

# Full Council – 10 December 2020

## Questions from Councillors

**1 Councillor Michael Hardware to Councillor Tony Durcan (Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity):**

Regarding the Perry Road project what is the timescale, what procurement route is being pursued, what type of construction contract will be used and whether it is one or two stage tender?

**Reply from Councillor Mark Ingall (Leader of the Council):**

It is expected that the start on site at Perry Road will be July 2021 with a two to two and a half year build programme. The Council's internal procurement service is being used and the most effective route is currently being reviewed. It is anticipated that it will be a one stage tender.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Michael Hardware:**

With the provisions of the Public Services and Social Value Act 2012 and the Cabinet procurement notice issued this year, can the Portfolio Holder confirm what provision the Council is specifying in the tender to maximise sustainability of the building and the construction process, what requirements are there for the supply chain and what skills and local training there are in the tender process.

**Supplementary Reply from Councillor Mark Ingall (Leader of the Council):**

I will ask Councillor Tony Durcan to write to you with a response.

**2 Councillor Michael Hardware to Councillor Mark Ingall (Leader of the Council):**

Is Harlow Council going to invest in the Harlow Investment Fund? As he will be aware, Essex County Council approved a £5million investment at cabinet earlier this month and full council earlier this week. The final fund will be up to £50million which will facilitate the wider regeneration of the town centre, allowing the projects to be properly joined up instead of the current fragmented approach and so is very important for the town.

**Reply from Councillor Mark Ingall (Leader of the Council):**

A report regarding the Harlow Investment Fund will be taken to Cabinet in early 2021 seeking approval of a £5million investment in the fund by Harlow Council. This date is in line with the majority of other potential investors to the fund. If all parties agree to investing, the fund will provide a major financial contribution to enable the regeneration of Harlow Town Centre.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Michael Hardware:**

Will this be added to the Forward Plan?

**Supplementary Reply from Councillor Mark Ingall (Leader of the Council):**

Yes.

**3 Councillor Simon Carter to Councillor Mark Wilkinson (Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

Last week at Cabinet you said that in response to your plans to acquire 45 three-bed houses so far the council had completed the purchase of only one house. You went on to say that you were extending your search to include two bed houses and flats, suggesting you are struggling to find enough properties.

What are the penalties if you fail to acquire sufficient properties by 31 December this year and 31 March 2021?

**Reply from Councillor Mark Wilkinson (Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

The penalty for not acquiring properties on or before 31 December is that that this Conservative led Government will insist on taking pooled receipts totalling up to £2.232m and would take £291,000 in interest payments in addition too. To date five purchases are progressing to completion and a further 24 offers have been accepted and are progressing through the purchasing process with completions expected prior to Christmas. If all were to be completed then no funds would be returned.

If the required properties are not purchased in the first quarter of 2021 then up to a further £1.554 million would be returned with interest penalties of £202,000. Offers have already been made on 19 properties and it is currently expected that no funding will be returned nor penalties incurred in relation to these pooled receipts.

The Council made representations to the Government to extend the 31 December deadline in light of the Covid crisis but this request was not agreed by MHCLG.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Simon Carter:**

Having lost £3.5 million will the Portfolio Holder acknowledge that the Administration has learnt nothing about investing money.

**Supplementary Reply from Councillor Mark Wilkinson (Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

Councillor Carter is fully aware of the reasons it wasn't possible to invest money previously. Under the previous Conservative Administration the Council delivered zero new council homes. The Council is now delivering council homes and has set up HTS (Housing and Regeneration) Ltd to deliver new council homes.