

Questions Submitted for Council – 25 January 2023

Question 1 - Submitted by Councillor G. Carter

“The cost of living crisis poses profound challenges to workers. Can the Leader of the Council explain Trafford Council’s approach to the Real Living Wage?”

Question 2 - Submitted by Councillor Zhi

“Can the Executive Member for Environmental Services please tell me how many complaints have been made directly to the Council since I was elected in May 2022 regarding the location or timing of road works in the Bowdon ward?”

Response

The Council records requests for service, enquires and complaints relative to highway services in the CRM/C360 system that unfortunately cannot be broken down into wards or type of service such as roadworks due to the way the data is currently captured. Hence, we are unable to give that level of detail without reading all the text in the complaints that we have received relative to highway works. Since May 2022 last year (for the whole borough) the council received 232 Stage 1 complaints and 48 Stage 2 complaints logged as Highway’s complaints. These complaints will cover many different topics linked to problems with the highway. The replacement for the CRM/C360 system that is currently being developed with IT will include additional functionality to allow more detailed reports to be produced going forward and this is anticipated to be in place during 2024.

Question 3 - Submitted by Councillor Welton

“The Council has a comprehensive gritting programme for keeping carriageways clear, but in December’s cold spell many pavements were left icy and dangerous for days. I know of older and vulnerable people who were trapped in their homes for over week, for fear of falling. Will the Executive Member for Environmental Services consider developing a strategy for clearing pavements when long periods of cold weather are forecast?”

Response

There is already a strategy in place for dealing with clearance and treatment of footways when there are prolonged periods of ice and snow conditions. It is unaffordable and logistically impractical to have teams standing by to undertake treatment of all footways routinely during prolonged spells of cold weather. There is a priority list of footways that are treated during prolonged cold weather and the approach to gritting is included on the website. These footways are treated by staff who are redeployed from the highways, street cleaning and grounds maintenance staff whilst they are unable to undertake their routine tasks due to the cold weather. The footways that are treated are predominantly in and around shopping areas, around schools and hospitals. Treatment involves hand spreading of grit hence why they are unable to undertake this on all footways and is only undertaken as and when those other services are unable to be delivered due to the cold weather. Compacted ice and snow, however, is difficult to remove once it has taken hold and will often remain in place until after the thaw hence there is likely to be some footways that will have residual ice and snow during prolonged severe weather periods. During these times we would follow government guidance on additional community support to ensure vulnerable members of Trafford are catered for: [Guidance on community action during severe weather - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/on-community-action-during-severe-weather)
[Gritting \(trafford.gov.uk\)](https://trafford.gov.uk/gritting)

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Question 4 - Submitted by Councillor Welton

“Like other members I would like to pay tribute to the work Eleanor Roaf has done for Trafford as Director of Public Health. Please can I ask the Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy if he has read the Greater Manchester Active Travel Public Health Manifesto, of which she was co-author?”

Response

Thank you for your question Councillor Welton. I can confirm that I have read and am familiar with the Greater Manchester Active Travel Public Health Manifesto which has in part informed the ambitions of the administration regarding Active Travel.

Question 5 - Submitted by Councillor Maitland

“I very much welcome the Council’s multimillion-pound Leisure Strategy, as this is already having a hugely successful impact within the borough - as we move into the next phase, which will see Altrincham Leisure Centre completely transformed to replicate the flourishing Move Urmston: Could I please ask my colleague, Councillor Harding, Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Strategic Partnerships, how will this strategy coupled with her vision – make further strides to improve the health, fitness and well-being for all residents across the borough?”

Response

Trafford Moving is the boroughs strategic approach to Sport and Physical Activity and takes a whole system approach. A whole system approach provides the opportunity to align the boroughs leisure centres and wider physical and community assets, partnership, clubs, voluntary sector and sporting NGBS to deliver universal and targeted programmes of activity, providing accessible, affordable opportunities for all residents to move more each day.

Building on the recent success of Urmston Moving, Trafford Council’s proposed leisure investment programme is informed by Trafford Moving and will deliver fit for purpose facilities that are embedded in local communities, offering a broad programme of activities, and mix of facilities tailored to local needs. The refurbished centres will act as local hubs of activity that deliver programmes to encourage and support residents to be more physically active, focused on delivering health and wellbeing outcomes for Trafford communities.

This includes the recently announced successfully bid for nearly £20 million to help revitalise Partington Sports Village through Levelling Up funding. The investment will safeguard the future of vital leisure facilities in the town and help deliver significant health and wellbeing benefits.

