

Council

Thursday, 24 January 2019

**Public Questions and Responses and
Standing Order 15 | Questions and Responses**

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**Public Question Time
Full Council
24th January 2019**

Mr John Ranford has asked the Mayor of the Council:

1. Does the Mayor agree with the conclusions of the IPCC report in September that the difference in the impacts of the 1.5-degree and 2-degree scenarios on populations are huge and that emissions should be limited to no more than 1.5 degrees?
2. Does the Mayor agree that the Climate crisis - which begun to flex its muscles during the last summer heat wave when many farmers in the UK suffered food harvest losses of 30% - poses a threat to Swindon residents, particularly in view of our reliance on imported food – since we import 48% of our food from countries where they are also seeing severe disruption to their harvests because of extreme weather?
3. Does the Mayor accept that in the face of the common threat that Climate Change poses to all Swindon's residents, whatever background, ethnicity, religion or party affiliation - is very great and that it demands:
 - Concerted and humble leadership to face this common threat
 - close working with all across party affiliation
 - listening to, and involving many people with expertise to devise responses
 - A clear focus on urgency, starting now to set ambitious targets to be reached by 2030?

The Leader has been asked to respond:

1. As stated in the Motion to Council, the target must be to Limit Global Warming to 1.5C. This requires strictly limiting the total amount of carbon emissions and whilst we note that the IPCC have stated that “Cutting emissions to meet a 1.5C limit would require “rapid and far-reaching transitions” across the global economy and that “These transitions would need to transform the way energy is used and the sources it comes from; the way land use and agricultural systems are organised; and the types and quantities of food and material that are consumed”, this administration is committed to listening to what the scientist tell us and following any relevant advice as best we can within our limited reach.
2. We are aware that climate change is already affecting food security and agricultural growth under all types of agriculture across the globe, and is expected to continue to have an increasingly serious impact on smallholders and large scale agriculture. This administration will urge Government to adopt a well-considered approach that tackles both technical and structural issues in agriculture to help create a prosperous climate-resilient agricultural sector in this country.

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3. I will ensure that we honour our position as outlined in the Motion to be discussed later and will reaffirm our commitment to Pledge 2

Ms Jasjeet Sumal has asked the Leader of the Council:

Does the Cabinet agree that the Climate crisis - which begun to flex its muscles during the last summer heat wave when many farmers in the UK suffered food harvest losses of 30% - poses a threat to Swindon residents, particularly in view of our reliance on imported food – since we import 48% of our food from countries where they are also seeing severe disruption to their harvests because of extreme weather?

The Leader of the Council has responded:

We are aware that climate change is already affecting food security and agricultural growth under all types of agriculture across the globe, and is expected to continue to have an increasingly serious impact on smallholders and large scale agriculture. This administration will urge Government to adopt a well-considered approach that tackles both technical and structural issues in agriculture to help create a prosperous climate-resilient agricultural sector in this country.

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Mr Andy Bentley has asked the Leader of the Council:

Is the Leader of the Council aware that the following changes are required in Swindon over the next 12 years to reduce the catastrophic effects of man-made climate change?

1. A move to renewable energy and smarter management of electricity demand;
2. Improving significantly the energy performance of our existing buildings;
3. Ensuring new build developments achieve their full low carbon potential and contribute effectively to a smarter energy system;
4. Stop relying on fossil fuels to heat buildings, hot water and industrial processes;
5. Switching to walking, cycling and efficient mass transport and electric vehicles;
6. Reducing emissions from agricultural food production and land use;
7. Reducing waste;
8. Increasing carbon capture, particularly through tree planting and land management;
9. To put systems in place to mitigate against the worst effects of climate change, such as flooding and premature death due to extreme temperatures.

The Leader of the Council has responded

Yes, we are aware of the above issues and as part of our low carbon agenda we are addressing them. There are a number of measures already in place with plans to go further. I will also ensure that we honour our commitment to Pledge

**Councillors' Questions
(Standing Order 15)
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Councillor Dale Heenan has asked the Leader of the Council:

1. With the continued ongoing problems being reported by residents about NHS service provider Integrated Medical Holdings (IMH), please could the Leader outline what powers are available to Councillors to direct change and improvements to help address the situation?
2. Please could the leader contact the CCG requesting a report from them on the introduction of IMH services chosen by 5 NHS surgeries in Swindon covering:-
 - What improvements have been made since the introduction compared to a year ago.
 - What impact has there been on the A&E department at GWH
 - Details about measures needed and changes necessary to stop continued complaints such as long telephone waits, and no appointments being available
 - Lessons learnt by both the surgeries and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), highlighting some clear actions that can be used to help them and other practices improve.
3. What message would you give to residents already suffering from illness or injury, who feel intimidated by protests outside their doctor's surgery?

