

COUNCIL – 8 FEBRUARY – SO 30 QUESTIONS

1. Question from Councillor O’Driscoll

Question to the Chair of the Housing Committee (Councillor Pursehouse)

Towards the end of last year, a site visit was arranged at my request for the Head of Housing, Chairman of the Housing Committee and myself as a member of the Council to visit temporary accommodation in Whyteleafe, to address some of the concerns have raised with me.

Since the visit was conducted, I have received reasonable intelligence that at least two large families of more than five members have been housed in the accommodation. Given how small the rooms are in this block, the fact that this overcrowding in the accommodation is taking place is problematic.

What steps are being taken to prevent overcrowding like this from happening in future?

2. Question from Councillor O’Driscoll

Question to the Chair of the Community Services Committee (Councillor Wren)

Reporting from The Tandridge Independent this month has raised awareness of the torrid conditions residents in Blize Court and Manorview Court in Whyteleafe are living in as a result of a rat infestation. Residents have had damage done to their cars. They are scared to use the lifts to get their homes instead having to use the concrete staircase and one young resident had the traumatic experience of a rat falling on her head.

Residents have repeatedly tried to raise their concerns with their housing association L&Q, and they have largely ignored them. Members will agree with me that this is unacceptable.

No one in our community should be living in these squalid conditions. This proves to be yet another case where remote housing associations are not looking after residents in our district.

What steps are this Council going to take to ensure that L&Q address the infestation at Blize Court and Manorview Close? And will this Council hold Housing Associations to account and ensure that residents in their properties live in decent, adequate housing free of mould and infestations?

3. Question from Councillor Cooper

Question to the Chair of the Strategy & Resources Committee (Councillor Langton)

At full Council on 14 December 2023 under item 192, various Caterham and other councillors raised very serious issues of anti-social behaviour, drugs, litter and traffic chaos relating to the installation of a McDonalds shop in the centre of Caterham Valley. Acknowledging these potential issues, the Chairman of the Strategy & Resources Committee committed to meeting with Surrey Police to discuss these issues and agree police actions to mitigate them. Therefore, please could the S&R Chairman update us on who and when, he met, at Surrey Police, to progress these matters and what written agreement is now in place with Surrey Police to define how the concerns raised by the Caterham Councillors are going to be dealt with. Also, given the importance of having proper agreements in place before allowing McDonalds to use the site, why has the S&R Chairman not passed copies of these agreements to the Caterham and other interested councillors.

4. Question from Councillor Cooper

Question to the Chair of the Strategy & Resources Committee (Councillor Langton)

At full Council on 14 December 2023 under item 192, various Caterham and other councillors raised the problem of large numbers of motor scooters running around the streets of Caterham creating havoc on the roads and a serious noise nuisance to local residents until late at night, which relates to the installation of a McDonalds shop in the Croydon Road in Caterham Valley. Acknowledging these potential issues, the Chairman of the Strategy & Resources Committee committed to meeting with Surrey Highways to discuss these issues and agree changes to the local road network to mitigate them. It should be noted that many local Caterham Councillors, with huge experience of dealing with Surrey Highways, had very little confidence in Surrey Highways actually doing anything in the near future, if ever. Therefore, please could the S&R Chairman update us on who and when, he met, at Surrey Highways, to progress these matters and what written agreement is now in place with Surrey Highways to ensure changes to the local road network/parking wardens etc, are going to be implemented prior to McDonalds being allowed to set up shop in the Croydon Road in Caterham. Given the importance of having these alterations in place before allowing McDonalds to use the site, why has the S&R Chairman not passed copies of these agreements to the Caterham and other interested councillors.

5. Question from Councillor Cooper

Question to the Chair of the Strategy & Resources Committee (Councillor Langton)

At full Council on 14 December 2023 under item 192, various Caterham and other councillors raised the issue of motor scooters creating havoc in the Croydon Road as they arrive and leave, to take deliveries from a McDonalds site in the Croydon Road Caterham. Acknowledging this problem the Chairman of the Strategy & Resources Committee committed to producing a detailed plan of alterations to the rear of Quadrant House to deal with the problem. I believe the changes also had to be agreed with McDonalds. Therefore, given that many weeks have passed since the last full Council meeting, please could the S&R Chairman update us on what changes have been agreed, when they will be implemented and explain why the S&R Chairman has not passed plans/timescales/costs of these changes to the Caterham and other interested councillors.

6. Question from Councillor Cooper

Question to the Chair of the Housing Committee (Councillor Pursehouse)

In his answer to my question on KPIs H04 and H05, at Full Council on 14 December 2023 under Standing 30, the Chairman of the Housing Committee explained that TDC does not know how many local residents are unable to get the housing they vitally need, it could be thousands. He then explained that he stated that "we will be reviewing the KPIs at the housing committee". As I cannot see a report on the review of these KPIs in the minutes of last Housing Committee meeting of 23 January 2023, perhaps the Chairman of Housing could explain why nothing has happened especially given the current KPIs indicate that potentially thousands of Tandridge residents are being failed by the lack of housing in Tandridge.

7. Question from Councillor Alun Jones

Question to the Chair of the Community Services Committee (Councillor Wren)

The council is rightly proactively managing its tree stock on council land. In some circumstances this may involve the removal of a tree which causes a danger to the public.

Some trees are much loved by our local residents adding to the character of our communities. This is in addition the trees helping mitigate flood risk and creating much needed natural habitats for wildlife. They also help to reduce the impact of urban heat island effect.

Where there are trees that it is concluded that removal is the best option, can the Chairman of Community Services advise what the policy is for replanting new trees in replacements?

8. Question from Councillor Wren

Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Sayer)

I have been in conversation with representatives from the Hair and beauty industry across Tandridge. Since January 2021 the hair and beauty industry are now recognised as part of the vital Personal Care Sector, and they have asked for this council's support in their plea for a reduction in the VAT they have to pay to be 10% to align them with some other Personal Care sector providers. This is a National Call by the industry and spearheaded by the Salon Employees Association.

Since 1992 the industry has been encumbered by a misclassification that subjected them to having to pay full retail VAT that has negatively affected the industry's growth.

In the aftermath of the pandemic when hair and beauty salons were forced to close their doors for over 8 months, without the alternative revenue streams that was available to retail or hospitality they were again overlooked when VAT relief was distributed for 20plus months to other sectors.

This industry now finds itself in a state of crisis. The very foundation of our high street salons-the commitment to local employment across the whole of Tandridge and apprenticeship training is under threat. A recent survey shows over half the business owners in this industry who are VAT registered are considering closing. The closure of High Street salons would cause the potential loss of around 60,000 footfall visits annually across Tandridge, diminishing the vibrancy and economic health of our communities across the whole of the district.

So could we please consider writing to Government ministers and the UK treasury to ask them to follow the example of Ireland, Finland and the Netherlands and support this industry in crisis, by recognising their role in our economy and addressing the need for the correct VAT classification of 10%.

9. Question from Councillor Cooper

Question to the Chair of the Housing Committee (Councillor Pursehouse)

I have recently been made aware of a single mother and child being provided with a council home. A very positive action. However, the individual did not have any furniture. She eventually contacted a local charity which was happy to assist.

Do TDC establish the needs of individuals taking council accommodation to ensure they either have the basics or are given details of a charity which would be able to assist before they move in?