

**SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS FOR
COUNCIL
7.30 pm on Thursday 28 October 2021
In the Council Chamber, Civic Centre**

The items below are due to be considered at the meeting listed above and were unavailable for circulation when the agenda for the meeting was published. The agenda items are noted below.

AGENDA

6. Questions from the Public (Pages 2 - 6)
7. Questions from Councillors (Pages 7 - 12)

Full Council – 28 October 2021

Questions from the Public

1 **Nicholas Taylor to Councillor Simon Carter (Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

During the recent election campaign the Conservative Party pledged to build many Council homes in Harlow. The previous administration's record on this subject can best be described as abysmal, sites such as at Elm Hatch and the former Lister House site have lain derelict for years and residents living in homes which will need to be demolished have been left in limbo. A document giving a timeline for development was produced by the Council in 2019 and another appeared in the Local Plan of December 2020.

Will you please advise me what progress is being made to develop the following sites, all of which form the first five year supply of homes in the Local Plan?

- a) Former Lister House site with Staple Tye Mews and the Staple Tye Depot
- b) Riddings Lane
- c) Pollard Hatch
- d) Elm Hatch
- e) Fishers Hatch

Reply from Councillor Simon Carter (Portfolio Holder for Housing):

Thank you for your question Mr Taylor.

The list to which you refer appearing in the Harlow Development Plan adopted in December 2020 is of sites identified for development over the plan period and are not specific to the Council. This information is available to developers and the Council actively promotes them,

For details of the Council's pipeline of potential new houses I refer you to the quarterly Capital Expenditure performance reports presented to Cabinet.

The performance of the previous administration in building new council homes has been dire since the Pathfinder programme some seven years ago. The quarterly performance reports prompted many questions and comments from us in Opposition. We regularly challenged the previous administration over the absence of activity and interest in pursuing one of their key priorities, building more council house.

We are undertaking a rigorous and comprehensive review of the sites in the pipeline to ensure we achieve the homes that are needed and are value for money. We are also working with our subsidiary HTS to build properties in the pipeline through their emerging Business Plan, something else the previous administration failed to do.

The action we are taking now will result in this new administration building many more new Council properties, we are aiming for hundreds, and I look forward to making more announcements on the details of these schemes in due course.

2 Nicholas Taylor to Councillor Dan Swords (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):

Over a quarter of a million pounds was spent on refurbishing Market Square just three years ago. Like me, many residents have been concerned to see that about a third of this surface in the square is being dug up and replaced with another surface. This work has been going on for about seven months during which time the whole area looks like a building site.

I understand that Essex County Council may be paying for this work, nevertheless, can you explain why this work is being done, what is the expected cost and when can residents expect the work to be finished?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):

Thank you Mr Taylor.

I was not the portfolio holder at the time that these works were agreed, nor when they commenced. Indeed, this was agreed by the previous administration following the awarding of £1 million of funding from the Government towards town centre regeneration.

I have been clear publicly that this is not what I would have spent £1 million of Government funding on to kick start town centre regeneration.

Nevertheless, I understand that the scheme is scheduled to finish in Winter this year. I hope that this improvement to public realm makes a difference to the area.

However, I would like to be very clear that this administration has extremely ambitious plans to deliver the biggest programme of regeneration since Harlow was built, including a total rebuilding of the town centre. Not a tinkering at the edges, not a repaving nor a repainting and plans for that rebuilding will be published in due course.

3 Alan Leverett to Councillor Joel Charles (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Resilience):

At the last Full Council meeting it was agreed that the Chief Executive would be asked to submit a formal objection to the Epping Forest DC Local Development Plan.

Can you advise me on what date that was sent, when will you make its contents known to residents and what if any response has been received?

Reply from Councillor Joel Charles (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Resilience):

An objection to the Epping Forest Local Plan was formally submitted by this authority on the 23 September 2021. No response to this has yet been received. The contents of this letter will be made public as part of the Main Modifications process of the Epping Forest Local Plan. It is understood that formal communications will be made publicly available at the point at which all comments on the Local Plan are published.

