

# Full Council – 22 September 2022

## Questions from the Public

### 1 **Nicholas Taylor to Councillor Dan Swords (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):**

Back in March you announced details of the Council's proposed house building programme, set in two phases. The redevelopment of Pollard Hatch, associated garages and green area had been included in the Local Development Plan. The phase two list published in March showed that a budget for consultants had been approved and indeed a consultant had been appointed to re-develop the area. During his election campaign the following month Cllr David Carter refuted any suggestion that there were plans to carry out such work in this area.

Can you confirm that Pollard Hatch is indeed in phase two of the Council's development plan, an architect has been appointed and advise me of what progress has been made by the architect to bring this scheme forward for members' consideration?

### **Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):**

I thank Mr Taylor for allowing me the opportunity to update members on our fantastic New Council House Building Programme which is moving at pace to deliver high-quality council homes for Harlow families – of the highest quality and in the right places.

The report to the Cabinet meeting in March he references on the new programme set out the initial two phases of the programme which I am pleased to say are progressing well with planning permissions being granted and shovels expected to break ground in the coming months.

With regard to Pollards Hatch, the report simply identified the hatch as one for potential regeneration to further improve the hatch facilities and explore the feasibility of additional residential units. That feasibility work is in the early stages and Mr Taylor's accusations in that election campaign were false and the factual statements that Cllr Carter made were entirely correct.

### **Supplementary Question from Nicholas Taylor to Councillor Dan Swords (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):**

Have the residents who are possibly going to lose their homes been informed of these plans?

**Supplementary Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):**

Thank you for the supplementary. As I just set out, any feasibility works are in very early stages and I don't think it would be right for anyone with any political remit to speculate about people losing their homes. That's not what we are talking about whatsoever. I'm sorry that you feel by that but as I said in my answer the feasibility work s in early stages and I'm sure that you as a local resident in that area and political representative would very much welcome the opportunity to regenerate the hatch and better improve its facilities in that area so as soon as we have more information on that we will do so. The final point I'd make about consultation, as I've said to him many times, I think it is extremely important, particularly in our regeneration plans. In fact, I'm very pleased that we have something to consult about in this case and the appropriate consultation will take place as early as possible and in the fullest sense of the word.

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

I have in the past asked questions about the external repair and painting of Council houses having been made aware that the Council have no record of such works carried out before 2016 and that just a very small number of houses have had such work done since. I have been assured that this issue would be given consideration along with other priorities when compiling the list of work to be done to maintain the Council's biggest housing asset.

Can you advise me if any such programme of work has been undertaken since your Party took control of the Council and if so, in what areas and how many houses have been completed?

**Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration) on behalf of Councillor Simon Carter (Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

Thank you for your question Mr Taylor and we absolutely are committed to restoring pride in our town, particularly through external repair and painting of Council housing. As he will be aware, we passed a £122 million Housing Investment Programme in March which include investment into these areas. A number of schemes are underway and the HRA Business sets out that this programme will ramp up.

Programmed for this year, such works include neighbourhoods such as The Downs, Home Close, Netteswellbury Farm, Risdens, Jerounds, The Hides, Pottersfield, Fullers Mead and others. Some of these have been completed and others will be done so this year. I will ensure Mr Taylor is written to with the details of which schemes have been completed to date and which are due to start as well as the other elements of the programme.

**Supplementary Question from Nicholas Taylor to Councillor Dan Swords (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):**

I would just like to make a point that it's all about council houses and not housing. I am aware about flats etc. but I am asking about houses.

**Supplementary reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):**

I will ensure that the written answer received details the council houses.

**3 Robert Bruce to Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment):**

The awarding of Green Flags to a number of areas in the town is to be applauded but one area which seems to continue to be neglected is Jean McAlpine Park.

Can you advise me if any programme of work to improve and make better use of this area is in the Council's plans in the future and if so, what are they?

**Reply from Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment):**

I am pleased that the Council has retained green flag awards for three sites under its control. Because resources in local government are very limited, unfortunately we must prioritise and have focused on three sites that serve the whole town. While we have no resources to raise Jean McAlpine Park to the same visitor standards, it does make a significant contribution to biodiversity. While I cannot make any specific commitment to additional Council resources at this time, the anticipated development at Public Health England may represent a partnering opportunity, and I would wish to see options for the park explored at that time.