

Full Council – 1 April 2021

Questions from the Public

1 Kay Morrison to Councillor Mark Wilkinson (Portfolio Holder for Housing):

I'm aware of the Council Leader's superb work in persuading councils across South-East England to stop using some of Harlow's worst Permitted Developments. However, I understand that councils of all political colours continue to deal with rough sleepers by finding emergency accommodation in Harlow, a prominent example being the Oasis Hotel.

What is the effect on our Council services and how can Harlow Council ensure that vulnerable people with no link to Harlow are not dumped in the town by other local authorities?

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

The effects of Conservative legislation that allowed the conversion of office blocks like Terminus House into accommodation described as “the slums of the future” and further Conservative legislation that forced London Councils to look outside their boundaries for temporary accommodation has created a housing crisis.

Harlow's Labour Council has been working tirelessly to protect Harlow from the worst effects of buildings like Terminus House, while the Conservative Party have been accepting donations from those who have profited from the misery of Terminus House.

Any local authority placing a homeless household into accommodation out of their area should advise the receiving area, by way of a notification called a “section 208 notice.” Unfortunately this often has not happened, and there is little enforcement that a receiving Council can take. However the Leader of the Council has undertaken many meetings with other Council Leaders and has negotiated assurances from them that section 208 notices will now be provided. Also the Council's Safer Harlow Partnership has a specific work stream to look at reducing the impact of poor quality permitted development on the residents living at these properties, and others impacted by them.

The Leader of the Council, and Officers, have also been able to negotiate with the London Council's a protocol on those Boroughs placing homeless families in Essex. The protocol is aimed at reducing the flow of homeless household placed into Essex by London and to make any moves that do happen, work better for that household and the community in which they are

placed. What should be considered as suitable accommodation for a vulnerable household includes whether it is safe to place someone in a particular area, particularly if it is in another town.

Supplementary question from Kay Morrison:

What further measures can the Council take?

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

The Leader will continue to meet with other leaders to persuade them to not send people into Harlow to provide them with temporary accommodation. The Government also needs to restore planning controls to local authorities.

2 Nicholas Taylor to Councillor Mike Danvers (Portfolio Holder for Resources):

At the Full Council meeting on 10 December 2020 I asked how Harlow Council or its agent determined the value of land which it agreed to sell. You explained why it is not considered appropriate to adopt a 'one size fits all' valuation approach.

Can you tell me how many pieces of land have been sold to individual applicants and how much income this has generated for the Council in the last 5 years?

Reply from Councillor Mike Danvers (Portfolio Holder for Resources):

The Council has sold 16 small land parcels with a combined value of £178,975 in the past 5 years.