

# Cabinet – 12 October 2023

## Questions from Councillors

### **1 Councillor Chris Vince to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):**

At the cabinet meeting of 7 September, I asked for an impact report on the many vacancies throughout the council, some of which are being actively recruited for and other which are not, and I was promised this report 'by 5pm the next day.' Over a month has now gone by and I have not received this report. Can I ask again for this report?

### **Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):**

Thank you for your question. I chased this information from services and did not receive the information until Friday 6 October. I reviewed this information on Tuesday 10 October and sent it on to you.

### **Supplementary question from Councillor Chris Vince:**

When it is agreed that information will be provided, can these be included in future minutes?

### **Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):**

Yes, they will be minuted.

### **2 Councillor Chris Vince to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):**

Will the leader of the council recognise that his statement that the last administration failed to secure any funding for Harlow town centre regeneration failed to take into account the Town Investment Plan (the bid for which Harlow received £23.7 m funding) which was submitted to government on 30 October 2020 when Labour was in administration?

### **Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):**

Thank you for your question. No. The funding announcement was secured in June 2021 following meetings in the House of Commons which I attended with Harlow's MP, and Business Cases were actually signed off in October 2022.

### **Supplementary question from Councillor Chris Vince:**

Would you then suggest that the work developed and submitted under the last administration had nothing to do with the bid being accepted?

**Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):**

No I'm not.

**3 Councillor Alastair Gunn to Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

As the town's biggest landlord, Harlow Council will need to take a lead on decarbonising the town's housing stock, especially its social housing. Will Harlow Council be bidding for the £80 million available through Wave 2 of the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund when it opens in November, and what lessons have been learnt from its previous unsuccessful bid to the fund?

**Reply from Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

Harlow Council takes this responsibility very seriously. We have submitted previous bids for both Wave 1 and Wave 2, but unfortunately both bids were unsuccessful. We will bid for the Wave 3 grants when the process opens. We have looked at stakeholder feedback on our bid and have identified areas where we can improve. These include:

- Completion of further retrofit assessments to get a better understanding of the measures required to improve the energy efficiency of the stock.
- Introduce some pilot projects, especially to non-standard properties, will help to us to identify what measures are appropriate and effective for each archetype. It will also enhance awareness of potential risks and plan contingencies accordingly and prove that Harlow Council can deliver energy efficiency measures.
- Investigate and build relationships with supply chains. A condition of the SHDF funding is that work carried out must be completed by a supplier that is PAS 2035 registered. This limits the contractors we can appoint for the work. We have an opportunity to encourage our current non-registered suppliers to upskill their workforce to become PAS 2035 registered.
- Harlow Council will shortly be introducing fit-for-purpose Asset Management software, which includes a module on energy efficiency. Once in place, we will be able to better scrutinise the energy efficiency

data and devise programmes that deliver the most effective measures and provide value for money.

- Break down the administration and ancillary costs of each pilot project in more detail. This will assist with the justification for these costs in future application and to manage resources within the Energy Delivery Team.
- We need to publicise our Corporate Strategy.

We believe that by continuing to build on our knowledge, experience and understanding of domestic retrofit, we will be in a strong position to submit a favourable bid when the next wave of funding is released.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Alastair Gunn:**

How confident are you that the areas highlighted will be improved sufficiently?

**Reply from Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

I am confident they will be progressed sufficiently and the bid will be accepted.