The Council looks forward to the publication of the formal objection as it directly aligns with the motion passed at Full Council on 16 September 2021.

4 Alan Leverett to Councillor Michael Hardware (Portfolio Holder for Strategic Growth):

As a result of the ill feeling expressed by residents living in Byngams to the warehouse development nearby, I understand that the Council undertook to review the procedures it uses when advertising Planning Applications.

Can you advise me if this review has taken place, if not when will it be completed and if it has, what changes the Council has or will be making to the procedures used?

Reply from Councillor Michael Hardware (Portfolio Holder for Strategic Growth):

Thank you for your question, and yes, we have been undertaking a review of our planning procedures and communications, and this is still ongoing. There is an item on the next Cabinet agenda reviewing the council's Statement of Community Involvement which sets out how we will consult residents on forward planning such as the local plan review, new Community Infrastructure Levy, supplementary planning documents and, as relating to your question, with development control, planning applications. This will set out some of the changes we propose for consultation.

There are three participants in the planning process: the applicants, the public and the council and council members. Our aim is to make the process as transparent and accessible as we can for all three participants.

We have already introduced measures to ensure council members are fully aware of all planning applications as they are validated – they now receive a weekly report.

We are reviewing the letters we send to residents advising them of planning applications to ensure people know what they are and not mistaken them for circulars and put them straight in the bin. The content of the letter is also being looked at, ensuring it is readable in plain English, says everything it needs to and directs people to where there is further information.

We are also considering the size of the area around a site where the letter is sent, looking to do more than the legal minimum.

Making the website more accessible so that residents can find the further information they are seeking. This could include a mapping application so they are more readily identifiable, and asking applicants to provide a summary of the application to make it easier for the public to understand the key points.

By law, a notice has to be posted near to the property and the application has to be advertised in a physical newspaper. As we are all aware, we only have the Harlow Guardian which only a few people read. We are looking at other media outlets in the town to ensure greater outreach to residents.

When an application comes before the Development Management Committee, we are considering increasing the number of speakers for larger, complex or controversial applications, allowing more residents to give their views.

And we are looking at the broadcasting and virtual involvement of people with the committee. We saw far greater involvement and engagement during lockdown when meetings were virtual which we would like to see carry on.

Once this review has concluded, the recommendations to be adopted will be announced.

5 Hugh Hoad to Councillor Simon Carter (Portfolio Holder for Housing):

I have had at least 15 workmen from HTS call at my address to carry out work or obtain the key for the Greenhills common room with no ID at the first knock. What is the council doing about this?

Reply from Councillor Simon Carter (Portfolio Holder for Housing):

Thank you for your question

All HTS employees and sub contractors are provided with ID badges. Employees are also trained on working with residents and this includes the importance of ensuring staff can identify themselves.

Residents are encouraged to always ask for ID from anyone proposing to enter their home. HTS employees and sub contractors are actively encouraged to show ID at first point of contact.

If no ID is presented when requested, residents should refuse access. It is important that residents report this to HTS. HTS will always take action if advised of such circumstances.

I will undertake to do everything possible to ensure that all HTS and sub contracted workers show their ID upon entry to a property.

6 Hugh Hoad to Councillor Dan Swords (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):

In the plan to regenerate the town centre tabled at Cabinet 14/10/21 there was plenty of green space in the scheme. Will this be watered throughout its life and not left to die like the red flower pots scheme?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):

Greening our town in line with the Gibberd principles is key driver for this administration. That new greenery will be maintained to the highest standards because the rebuilt town centre truly will be one of the best town centres in Britain.

Dying plants have no role in that plan and we will be building back more beautifully, building back bigger, building back brighter in order to build back better.

Full Council – 28 October 2021

Questions from Councillors

1 Councillor Mike Danvers to Councillor Michael Hardware (Portfolio Holder for Strategic Growth):

Will you give an estimate of the cost of drawing up a town plan including officers' time, meetings, published documentation and public consultation?

