

# Questions Received for Council – 30 January 2019

## 3. **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS**

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This is an opportunity for Members of Council to ask the Mayor, Members of the Executive or the Chairs of any Committee or Sub-Committee a question on notice under Procedure Rule 10.2.

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### **Question 1 - Submitted by Councillor Brophy**

Could the relevant Executive Member inform what discussion has been had about the proposed new zoo in Trafford, which teams from the Council have been involved and what, if any, support has been offered?

#### **Response:**

Officers from the Planning and Development and Strategic Growth Services, along with the Corporate Director of Place, have previously met with the promoter of the zoo, Johnpaul Houston, and his planning consultant. However, there has been no recent contact with Mr. Houston or discussion of the site identified in recent media coverage. High level discussions have previously been held in relation to a different site. At this time no particular support was offered beyond general advice in relation to the planning process and Mr. Houston was advised that, should he wish to pursue the proposals, he would need to appoint his own professional advisors.

### **Question 2 - Submitted by Councillor Brophy**

In Trafford we are committed to a system of 'zonal levies' for affordable housing. This offers a guideline for developers as to what the percentage of affordable housing should be for a given development.

However, given that Manchester City Council has been allowing developers to use 'Viability Assessments' to circumvent affordable housing guidelines, can the Executive Member tell us the percentage of affordable housing in developments currently being built, and those which have been approved?

#### **Response:**

The Council's Spatial Data team monitor the number of affordable residential units granted planning permission and then completed. Since April 2016, a total of 1715 residential units have been completed. Of these, 253 were provided as affordable, or 15%.

A total of 8274 residential units currently have extant planning permission and have not yet been completed. Some, but not all of these permissions will have started on site. Of those 8274 units, 156 are to be delivered as affordable, or 2%.

However, in certain circumstances an off-site financial contribution to affordable housing can be delivered in lieu of on-site provision, and as well as on site provision of 156 units, a total of £1.67m has been secured from these permissions. These monies equate to approximately a further 250 affordable homes. Additionally, this fund will be boosted by £1.3m once the S106 agreement for the Pomona development has been completed. Further monies may be secured through overage provisions in S106 agreements where sales values exceed those put forward by a developer in a viability appraisal.

The assessment of the viability of development in order to ensure it is deliverable is a long established and accepted principle of both the plan-making and planning applications process. There is extensive government policy and guidance on the matter. The Council's adopted Core Strategy makes frequent reference to the need for site specific viability review when determining planning applications, particularly where costs and values of development would not reflect historic market conditions; which is increasingly the case particularly in the northern parts of the Borough. This approach enables the Council to obtain a greater level of

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affordable housing (up to 40%) than the standard policy requirement of 10%. Additionally, positive steps have recently been taken to improve the transparency of the viability assessment process with the intention that this will improve the delivery of affordable housing. The Planning Service now appoints specialist consultants to robustly and rigorously interrogate developers' viability assessments. In November 2018, the Council's Validation Checklist was updated so that developers' viability assessments are now published online for the public to view and, in the same month, following a review of market conditions, the standard policy requirements for affordable housing were increased by 5%.

### **Question 3 - Submitted by Councillor Coggins**

Can the Council explain why the leafing programme, which is very important for pedestrian safety, was over 1 month late in its second run through Altrincham ward?

#### **Response:**

The leaf removal programme estimated that each area would require a certain amount of visits taking account of the known leafy areas between October and February. However the very nature of this type of work with changes in weather with frosts and high winds affects the timing of leaf fall, leading to larger than anticipated accumulation of leaves in some areas and diversion of the team onto emergency situations. Thus, some areas including Altrincham when visited have required more time to remove the leaves on site.

The programme has been under review during the season and an assessment of the delivery of the programme will take place on conclusion of the current season to ensure the service is improved for 2019/20. The weekly updates were designed to supplement the original schedule giving members more accurate and up to date information on this work at a local level and I hope Members welcome the weekly updates on areas visited and due to be visited. Altrincham is scheduled for a visit week commencing 4 February 2019.

### **Question 4 - Submitted by Councillor Jerome**

Pavement parking is illegal in Greater London. Would this administration support the same restrictions in Trafford?

#### **Response:**

There are no current plans to introduce a borough wide ban of pavement parking as some narrow roads in Trafford would become inaccessible for bin collections and emergency service requirements, however, there is a need to review locations where increased disability access could be created in town centre areas with the increased use of bollards and pedestrian zones.

The Council's parking officers currently provide a reactive service where reports of limited pedestrian access are received, officers will issue a 'Pavements are for People' leaflet to encourage drivers to park leaving at least a 1 metre gap on the pavement to allow wheelchair/pushchair access, the leaflet also advises that Greater Manchester Police could issue Fixed Penalties for obstruction. Leaflets are generally successful in removing the reported road safety concern.

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### **Question 5 - Submitted by Councillor Jerrome**

Air BnB has a 90-day ruling in residential areas in Greater London which prohibits an Air BnB being let for more than 90 days in a residential setting. This is recognised by the company and is reflected on its website. Would this administration agree to such restrictions in residential areas in Trafford?

### **Response:**

The 90 day restriction on the letting of Air B&Bs in London arise from a specific piece of legislation which is effective only in the capital; the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1973. The effect of this legislation is that 'temporary sleeping accommodation' occupied for more than 90 consecutive nights is a material change of use of a premises which requires planning permission. There is no such equivalent power in operation outside London, and the use of premises as an Air B&B in Trafford does not require planning permission. To enact this power in Trafford would require a change to national legislation and is not a restriction which could be imposed locally.

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