Question 6 - Submitted by Councillor Walsh

“In Gorse Hill Ward many residents have approached me asking what is the Council doing to support the community in these difficult times. Can I ask the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Strategic Partnerships to explain what her department is doing to support residents around the “cost of living crisis?”

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Question 7 - Submitted by Councillor Duncan

“On 19 November 2022, the Secretary of State for Levelling up Housing and Communities wrote to all Local Authority Chief Executive and council leaders following the tragedy of the little boy, who died at two years old as a direct result of mould in his family home. The letter highlighted the urgent need to ensure a decent standard of properties for tenants in all sectors.

Can the Executive Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods please tell me what action the Council has taken since May 2022 to prioritise the improvement of housing conditions for the thousands of private and social tenants in Trafford, in line with existing duties in the Housing Act 2004?”

Response

Trafford has the benefit of a comprehensive stock condition survey to help inform our approach to arising housing standards in our Borough. The Survey carried out just before the pandemic found that 84.3% of the private sector homes in Trafford met the requirements of the Decent Homes Standards – compared with 79.9% nationally. It also found that 5.5% of occupied dwellings in Trafford experienced Category 1 hazards, well below the national average of 12.1% - with dampness mould accounted for around half of these Category 1 hazards.

Whilst the position of housing in Trafford is better than average – any property with such problems is one home too many. Our small but effective housing standards team respond to around 350 housing complaints each year. Over the past three years Damp and Mould problems have accounted for between 9.6% and 15.5% of all complaints received.

Since this tragic incident was brought to public attention, we have changed our complaints process so that damp and mould issues are given a higher profile. All complainants now receive an immediate advice leaflet so they are better able to address the issue, regardless of what formal action may subsequently follow. We do not yet have full figures from May 2022 but I can advise that since we changed our processes in November we have dealt with 30 damp & mould complaints across the Borough.

At the same time the Government has written to all registered providers to ensure they are actively managing this issue. We are aware that THT have altered their procedures as a consequence to be more responsive to this type of complaint.

Question 8 - Submitted by Councillor Holden

“How many agreed crossing patrol points are there in the Borough and how many are currently vacant?”

Question 9 - Submitted by Councillor Axford

“In view of the urgency of tackling the climate emergency and our aspiration to reach zero carbon by 2038, can the Executive Member for Climate Change and Transport Strategy please let us know if it is possible to have additional council officer resource?”

Response

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Since the Council first declared a Climate emergency in November 2018 we have been working to ensure Climate Change action is at the heart of the Council's activities. Notable milestones include our first Carbon Neutral action Plan in December 2020, the establishment of Climate Change Commission and significant de-carbonisation works on our public buildings. Our revised Corporate Plan establishes "Addressing our climate crisis" as one of our three priorities for the Council – and so whilst tackling climate change is the responsibility of all services across the authority, I recognise this agenda needs to be properly resourced.

With that in mind, I am pleased to announce that resources have been identified to boost the dedicated officer team – with both a more senior officer role at Head of Service level, commensurate with this high-profile activity, alongside an additional officer within the team to progress ongoing activity. Full details will be within the Budget Report to be submitted to Council next month.

Question 10 - Submitted by Councillor Newgrosh

"Having just passed the third anniversary of Trafford Council's Empty Homes Policy, with the most recent Council report stating the long term empty housing have risen to 912 (as of December 2021), and with my residents still blighted by the threat of New Homes and Offices on the Greenbelt of Timperley Wedge:

How many long term empty homes have been brought back into use by this important Council initiative? And, can the Executive Member inform us what December 2022's Long Term Empty figures are?"

Response

I agree with Cllr Newgrosh that empty properties are a cause of concern – and that we need to work pro-actively to ensure as many are brought back into effective use as possible. As an example of this I'm pleased to say that Trafford Housing Trust will be starting work next month on refurbishing the empty flats at Lindow Court in Sale, utilising £540,000 from our Trafford Affordable Housing Fund. this will provide 9 one and two bedroomed flats, re-fitted to modern standards.

Unfortunately, it wasn't possible to collate the figures to December in time for this meeting, but I undertake to provide those in writing as soon as possible.

Meanwhile I cannot agree that development at Timperley Wedge will be in any way a blight – of course we should be prudent with the use of our precious greenbelt land, but the delivery of much needed affordable housing alongside a mix of conventional family homes should only be viewed as a benefit to the local community.