Reply from Councillor Michael Hardware (Portfolio Holder for Strategic Growth):

There are no direct costs involved in the production of the Town Plan. The Town Plan seeks to create a long term vision for the future of the town and does not require significant amounts of external consultancy support. The plan is being produced through the use of officer time across the Council. This is part of their day to day job and does not incur additional cost for the Council.

2 Councillor Mike Danvers to Councillor Michael Hardware (Portfolio Holder for Strategic Growth):

Will the present leader of the Council please give details, if any, of official meetings between Harlow council members and officers and Epping Forest council members and officers since May 2021 to discuss the Epping Forest local plan? If meetings have taken place can minutes of these meetings be published?

Reply from Councillor Michael Hardware (Portfolio Holder for Strategic Growth):

Harlow Council has extensive liaison with Epping Forest District Council at both Member and Officer level as part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Partnership. Many of the conversations about the Epping Forest Local Plan have taken place in these fora. Additionally, informal meetings took place in late August and early September at a political leadership level between Harlow Council and Epping Forest District Council to discuss the Epping Forest Local Plan. There are no minutes of these meetings as the discussions were informal. At officer level, formal meetings, outside of ongoing meetings within the HGGT structures took place with EFDC to discuss Local Plan issues, as well as other matters, on 15 September and 6 October. Minutes of these meetings are not published.

3 Councillor Tony Durcan to Councillor Russell Perrin (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance):

On Tuesday 12 October 2021, the local social media newspaper published a statement from the editor Michael Casey “Comment is free (but don’t abuse the privilege).”

The article indicated that a significant number of articles that at times were offensive against others including myself came from an address within Harlow Council.

I have two asks of the new Leader.

Would under your leadership re enforce to all councillors the need to maintain the Nolan Principles and I ask that they are included in your reply? Could you assure me that you will work with the Chief Executive of the council to ensure no staff member is using IT equipment to provide personal views and comments of a political nature?

Reply from Councillor Russell Perrin (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance):

I thank the Councillor for his question. I agree that all Councillors should be held to the highest standard of conduct whilst in office and abide by the Nolan Principles as required by the Council’s Code of Conduct. You will be aware that the Monitoring Officer has undertaken a number of training sessions for Councillors on the Code which has given guidance to members about their online activities, and all bar one of the current Councillors has attended this training in the last year or so. This training is repeated every year so members should be well aware of the codes requirements.

A number of training sessions have also been carried out by the Monitoring Officer for Officers again this year on their own Code of Conduct which is set out in Part 5 of the Constitution. These were well attended and this training specifically covers use of Council IT equipment and online media.

The Nolan Principles are set out below:

- a) Selflessness - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
- b) Integrity - Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or takes decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their

family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

- c) Objectivity - Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- d) Accountability - Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- e) Openness - Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- f) Honesty - Holders of public office should be truthful.
- g) Leadership - Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

4 Councillor Tony Durcan to Councillor Russell Perrin (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance):

This year we have seen an increase in racial tension both at locally and at national level.

This is due to many factors but would he agree that we need to call this out and speak with one voice that these matter are anti-racist and we need to take strong action against those who promote hatred against others.

Black History month enable us to reflect and celebrate the wonderful diversity of culture within the town.

As the new leader what difference will you make to ensure that you will do everything to reduce and stop such vile racial behaviour against our friends and neighbours?

Reply from Councillor Russell Perrin (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance):

Hate Crime, and incidents that are not considered a crime in law but are equally unacceptable, not only harm victims but also their friends and families and the wider community.

Such behaviour is not acceptable and we are committed to raising awareness of what Hate Crime is; how damaging it can be to communities; the difference between a hate crime and a hate incident and how to report concerns to ensure that perpetrators are dealt with appropriately and are aware that this behaviour will not be tolerated in our town.

The Safer Harlow Partnership has identified Hate Crime as one of five top priorities for 2021/22 and there is an established multi-agency working group that concentrates its efforts on delivering an action plan that aims to raise awareness of what Hate Crime is and how to report it. The group also works with Essex Police to deliver a programme of Hate Crime Ambassador training and to date more than 130 Ambassadors have been trained in Harlow. Harlow Youth Councillors have also been trained as Hate Crime Ambassadors to help educate other children and young people in Harlow and help protect the next generation from this abhorrent and intolerable type of behaviour.