The Leader of the Council has responded:

1. The Council's role is to hold external bodies and organisations to account, on behalf of its residents. This can take the form of lobbying, private meetings or to call them to Scrutiny meetings for a public debate. Ultimately, these bodies are autonomous and answerable to their Government department, Board, or owners, and the Council has no direct control over them.
2. The Cabinet Member, Members of Parliament and I have all had many contacts with the CCG and IMH, on all the issues affecting the residents of our borough, and we have repeatedly been promised improvements. Thank you for your questions, I will write to the CCG asking them to answer each point raised, in full, as a matter of urgency.
3. The behaviour and actions of the protestors outside surgeries have been intimidating and disgraceful. They have been unhelpful and achieved nothing. I urge the protestors to desist immediately.

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Councillor Jim Robbins has asked the Leader of the Council:

Leader, do you agree with Ofsted that a Written Statement of Action is required because of significant areas of weakness in the local area's practice, following the Joint local area Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Inspection?

The Leader of the Council has responded:

Ofsted have required that we provide a Written Statement of Action and we will accordingly provide one. Ofsted confirmed that our self-assessment is accurate. They note that the council is building a committed and cohesive staff team who are working together to make the necessary improvements but add that many of the changes are in their infancy and as yet not having the impact needed.

Therefore I welcome the input from Ofsted to help us continue to focus and accelerate our programme.

**Councillors' Questions
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Councillor Steve Allsopp has asked the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Customer Services:

I understand that 40% of queries raised through digital and voice channels to the Housing Department are misdirected-can he confirm that this figure is correct and has a root cause analysis been conducted to establish why this is occurring. Is there substance to the view that lack of dedicated housing call handlers is leading to the misdirection.

The Cabinet Member has responded:

This is not a figure that I recognise and as such, we have not undertaken any root cause analysis.

It would not be the case that a lack of call handlers would lead to any type of call misdirection. Contact centre staff are handling calls constantly throughout the day and as such the number of call handlers may impact upon call wait times and call abandonment rates but would not impact upon the quality of the call handling which remains generally consistent.

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Councillor Emma Bushell has asked the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Safety:

1. As at December 2018 what is the number of repairs in the Housing Repairs database?
2. How does the December repair number compare with the average for 2018?
3. What volume of monthly repairs is the Housing Repairs team resourced to carry out?
4. How many of the December 2018 repairs were categorized as emergency repairs?
5. Has the resources allocated to the recovery of the void rate been at the expense of the repairs team?
6. How many vacancies are currently being held in the management and administration of the Housing repairs team?
7. Is the on-line repairs reporting system now fully functional? If not what date is the current date for full functionality?
8. Have Housing management resources been re-allocated to call handling issues generated by on-line reporting problems. If so when is this planned to end?
9. Does the on line system enable tenants to rebook missed appointments by contractors. Does the system record a new appointment as a new job?
10. How many calls to Housing Repairs were abandoned in November and December?

The Cabinet Member has responded:

1. The number of repairs recorded for December 2018 was 3,284
2. Average is 3444
3. 3467 (800 per week)
4. 169
5. Initially repairs staff were diverted to voids, however trade vacancies were returned to a full complement within 12 weeks

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6. 4, 3 of which appointments have been made to start within the next month. Recruitment remains open for the final vacancy.
7. The online repairs facility has been operational since October 2018, regular improvements are being made to improve the customer experience, including the ability to reschedule appointments.
8. Housing repairs staff have been supporting the Contact Centre during the winter months to assist with seasonal demands as happened last winter
9. No. This is part of ongoing improvements to the system

The Cabinet Member for Corporate and Customer Services has responded:

The Contact centre received 9997 calls (including repairs) for the months of November and December 2018 of these 4030 were abandoned

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Councillor Steve Allsopp has asked the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety:

1. What is the target date to sell the 10 vacant properties set aside for equity share sale in Sussex Place.
2. How many of the 10 units have firm offers on them.

The Cabinet Member has responded:

Due to market conditions, our shared ownership partner has recently withdrawn for the project. Subject to Cabinet approval as part of the Housing Revenue Account Report on 6th February, these properties will now be let as affordable rented properties.