talking to residents about this recently I was asked, "What difference will having a climate change officer make?"

Please can the Leader give any examples of impacts that having a climate change officer is making already; and what, if any, procedures, strategies or changes the officer is putting in place that will benefit the council and the borough moving forward?"

2. Question to the Leader of the Council & Executive Member for Climate Change from Councillor Kingsbury

“I note that the new administration has been actively visiting and supporting a number of excellent projects previously initiated by the Conservative administration: One Town Centre, Oak Hill Crematorium, Minster House, and the new lottery, to name just a few. While the two parties now in control did not always fully endorse these initiatives when our group championed them, I am pleased to see the current support for these critical projects, which are so important to the Borough and its residents. Could the Leader please provide any details of prospective projects of comparable scale that the new administration intends to pursue?"

3. Question for the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council from Councillor Panter

“As we approach the cold, wet winter months, I look around our borough and become acutely aware of our homeless brothers and sisters on our streets where I fear the figure reported is not a true figure. You don't need to be sleeping on the streets or a park bench to be homeless!

Then, when I look at the news to hear the Government wanting to evict the homeless from a tent and move them on - I despair - how unloved, un-wanted, and sad that society cannot afford to give the most basic services to humanity I find it truly heart breaking. To confiscate their only means of keeping the wind and rain at bay if they're lucky. This is totally unacceptable! on all levels.

WHBC, and indeed all councils, are having to cope with the financial cost of homelessness, and of those that have fallen on hard times due to the cost-of-living crisis. This is in addition to 3300 families on our waiting list, meaning as many as 8000 plus people roughly the population of Welwyn.

The government grant for homelessness for 2023-24 is already projected to be overspent by around £600k

We desperately must address our housing crisis within the borough; it cannot and will not continue on this trajectory under this joint administration without us taking some direct action to demand that Government funds be made available for social housing, to give safe, most modern, warm, zero carbon homes to those who will never be able to buy within our Borough.

I therefore ask the Leader and Deputy Leader with the Chief Executive of the council to write directly to the prime minister and housing minister and the Levelling Up Minister requesting additional funding but meanwhile, will we declare a Social Housing Emergency in this borough? It is a Social Housing Emergency crisis that demands response.”

4. Question to the Leader of the Council & Executive Member for Climate Change from Councillor Grewal

“In the light of the rejection of planning permission for a quarry at Ellenbrook, due to the overwhelming impacts on local roads, nature, residents amenity and health, will the leadership of this council commit to appropriately lobbying Hertfordshire County Council to remove the Ellenbrook Allocation (MAS02) from their Emerging Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2040)?

Will the leadership commit to ensuring sufficient resources, including officer time, are provided to the lobbying effort, including to cover appropriate representation at any Examination in Public?

Will the leadership also commit to writing to Richard Roberts, Leader of Hertfordshire County Council, outlining these commitments and to further emphasise Welwyn Hatfield’s continued opposition to quarrying on what should by now be Ellenbrook Country Park?”

5. Question to the Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Climate Change from Councillor Watson

“Humans have already caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt in the UK, and across the world. The average global temperature has already increased by 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels and—alongside this—the natural world has reached crisis point, with 28% of plants and animals threatened with extinction. In addition, the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world as more than one in seven of our plants and animals face extinction, and more than 40% are in decline.

Climate change remains a major concern for our residents with 66% of people in the Country (according to YouGov) expressing they are ‘worried about climate change and its effects’. Alongside this, the popularity of Sir David Attenborough’s Save Our Wild Isles initiative demonstrates public concern that UK wildlife is being destroyed at a terrifying speed.

The Climate & Ecology Bill is a private member’s bill currently before the House of Commons that’s looking to address the challenges that this situation poses by creating a whole-of-government approach to deliver a net zero and nature positive future.

Based on the latest science, the Climate & Ecology Bill aims to align current UK environmental policy with the need to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030, which was goal agreed to at COP15, via the Kunming-Montreal Framework (22 December 2022); and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the UK's fair share of the remaining global carbon budget to give the strongest chance of limiting global heating to 1.5°C, which was the goal agreed to at COP21, via the Paris Agreement (12 December 2015).

By bridging the gap between the UK Government's current delivery, and what has been agreed at international levels, Britain has a chance to be a world leader on climate and the environment; seizing the opportunities of the clean energy transition, including green jobs and skills; reduced energy bills; and boosting the UK's food and energy security.

Will the Leader of the Council consider supporting the Climate and Ecology Bill?"