

Council – 1 March 2022

Responses to Members' Questions

Question 1

Councillor Ben Crystall to ask Councillor Graham McAndrew, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability:

Question deferred to the meeting on 11th May 2022.

Question 2

Councillor Ben Crystall to ask Councillor Graham McAndrew, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability:

Question deferred to the meeting on 11th May 2022.

Question 3

Councillor Alastair Ward-Booth to ask Councillor Jan Goodeve, Executive Member for Planning and Growth

Does the Executive Member for Planning and Growth agree with me that it is important that developers on the Stortford Fields estate are held accountable for their failure to adhere to the conditions of their planning application, and what steps will the Council take ensure compliance with their planning conditions?

Response from Councillor Jan Goodeve

Thank you Councillor Ward-Booth. You raise a very important question about situations where development is not being carried out in accordance with the conditions attached to the planning permission.

You specifically mention the development at Stortford Fields which is a key part of Bishop's Stortford North. The Bishop's Stortford North

area benefits from planning permission for up to 2,200 homes and associated infrastructure, and is currently being built out.

I agree that compliance with the conditions attached to the planning permission is important and understand that a number of concerns have been raised by local residents.

I can confirm that the matter of planning compliance and enforcement at Stortford Fields is being progressed as a matter of priority by the Council. Officers, including the Head of Planning and Building Control, have spoken directly to the consortium of housebuilders at Stortfields Fields about the need to ensure that plans and conditions are adhered to. The seriousness of this has also been raised in writing.

Alongside this, a planning enforcement officer has been identified to investigate all alleged breaches. An action plan has been developed in order to help track and resolve specific issues, with the enforcement officer working closely with the planning officer.

This is overseen by the Service Manager for Development Management and now a regular item on the agenda when officers meet with the Consortium.

Addressing breaches or non-compliance without formal action can often be the most appropriate and proportionate approach but in some instances formal action may be considered necessary, and officers will make a judgement based on the extent of the breach and whether it is expedient to take formal action.

Officers are in contact with local residents and will be reporting progress to the next Steering Group meeting which includes local councillors. In addition, local councillors will continue to be kept informed as progress is made, and matters are hopefully resolved.

There was no supplementary question.

Question 4

Councillor Rosemary Bolton to ask Councillor Jan Goodeve, Executive Member for Planning and Growth:

What is this Council doing to support local business owners and help them learn new skills to foster further economic growth in our District?

Response from Councillor Jan Goodeve:

We continue to administer our highly successful new premises grant scheme for which we have had 42 applications so far. The scheme has had good coverage on local social media and also in the Mercury and Bishop's Stortford Independent. We have been pleased to support the creation and expansion of so many businesses in the district and it bodes well for our future economic wellbeing that so many people are willing to invest in East Herts. Our approach has been so successful we have been invited by North Herts Council to administer a similar scheme for them which we are now doing, taking a small fee to cover the costs of doing so of course.

The economic development team at East Herts is also leading a countywide programme of business support using funding from the Health Protection board to support Covid business recovery. This funding will last until June this year and on behalf of 9 districts in Herts we are running different business support activities around social media, mental wellbeing and entrepreneurship through a mixture of on-line and in person events.

Some good examples include a "Growth Through Sustainability" event held on the 11th February at the University of Hertfordshire and attended by over 100 people. Some of you may also have come across the Mama Hive group in Hertford and we are collaborating with them to run a series of workshops and networking sessions throughout March, focusing on women in business linked to International Women's Day.

We also have the Rebel Business School who will be running events on starting and growing your own business, particularly targeted at disadvantaged groups across the county. You may have also seen we also have Jay Blades (from the BBC's Repair Shop) providing a keynote speech and Q&A at an entrepreneurship online event on the 9th March. Once these are completed we will be organising events in April and May on supporting blogging and vlogging skills for business owners amongst other initiatives.

All these events can be found on LinkedIn and Eventbrite so do please have a look if you want more details.

As well as running events and networking sessions we are also helping in more direct ways. A good example is working with Street Food Heroes to get the market back to Hertford and we are using some of the Health Protection Board funding to cover costs of running these events on 31st March, 28th April, 26th May, 30th June, 28th July, 25th August, 29th September.

There was no supplementary question.