

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING – 16 MARCH 2022

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 from Councillor Gail Ganney

“The Council commissioned an independent review into how the Council’s Housing compliance issues arose.

That report was published in February and identified the root causes contributing to non-compliance.

Can the Leader kindly outline what actions are now being taken to firstly, addressing the findings in the report and secondly, to prevent this or similar situations from happening again?”

2. Question to the Leader from Councillor Jane Quinton

“With the continuing lack of an EV charging strategy from National Government it is incumbent on local councils to make the best choices when installing public charging points.

Given that research published by CENEX in Jan 2018 for the Committee on Climate Change states that:

- a) Of the fast and standard [EV] chargers required 55% of chargers need to be fast (22kW) and 16% standard (7kW), to enable drivers stopping for varying amounts of time to top up
- b) a 5-fold increase in fast chargers is needed compared to a 2-fold increase in standard chargers.
- c) The number of public chargers needed for ‘top-up charging’ during parking-based charging around towns and local areas needs to rise from 2,700 in 2016 to over 27,000 by 2030

Yet the council are continuing to install EV charging points at only standard (7KW) charging rates instead of fast (22Kw).

I have been assured that at least some of the recently installed points can be upgraded to 22Kw or at least 22Kw per post (2 cars) so why is this not being done?

Are plans being made with UKPN (UK power networks) to supply the majority of future charging points at fast (22KW) rates?”

3. Question to the Executive Member (Resources) from Councillor Paul Smith

“I noted at a recent Budget Task and Finish Panel, the hugely positive financial impact that the crematorium being constructed in Hatfield will have for our Borough. Could the cabinet member for resources please update members on the progress of this project, and perhaps set out the key benefits to our community that this will deliver once completed?”

4. Question to the Leader from Councillor Stan Tunstall

“Could the leader tell us about the HAPpy program and our borough's involvement?”

5. Question to the Leader from Councillor Glyn Hayes

“Since my accident my eyes have been opened to all manner of areas Welwyn Hatfield Council fails to consider the needs of disabled people.

Skips placed in disabled parking areas in Council car parks, a lack of disabled friendly electric charge points, and to my frustration but certainly not my surprise - the removal of ALL disabled parking at the Highview shopping area while the building works are taking place.

Does the Leader agree with me that Welwyn Hatfield Council is failing in its duty to consider Disabled people in Welwyn Hatfield?”

6. Question to the Leader from Councillor Frank Marsh

“In September 2021, Cllr Ayesha Rohale asked the following question that is still effectively unanswered. I ask the council to now respond appropriately and answer the question as stated, namely “Would the leader of the council explain the role Mears had in ensuring electrical safety testing for council owned properties and if this took place over the life of the contract that has recently been terminated?”

7. Question to the Leader from Councillor Russ Platt

“Since becoming a councillor, I have noticed that Council response levels and times to my enquiries vary wildly from department to department, and indeed person to person. Some respond quickly, and with relevant information, and this is great as it enables me to get back to my resident with an update and manage their expectations.

Sadly though, this is not the norm and, in many cases, councillors get no response until it has been chased once, twice or sometimes three or more times. Councillors do not expect an immediate answer or resolution to enquiries, we know that is not possible or realistic in most cases. What I think we should expect though is an acknowledgement that the issue has been received, details of the next steps to be taken or who is dealing with it, and a date that we will be updated.

To be clear, this is not about getting issues resolved at the initial stage, it is about acknowledgement and communication, so that the residents that we represent can be kept informed. It is also not a case that councillors are more important than the public, but commonly, we are asked to intervene either on behalf of residents or when residents have not been able to get a resolution from the council themselves.

Delays and/or inefficiency reflect badly on the council and on councillors, and more importantly can mean that maintenance or safety work can be delayed. In light of the recent housing maintenance failures, there is a need for this to be addressed as part of the council's commitment to keeping the momentum going.

So, my question is as follows. Will the council agree to implement a 'service level agreement' for responding to councillor's queries, an SLA that ensures that within 24 hours councillors are aware of what the next stage of the enquiry will be, who will be dealing with it and when the next update will be given?”

8. Question to the Leader from Councillor Lucy Musk

“In view of the recently published report by this Council into its regulatory failings on housing safety, does he agree with me that it is disgraceful that we currently have residents and young children living in homes affected by black mould, crumbling plaster work, and general conditions that would not be tolerated in the private sector?”

9. Question to the Leader from Councillor Paul Zukowskyj

“On Monday 1st March, cabinet ‘noted’ the management response to the Eversheds report, by implication therefore condoning it. That management response was not seen prior to publication by most councillors, nor was it presented to CHP, leading to a failure of appropriate governance. The response has clear and demonstrable failures to actually address the fundamental problem, namely a failure to deliver an appropriate health and safety minded culture across the council.

Will the leader join me in rejecting the management response as both inadequate and potentially dangerous?”