

COUNCIL MEETING

29 July 2019

Member Questions under Council Procedure Rule 4.5 (K)

1. The following question has been asked by Cllr Bullivant

Question

At the last TALC meeting the leader gave a presentation on the delivery of affordable homes in Teignbridge.

His presentation claimed that there had been no affordable homes delivered outside of Newton Abbot for the last 5 years.

Did the Leader check his facts with the council officers before making this claim?

Response from the Leader

The following sentence appeared in the TALC minutes, attributed to me.

“Affordable housing is still too expensive and these rented properties are currently at 80% of the market rent. This is too high and needs to be reduced. With the exception of Newton Abbot, Teignbridge has seen no affordable housing built in the past 5 years”

From memory I believe I did use, erroneously, the term "affordable" on one occasion when answering a question, but subsequently made reference to social rented property, a significantly different product. Whilst, there has been so called "affordable" housing delivered, there has been no social rented housing delivered in Newton Abbot in the last 5 years, which was the point I was trying to make and subsequently did make, correcting my previous error. This unfortunately appears not to have been recorded in the minutes.

Teignbridge is designated as an area of "high affordability pressure" where affordable housing as currently defined (80% of market rent or purchase price) is not affordable for the vast majority of people on low incomes in our District. My answer sought to stress that the Lib Dem administration intended to prioritise social rented housing to address the issues of affordability that our District is experiencing, a very real need.

2. The following questions have been asked by Cllr Clarence

Question 1

Given the outstanding success of the Teignmouth Air Show, which brought in significant numbers of visitors and locals, plus an economic benefit to the town of Teignmouth, will the Council commit to supporting events that contribute also to the happiness and enjoyment of those that attend such events?

Response from the Leader

The assumption in this question is that happiness is produced by people watching planes fly. These activities may be pleasurable but they of themselves do not produce happiness. Happiness is a state of mind, the product of peace of mind where the individual has a lasting sense of wellbeing produced by, amongst other things, a clear conscience, a fulfilled sense of purpose and a degree of personal and family stability. The long term ability to protect, house and feed loved ones are far more likely to produce happiness than watching planes fly.

It is with this in mind that the new administration will strive to house the homeless and those living in overcrowded or inadequate housing; to raise those living in or close to poverty out of their financial difficulties and raise their levels of happiness

We are also investing in our green spaces, leisure facilities, housing and in local communities to improve conditions for our residents, give them places to enjoy the outdoors and stay active, create social connections and learn about their environment. The benefits of these activities are well evidenced, and create long term resilience. Our recent Green Flag awards demonstrates our investment in local projects that will bring enjoyment to visitors and residents alike throughout the whole year.

Question 2

There was much criticism by the L/Ds when in opposition over the previous Conservative administration who supported events, such as the Radio 1 weekend and the Tour of Britain Cycle Race by making a financial contribution to their success. Now that the L/Ds run the Council and their failure to support the Teignmouth Air Show financially in any way, how is the Council going to deliver increased happiness and enjoyment to visitors and residents of Teignbridge?

Response from the Leader

No direct funds (£10,000) were ever promised either by this administration or the previous Conservative administration. Facilities and staffing, advice and guidance were all provided free of charge. The loss of income from the Point Car Park being closed for a single day is in the region of £640. All factors will need to be carefully considered in any future requests for assistance from whatever direction.

The Lib Dem administration will focus its resources on making long term improvements to our residents' welfare. We need to ensure our precious financial resources are allocated in a way that will alleviate the housing crisis and fight to

protect our environment, as we were elected to do. I would hope that our residents and all elected Members will see the benefit of such prioritisation.

Where previous council administrations may have been willing to support events such as the Radio 1 roadshow, we would need to consider whether these would meet our priorities, and whether financing them would have an impact elsewhere on our services.

This administration's position on funding has been entirely consistent with the precedent set when no direct funding for the Dawlish Airshow was provided by TDC at any time. The decision is also in line with our clearly stated position on climate change, which had cross chamber support. On this critically important issue, I am hugely encouraged by the large number of local residents who have contacted me and supported the position taken. That is not to say that all contact has been favourable; it hasn't. However, the overwhelming majority has been supportive. In saying that, I would wish to place on record the collective thanks of many to those who rallied round and gave considerable time and effort, as volunteers, to ensure the show went ahead. I am told a good number turned out and apparently and therefore encouragingly, some business benefit was gained. However, a number have stated that they took less money than on a normal summer Saturday, while others have reported a similar turnover.

This administration will seek to work collaboratively with all to enhance the economic wellbeing of local business, the physical and emotional wellbeing of our residents and protect the local environment. With that in mind, I want to make it crystal clear that we are open to suggestions from Teignmouth, and indeed all parts of the District, to take forward mutually advantageous projects.

Question 3

In the light of Torbay Councils L/D led administration to continue promoting an air show to the tune of £25k in 2020, whilst still mindful of climate change in other spheres, both the L/D led Teignbridge District Council and L/D led Torbay Council, seem to differ in policy. With that in mind, will Teignbridge District Council soon be gaining the reputation of being known as a Council of killjoys?

Response from the Leader

I am not in a position to answer for any other local authority, near or far. I am not aware that any authority has yet got close to constructing its budget for next year, and I think we should all wait any such decisions.

3. The following question has been by Cllrs Eden, John Nutley and Huw Cox

Question

As you will be aware Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority are currently consulting on the heaviest budget cuts proposal in living memory. To specify these cuts propose to close 8 fire stations including Ashburton in Teignbridge, cut night-fire cover at stations across the districts cut second and third fire tenders at fire stations across the district and reduce the day cover for second fire tenders at 14 stations including Teignmouth in Teignbridge. I believe these Conservative led cuts will make communities and visitors less safe. I would like therefore to ask if you as leader of the council will write to DSFRA expressing TDC's opposition to these cuts and seek clarification as to why these cuts are proposed.

Response from the Leader

The proposed cuts to the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service can only reduce the effectiveness of the service, and in so doing put lives at greater risk. The public deserves a first-class service and this proposal does nothing to either enhance the current reputation of the service or increase the confidence of the public that their best interests are being served.

I will write to the DSFRA and express my concerns as Leader of the Council and circulate this letter to the Group Leaders asking them to sign the letter to show cross party support for the proposed cuts I will ask the DSFRA to come and brief Members on the proposals and I suggest that all Councillors make their concerns known through the DSFRA consultation process.