

Milton Keynes Council - Review of Independent Review of Planning Decision

Questions Submitted to C.Co in advance of 22 March Audit Committee

Ref	Source	Name	Question	Date Received	Response	Action
QA1	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Why did you not contact any stakeholders, such as the Blakelands Residents Association or Councillors, as part of your audit?	19.3.2021	<p>The Audit scope was quite specific and centred upon the processes undertaken by Mr Dorfman in reaching his preliminary conclusions. For that reason our principal interviewee was Mr Dorfman, although as indicated within the report, we did clarify some outstanding lines of enquiry with the Chief Auditor and the Deputy Chief Executive.</p> <p>We did not believe that contacting additional stakeholders was necessary to reach the conclusions that we did.</p>	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint
QA2	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Did you review the YouTube video recording of the Audit Committee meeting of 1 December 2020 and if not, why?	19.3.2021	Yes, as part of baselining activity.	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint
QA3	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Could you list the documents you have reviewed as part of your audit?	19.3.2021	<p>As part of our baselining methodology, to address the specific scope statements, C.Co has reviewed all publicly available documentation from the Audit Committee on 5 March 2019, where reference was made to the need to appoint an external reviewer, to 1 December 2020 Audit Committee, including its publicly available YouTube video, where Mr Dorfman's preliminary findings were presented. In addition, we have viewed subsequent Audit Committees, for related items, and as part of our fieldwork phase requested/reviewed additional documentation including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr Dorfman's CV - Mr Dorfman's matrix assessment template - Mr Dorfman's letter to residents dated 16.9.20 - Related Press articles 	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint
QA4	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Have you reviewed Marc Dorfman's contract with Milton Keynes Council, its very short specification ("Independent review on planning applications") and the contract liaison (the former Director of Planning)?	19.3.2021	Not specifically, although we have referenced and addressed the scope of Mr Dorfman's commission within the report.	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint

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QA5	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Were you made aware of the existence of a confidential document produced by Marc Dorfman on 10 March 2019 where he concluded the warehouse scheme was "poor" and the officer recommendation "was not correct"?	19.3.2021	Yes and we understand that this was written as part of the selection process to determine if Mr Dorfman was a suitable candidate. The appointment of Mr Dorfman is not part of this Audit.	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint
QA6	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Does it concern you that Marc Dorfman is now backtracking on the document of 10 March 2019 and his views of the warehouse scheme?	19.3.2021	As stated in my previous answer, we understand that original document formed part of Mr Dorfman's selection process and that process is not within scope of this Audit.	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint
QA7	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Do you believe it was appropriate for Milton Keynes Council to seek the preliminary views and conclusions of Marc Dorfman before instructing him? Is this normal practice in auditing and would it be normal for four legal officers to be present (Director of Law, Head of Legal, Deputy Head of Legal and the Principal Solicitor for Planning and Highways)?	19.3.2021	The process for the recruitment of Mr Dorfman is not within scope of the Audit. However, most processes of that nature would include some form of written assessment.	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint
QA8	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Do you believe it was appropriate of Marc Dorfman during his review to not speak to, or even attempt to contact, the Council's auditor who did most of the work for the internal audit?	19.3.2021	We are not aware that Mr Dorfman did not speak to or contact the Council's auditor.	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint
QA9	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Do you believe it was appropriate for Marc Dorfman to refuse to work with the Council's auditors during his review? Do you believe there was a conflict of interest in his administrative point of contact being an officer within the planning service that reported to the Director of Planning?	19.3.2021	We are not aware that Mr Dorfman "refused" to work with the Council's Auditors and our understanding is that his "administrative point of contact" was through the former and current Deputy Chief Executive.	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint
QA10	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Do you believe there was any conflict of interest in the role of the previous Director of Planning in overseeing Marc Dorfman's appointment and the external review into the warehouse scheme?	19.3.2021	As previously stated, the recruitment of Mr Dorfman does not form part of this Audit. However, for an appointment of this nature we would expect the Planning department be represented in some capacity and any interest declared.	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint
QA11	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Is it normal practice in audit work for the department being audited to be responsible for and in control of the audit?	19.3.2021	Our understanding is that Mr Dorfman was at liberty to direct his own review and that his link to the Council was through the former and current Deputy Chief Executive.	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint

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QA12	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Do you believe there was any conflict in interest in Marc Dorfman being recommended by a former Director of Planning at Milton Keynes Council (now working for the LGA/PAS) who was in that role at the time the warehouse scheme was approved in May 2017?	19.3.2021	The process for the recruitment of Mr Dorfman is not within scope of the Audit.	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint
QA13	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Do you believe it was appropriate of Milton Keynes Council to not mention the connection with the LGA/PAS and its former Director of Planning (emails show that senior officers did not want residents to "find out the connection")?	19.3.2021	Although, the process for the recruitment of Mr Dorfman is not within the scope of the Audit, we were satisfied that recruitment of him through the LGA provided sufficient assurance of his ability to undertake the role.	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint
QA14	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Are you aware that there are multiple emails showing that Milton Keynes Council wanted to distance itself from the appointment of Marc Dorfman through the Planning Advisory Service (in case residents found out about the connection with the former Director of Planning)?	19.3.2021	We are not aware of these emails	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint
QA15	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Do you believe there is a lack of transparency by Milton Keynes Council in refusing to publish copies of the minutes or notes from meetings with Marc Dorfman after he was appointed?	19.3.2021	We are not aware of the specific issue and suggest that this is a matter for the Council.	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint
QA16	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Have you reviewed the letter from Milton Keynes Council to Marc Dorfman of 3 November 2020 (where he was told that it was imperative his preliminary findings were released and the Audit Committee meeting took place before the Director of Planning left in December 2020)? Do you believe this letter was appropriate?	19.3.2021	Although we haven't seen the letter you refer to, we do indicate within the report that the preliminary report appears to have been written "at pace" to meet the freeze date deadlines for the 1 December Audit Committee. Given the time expended on his review, to that point, we do not believe it unreasonable to request preliminary if not final findings.	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint
QA17	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Does it concern you that Marc Dorfman appears to be unable to produce a document showing a list of individuals he has interviewed, met or communicated with electronically and the respective dates of any meetings?	19.3.2021	We believe that our judgement and narrative for the second scope item, 'proper examination of submissions' covers this question.	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint
QA18	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Were you made aware that the original case officer for the warehouse application was changed at a very late stage and only after the developer was told that the recommendation would be for refusal?	19.3.2021	We were made aware of the change in case officer and have referenced this against the third scope item within my report.	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint

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QA19	Email from MK Dem Services	Blakelands Residents Association (BRA)	Have you reviewed the additional document produced by Marc Dorfman on 1 December 2020 in which he states the replacement case officer alleges to have been coerced into putting a recommendation of approval forward for the warehouse application contrary to her professional planning judgement	19.3.2021	Yes, and we believe the assurance we have taken from Mr Dorfman's knowledge and experience covers this within the response to the third scope item.	Short Written Response and Include in Powerpoint