During Hate Crime Awareness Week (9 – 16 October 2021) the working group delivered awareness raising events in the community, at Harlow College and at places of worship and were successful in engaging around 200 people at these events and distributing useful and informative resources to members of the public.

Councillor Durcan will be aware that Cabinet has recently approved a draft Community Resilience Strategy which will be published later this year following a short consultation period. At the heart of this strategy lies a commitment to build a strong, better connected town that celebrates diversity and helps people from all backgrounds feel a greater sense of belonging and empowerment. It is a strategy that will help build a renewed sense of community purpose and contribute towards identifying and tackling inequality and ensuring social inclusion for all. The strategy is supported by six strategic pillars to ensure the whole community will benefit from recovery, opportunity, inclusion and future prosperity regardless of identity or background. One of the six pillars is centred around Safe Communities and we have set out how we will tackle and reduce crime, violence and ASB and how we will work collaboratively with partners to ensure that all residents feel and are safe in the community and in their own homes and have the confidence to report crime and concerns without fear of recriminations.

We will continue to support events like Black History Month and work with partners such as the Harlow Ethnic Minority Umbrella (HEMU) and Integration Support Services (ISS) to both support and celebrate our wide and wonderfully diverse population and promote all the benefits that this can bring to our town.

5 Councillor Chris Vince to Councillor Russell Perrin (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance):

In February of this year Mervyn Juliff sadly past away. In the 1970s, Mervyn served as Leader and Chair of Harlow Council, as well as becoming Chair of the Harlow Development Corporation. He was also the last Labour Leader of Essex County Council from 1997 to 2001.

Would it be possible to get a cross party group together to form a policy to ensure civic leaders of all political colours, like Mervyn, are properly recognised with a permanent tribute to him either in the form of a blue plaque or other memorial?

Reply from Councillor Russell Perrin (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance):

Like you, I was saddened by Mervyn's passing. His legacy in and commitment to the town was considerable. Just outside the Chair's suite, you can find Mervyn's portrait, along with other previous Chairs of the Council. All of these people served the town with distinction.

I recognise that many civic leaders never receive the honour of being Chair so this administration will look to develop a framework for commemorating civic leaders. I will ensure that there is cross-party involvement in developing this.

6 Councillor Bob Davis to Councillor Joel Charles (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Resilience):

Would you consider having a thank you event for the people that put in so much effort during the worst of the Covid Pandemic? There are Officers, Councillors, Nurses, Charities and Individuals that put in a lot of effort during this crisis and I think they should be recognised.

Reply from Councillor Joel Charles (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Resilience):

The Council continues to recognise what the NHS, charities, key workers, faith groups and the many volunteers are doing to support all residents, and those who are particularly vulnerable from COVID-19. Their acts of courage and selflessness will not be forgotten. The level of community spirit and resilience in Harlow was evident from the first lockdown and I want the Council to harness this as we work towards a social and economic recovery, but we cannot become complacent as the pandemic is not over yet.

The timings for when and how to celebrate the commitment of those who have stepped up to support our community is something the Council has been actively considering. I feel it is premature to say more at this time as the Council continues to monitor COVID-19 infection levels in the town carefully. The judgement about when the appropriate time for the celebration should take place will be included as an action for the Cross-Party COVID-19 Recovery Working Group. I expect the celebration will take place after the winter period and once COVID-19 infections have returned to lower levels across the town.

7 Councillor Jean Clark to Councillor Joel Charles (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Resilience):

Can you confirm that the town park will have a revenue budget for the year April 2022-23?

Reply from Councillor Joel Charles (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Resilience):

Yes, the Town Park has a revenue budget of nearly £300,000 per annum to enable the park to be maintained to a high standard. This investment has been put in place because the Council takes pride in the fact that it has successfully been able to secure yet another Green Flag award and is determined to maintain its record on the environment.