

**(6) MEMBER QUESTIONS**

Council Procedure Rule 11 - Not more than fifteen minutes allowed for written questions to be put by Members on any matter in relation to which the Council has any power or duties or which affects the District.

Questions have been submitted, and responses provided, as follows:-

- (1) From Councillor PR Hodgkinson to Councillor Lynden Stowe, Leader of the Council

*'In the financial year starting this April, this Council will receive £2.5 million as a 'New Homes Bonus' out of a total of £6.2 million from the Government. How many new homes have been built in the Cotswolds since 2011 which have led to this cash windfall?'*

Response from Councillor Stowe

'The New Homes Bonus grant recognises net additional dwellings in the Council Tax base. This is calculated by subtracting effective stock (total stock less long-term empty homes and demolitions) as recorded on the Council Tax Base return in one year from the previous year. A £350 bonus is also paid for each additional affordable unit. The affordable homes data is taken from the "Affordable Housing Supply in England" government publication and the additional number of permanent traveller caravans (where applicable).

The statistical data used to calculate New Homes Bonus for each year since 2011/12 is set out below:

|         | Net additional dwellings in the council tax base | No of affordable units |
|---------|--|------------------------|
| 2011/12 | 200  | N/A                    |
| 2012/13 | 424  | 67                     |
| 2013/14 | 487  | 242                    |
| 2014/15 | 427  | 202                    |
| 2015/16 | 442  | 74                     |

The New Homes Bonus is funded through a top slice of Revenue Support Grant so in this regard should not be regarded as a windfall.'

- (2) From Councillor PR Hodgkinson to Councillor Lynden Stowe, Leader of the Council

*'My motion to this Council in December 2014 called for better mobile phone coverage across the Cotswolds and received unanimous support. It called for the Chief Executive to contact mobile phone providers and OFCOM to find out what plans are afoot to improve coverage. What is the latest update on progress with this?'*

Response from Councillor Stowe

'In accordance with the Council's wishes, the Chief Executive wrote to the four main mobile phone providers - EE Limited (which includes Orange and T-Mobile), Hutchison 3G UK Limited (Three), Telefónica UK Limited (O2), and Vodafone UK. In addition, letters were sent to the Chairman of Ofcom, the Chairman as well as the Chief Executive Officer of BT Group plc, and to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

Formal responses have now been received from EE, Three, Vodafone and Ofcom, details of which will be circulated to Members. A response has been promised by Telefónica in time for the Council Meeting. A representative of BT Group plc has confirmed that the company cannot do anything to assist as, at the present time, it does not have a mobile phone operation.

We will now need to review the responses received, and identify the next steps to be taken in order to ensure that the momentum is maintained.'

(3) From Councillor JA Harris to Councillor Chris Hancock, Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Partnerships

*'How much money did the District Council take in parking charges during the free parking trial (Monday's and Tuesdays 1pm until 8am the following day) in January and February this year?'*

Response from Councillor Hancock

'The Council has run a very successful promotion for free afternoon parking on Monday and Tuesday afternoons during January and February. The car parks have been very busy and we have received some very positive feedback from drivers benefitting from this offer. Survey results show an average 75 more spaces taken per afternoon across Cirencester on the Mondays and Tuesdays compared to the Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

It was unfortunate that signs did not go out early enough on the first Monday of the promotion and some people paid the parking charges unnecessarily. We are now in the 7<sup>th</sup> week of the promotion and we can report that a few drivers are still paying. Week 1 shows income of £1,717.63, week 2 £407.58, week 3 £466.52, week 4 £477.88, week 5 £344.00 week 6 £338.88 and week 7 £526.67. This shows that other than week 1, when the figures were distorted by lack of signs, overpayments have amounted on average to less than £20 per car park per day.

As soon as we realised people were paying unnecessarily full refunds were offered and the promotion extended by an additional Monday in March.

We are not sure why drivers are still paying during these free periods as there are multiple signs in every car park. There are 2 very clear

signs on each pay machine and 1 on each board next to each machine. This promotion is across 13 car parks and people appear to have paid in each car park suggesting a random selection of drivers have paid with no clear pattern or apparent lack of information/signs in any particular car park.'

(4) From Councillor JA Harris to Councillor NJW Parsons, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

*'What discussions have you had with the Bathurst Estate, the Earl Bathurst or their representatives regarding the proposed Chesterton development?'*

Response from Councillor Parsons

'In the light of the petition relating to the Chesterton Strategic Site, and the Public and Member Questions on the subject, submitted to the Council Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014, The Earl Bathurst wrote seeking a meeting with the Council given what he acknowledged as 'considerable concern about what is perceived to be proposed regarding the Chesterton development.'

A meeting was held on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2014, at the CDC Offices. The meeting was attended by The Earl Bathurst and one of his representatives; and by the Chief Executive, Strategic Director, Head of Planning and Strategic Housing, and myself on behalf of the Council. This is the only occasion on which I have attended a meeting and/or had discussions with The Earl Bathurst, The Bathurst Estate or their representatives regarding the Chesterton Development.'

Notes:

- (i) If any Member who has submitted a question is present at the Meeting, he/she will be entitled to ask one supplementary question arising directly out of either the answer given or his/her original question.
- (ii) The Member to whom any supplementary question is addressed will try and answer any supplementary question at the Meeting; but if this is not possible, then the Member will answer as much as possible at the Meeting and then provide a full response within five working days. If, for any reason, a full response cannot be provided within those five days, then a holding response will be sent to the questioner, along with the reason for delay and a likely timescale for the full response.

(END)