

Public Questions – Full Council (21 October 2020)

1. Virginia Bell to Councillor Darlington/Councillor Townsend (14/10/20 – 13.30)

Last month Defra said ‘The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) requires all public authorities to have regard for conserving biodiversity in the exercise of their functions’.

Milton Keynes Council has always been a progressive Council. You have declared a climate emergency and are putting sustainable measures in place to back this up. But more needs to be done to protect our wildlife. Will you ensure that the following measures for less intensive land management are introduced?

1) Mow less. 2) Stop using harmful chemicals that adversely affect minibeasts. Instead, plant hardy native species of trees, shrubs and flowers which don’t need sprays. Many areas of grassland could be planted as wildflower areas, to include nettles, thistles and dandelions etc which are so precious to insects. The edges could be mown to give a pleasing contrast 3) Find an alternative to salt on icy roads. It is lethal to all life.

2. Manish Verma to Councillor Townsend (19/10/20 - 10.33)

Buses have been stopped from going through Oxley Park. On enquiry residents have been told that it was The Council, not Arriva, that made that decision. Please may you clarify what is happening as many residents in Oxley Park depend on that service?

Supplementary

Last time I asked about poor parking in Oxley Park, which is a related issue as residents are struggling to move in, around and out of the estate, the Cabinet member was going to look into the issue, would it be possible to have an update?

3. Ethan Wilkinson to Councillor Townsend (19/10/20 - 10.39)

I have spoken with residents across Bletchley East and they have told me that the current parking enforcement measures do NOT work. People ignore the signage and have no respect for parking enforcement officers. Given that the current measures are NOT working, what other measures is the Council going to explore?

4. Charlotte Hall to Councillor Darlington (19/10/20 - 11.49)

I have been working with other resident’s litter-picking and reporting fly-tipping over these last 8 months. This blight is an escalating matter and of great frustration for residents at a time when our beautiful green-spaces are so important to us all. Please may I ask what is being done to mitigate these issues?

Supplementary

The ‘book a slot’ scheme at waste recycling centres is also an area of frustration for residents and is clearly not helping the fly-tipping and littering problem. What is being done to open up our recycling centres to give more flexible access to this service?

5. Iain Layden to Councillor Middleton (19/10/20 - 16.13)

On the 18th March I presented a petition to this Council, opposing plans to lease the golf course to a developer, fence it off and build a sports hub, hotel and houses. This petition had over 1,300 signatures from Milton Keynes residents, including nearly 700 from residents of MK3.

At the meeting, Councillor Middleton said he would take a step back to allow him to review the arguments both for and against the development, and to take account of the consultation being undertaken by the developers - Evolve. He undertook to meet with me, once his review had been completed.

Seven months later, that meeting has still not taken place. But we know that the developer is working on a planning application, despite the widespread opposition from local residents.

Could Councillor Middleton please commit to a date by which he will meet with me and convey his response to our petition?

6. Alan Francis to Councillor Darlington (19/10/20 - 16.31)

Waste collection pilot - The council's criteria for houses to be exempt from wheelie bins include:

- No rear or side access
- Inadequate space to store wheeled bins

Many houses in New Bradwell have been given wheelie bins even though they have no rear or side access and inadequate space to store wheeled bins. The wheelie bins are being left on the pavement where they cause an obstruction. Residents have expressed their objection in the local media.

Will MKC allow all houses that cannot accommodate wheelie bins, by the council's own criteria, to have boxes instead?

7. Lesley Sung to Councillor Marland (19/10/20 - 17.08)

What is the Council's documented process for determining whether a change to a planning application is non-material, and therefore, can avoid public consultation? Who is authorized to make the determination and what triggers a review by DCC?

8. Nicholas Cadman to Councillor Townsend (19/10/20 - 18.04)

In light of the recent changes to bus service subsidies across Milton Keynes, I would like to highlight an area of concern.

The number 28 is subject to change as Vale Travel will not be renewing their contract at the end of this month. The number 28 is a means for residents at Shenley Wood Village to travel to/from several destinations, including doctors' surgeries and the hospital. The withdrawal of this service could now leave residents with no access to such services.

Therefore, I ask the following; Can the cabinet member confirm what steps are being taken to find an alternative solution for Shenley Wood Village residents?

9. Sharon Ghoula to Councillor O'Neill (19/10/20 - 18.35)

With both COVID infection rates and unemployment rates rising significantly every day, what plans are MKC making to support access and distribution- of free (or subsidised) PPE, (reusable masks, hand sanitizer, gloves) in BAME, low income and vulnerable groups, as it has already been identified that these groups are most at risk?

Supplementary question

How is MKC educating and supporting its citizens to start using washable/reusable masks in order to reduce COVID waste and met the climate emergency targets?

10. Alderman Paul Bartlett to Councillor Darlington (19/10/20 - 18.47)

Throughout Milton Keynes Borough, a journey along any Grid Road and a number of estate and village roads, one cannot fail but to see dozens of abandoned roadworks signs, metal frames, cones and equipment which are left behind by Milton Keynes Council and its contractors. These are an eyesore and in some cases a danger to drivers, pedestrians and confusing if indicating a non-existent diversion or set of roadworks. Anyone other than MKC and its contractors would face prosecution for littering and fly tipping.

To correct this situation, can Councillor Darlington recognise the problem and take measures to ensure that all contractors and the Council remove immediately after the completion of works, roadworks signs etc and that managers and Directors take responsibility for this and that it becomes a part of their role and assessment; also that failure to remove said equipment will mean that those creating the problem will be fined for each item the sum of 5% of the value of works for each infringement (ie each cone, each sign etc); that as of tomorrow, MKC undertake a daily collection of equipment and signs until the Borough road network is cleared with a target date of 5th November for this to be completed?

11. Chris Wardle to Councillor Cannon (19/10/20 - 19.07)

Would it be possible to have an update as to when the Dorfman Report, the supposedly independent report into the Blakelands fiasco, will be published? It was last promised for mid October and is still not here.

12. Liam Andrews to Councillor Darlington (19/10/20 – 19.07)

I have spoken with businesses on Stony Stratford High Street with the majority telling me they have suffered a loss in trade since the so-called semi-permanent changes were made to the High Street.

Some of these businesses have been on the High Street for decades and know how it works, people park up, pop straight into the shop, get what they need and leave. Removing parking spaces outside shops such as the butchers has stopped that happening and it is frustrating businesses and customers. One business was told they weren't even allowed to put a board up outside their shop saying they were open and have had customers say they thought they were closed. Businesses feel like they have been ignored by this Labour Council. These changes are damaging a unique, historic High Street.

Will the Cabinet Member agree to meet with myself and businesses on Stony Stratford High Street to discuss a way to support them moving forward and to confirm there are no plans for this semi-permanent plan to become permanent?

13. Adam Rolfe (written question) to Councillor Darlington (19/10/20)

The recent discovery that Mellish Courts flats are unsafe to be living in, after 60 years, what steps are the council taking to ensure that families and residents can live safely now? Whilst I understand that they have been offered help to move, shouldn't the baseline standard be to move everyone regardless so that everyone is safe?