

Council Meeting on 20th July 2022

Agenda Item No 8

Questions by Members to Full Council under Procedure rule 9.2

Question 1: Procedure Rule 9.2 to the Chair of Council from Councillor Peter Faithfull

- a. How much notice was given of the list of awards of the position of Alderman prior to the meeting at which the awards were given?
- b. Did any councillor of any party or group make any attempt to intervene or question the giving of the award of Alderman to John Humphreys.

Answer:

- a. An email was sent on 12 November 2019, as part of the original consultation with Group Leaders and for their consideration after a number of discussions had already been taking place on the matter since July, in readiness for an extraordinary meeting of Council which would have normally taken place in July. It was then put off until October, only to be deferred again to December due to the calling of the General Election. The process had been followed, just later than usual. The agenda for the Extraordinary meeting of Council on 18th December 2019 was issued on 9th December, and was well within the usual statutory deadlines.
- b. No. As you can see, there was plenty of time for comments or responses before the scheduled Extraordinary Council meeting, but there were none.

Question 2: Procedure Rule 9.2 to the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets from Councillor Marcus Hartnell

A request has been made to allow a school contract bus operator to use the EDDC owned site on Colyford Rd (next to the football club) for daytime parking during term time. Once actioned this will allow more space for visiting tourist coaches at the Underfleet Coach Park in the Town Centre. Can you advise me when the agreement will be available for the school bus operator to sign?

Answer:

At the request of Members, Officers had looked at possible EDDC sites to relocate the school buses. Our employment land at Colyford Road could perhaps be used short term, but might require a temporary planning consent, and Officers would be concerned at risk of public perception when we then end that agreement to do something different on the land. This site is in our levelling up bid and if that fails, by end of this calendar year we'd be looking at other opportunities to bring this site forward for redevelopment utilising the high level design and viability work in place now. It is understood that a permanent solution is required and this site is most likely not that. The Car Parks Manager is to investigate occupancy levels by school buses but also demand for spaces by tour buses to determine whether the Colyford Road site should be explored further.

Question 3: Procedure Rule 9.2 to the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes & Communities from Councillor Paul Millar

To ask the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes & Communities, how many Council houses in Exmouth currently lay empty?

Answer:

There are currently 45 voids in Exmouth as of the 14th July.

As Cllr Millar may know, the number of voids fluctuates daily with vacated properties coming into the system and newly refurbished properties being allocated to our residents. There have been a number of issues with voids throughout COVID-19 and especially in the last 12 months with the number of empty properties across our housing stock steadily increasing month on month. Some of these issues include shortages of labour and resource and some challenges around clearing debts on void meters, following our previous arrangement with British Gas coming to an end. We have reported this area of concern in detail to the last two meetings of the Housing Review Board and have included reference to our specific Action Plan that does detail specific work that is underway to review our void performance.

The Council has recently appointed a new contract manager for the integrated asset management contract and one of their main roles will be to focus on getting the number of voids across our stock down. I can confidently say that these issues are being addressed and I will go on record to say that we will have 50 more families in Council accommodation in the next 3 months than we do today with further improvements coming in the new year.

Question 4: Procedure Rule 9.2 to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Paul Millar

To ask the To ask the Leader of the Council, can he share on the public record the specific written instructions were given to the QC regarding the independent inquiry into the John Humphreys affair on behalf of the Council?

Answer:

I will ask the Chief Executive to review this request.

Question 5: Procedure Rule 9.2 to the Portfolio Holder for Democracy & Transparency from Councillor Paul Millar

To ask the Portfolio Holder for Democracy & Transparency, what was the total cost for the QC's advice to Council regarding the independent inquiry into the John Humphreys affair, and which budget did this come out of?

Answer:

Counsel's fee note is outstanding until members have had chance to consider the advice provided as there may be further work required if clarification is required. The relevant budget is the legal services budget.

Question 6: Procedure Rule 9.2 to the Portfolio Holder for Finance from Councillor Paul Millar

To ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance, regardless of whether Cabinet or Council 'owns' it, is the current administration still committed to making a Car Parking Strategy?

Answer:

Yes, the intention is to bring forward a Car Parking Strategy. We have recruited to the position of Parking Services Manager who will join us at the end of the month, and that individual will be involved in the preparation of the Strategy which we aim to bring to members for consideration by the end November 2022.

Question 7: Procedure Rule 9.2 to the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Portfolio Holder for Democracy & Transparency and Chair of Overview Committee from Councillor Paul Millar

To ask the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Democracy & Transparency and Chair of Overview, with reference to Overview Committee's recommendation seven months ago on 17th January, that "a working draft of the Car Parking Strategy be presented to the next Overview Committee to set timescales for a speedy adoption", why has a report not been forthcoming to provide the wider membership with the opportunity to contribute further ideas to a working draft prior to Cabinet debate and adoption, and do they agree that regardless of whether Cabinet or all sixty Members 'owns' the strategy, that the idea of the local authority having an overarching strategy on all aspects of parking policy - as Exeter does - is a sound one not least to minimise the potential for further sharp rises as caused by the 11 year period of fixed tariffs in the future and the issue becoming a cheap party political football as exploited by East Devon Conservatives representative Mike Goodman?

Answer:

Please refer to Answer 6 above.