

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Question 1	Cllr David Snowdon to ask Cllr Jan Goodeve, the Executive Member for Planning and Growth
<p>Could the Executive Member please make a statement about the future of Launchpad once the Old River Lane works commence?</p> <p>Response</p> <p>We are aware that Launchpad is a popular and well used facility in the town and many businesses there are getting nervous about its future within the ORL development. We are actively seeking a new venue and have identified two possible options, one of which is quite advanced in terms of negotiations. We hope to have resolved the issue before Christmas and be in a new venue from 1 April 2023. Chris Smith, our award winning Economic Development Manager, is liaising closely with the businesses in the Launchpad about the options and I know several of them have committed to stay with us if and when we do move.</p> <p>There was no supplementary question.</p>	
Question 2	Cllr Ben Crystall to ask Cllr Jan Goodeve, the Executive Member for Planning and Growth
<p>In May this year the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea ruled that all Grade II listed and most Grade II* listed properties can install solar panels without seeking listed building consent. In an order applying the change, the council said solar panels "would appear as an honest and clearly modern intervention, and</p>	

normally read as part of the equipment necessary to service the uses conducted within the building", similar to water tanks, television aerials and other equipment.

Will East Herts Council introduce a similar change?

Response

The permission for solar panels on Listed Buildings referred to is as a result of a Local Listed Building Consent Order. These were introduced by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 but have not been widely used as of yet. If introduced, they can grant blanket consent for "works of any description for the alteration or extension of listed buildings" and means that the owners of those listed buildings specified in the Order will not have to make individual applications, but will be able to proceed with the works, provided they comply with any conditions that may be attached to the Order.

East Herts has around 4000 listed buildings (comprised of around 3100 listings), a similar total number to Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, but the context is very different. We could not serve any sort of blanket order in the same way due to the variety of our building stock and the many vernacular buildings with feature such as thatched roofs that would not be suitable for the introduction of solar panels. In many instances in predominantly rural areas like East Herts, solar panels are best placed within the grounds of a building or on outbuildings, rather than on the main roof of a Listed Building, where they could result in avoidable harm to the character and special interest of the Listed Building. There are many instances whereby solar panels can be installed on Listed Buildings without harming their character and special interest, such as where there are parapets that hide view of the roof from street level. The example in given in

the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is of predominantly urban terraces of listed buildings, with roofs that are not prominent within the street scene.

In order to put in place a similar Local Listed Building Consent Order in East Herts we would need to survey all 4000 listed buildings within our district to ascertain which would be suitable for inclusion within the order. This would be a sizeable task and resources would need to be put in place in order to undertake both the survey work and the serving of the order.

It should be noted that if East Herts were to grant such an order, if in the future it was to be revoked, compensation would be payable for the withdrawal of consent. There are therefore financial implications for the Council which would have to be carefully considered, and specialist legal advice would need to be obtained on this point.

Question 3

Cllr Chris Wilson to ask Cllr Jan Goodeve, the Executive Member for Planning and Growth

I recently asked a question at a previous full council meeting about the lack of progress of the cycle route through the Meads and Grange Paddocks in Bishop's Stortford and was told this was a County Council project and that therefore there was no information that could be given to me by East Herts. However, it is the case that this route is not an official cycleway, and so not necessarily wholly within the remit of the County Council. It is also a route that goes partly through East Herts Council-owned land, and is, at least theoretically, partly funded through S106 money from an East Herts development, In light of this, I again ask, what role has East Herts had in the delay to this cycle route and what are our plans with respect to the part of it that goes through East

Herts-owned land? What negotiations have been done with the department of the County Council that are dealing with this proposed route?

Response

The Rye Street – Grange Paddocks cycle route is a concept which is supported in principle by all interested Local Authority parties. Our Parks and Open Spaces team have recently been working with HCC’s Countryside and Rights of Way service to confirm a preferred route and establish delivery costs. Currently Section 106 contributions from the BS North development held by EHC make up approximately 40% of projected delivery costs. Work to establish a mechanism to secure further funding, as well as delivery, adoption and ongoing maintenance responsibility is ongoing.

Question 4

Cllr Chris Wilson to ask Cllr Eric Buckmaster, the Executive Member for Wellbeing

The recent Castle Park redevelopment in Bishop’s Stortford, while mainly successful, has included a failure with respect to the contractors who were employed to construct the new Skate Park. My understanding is that these contractors failed to complete their assignment and honour their contract and are due to be replaced. They have however, pocketed public money in the process, to the tune of more than £100,000. While I am aware that it was Bishop’s Stortford Town Council (BSTC) that ran this project, East Herts are partners in this exercise and our money and our resources have been used to help fund the redevelopment. Can I therefore ask if the council has asked BSTC if they performed due diligence and for an explanation as to why such funds have been misspent?

Response

The Castle Park project is a joint project with Bishop's Stortford Town Council (BSTC) led by East Herts District Council (EHDC) and therefore it was EHDC that let the contract to construct the skate park development. A tender process was carried out to commission the company which included financial checks and the normal due diligence you would expect i.e. insurance, references etc. Following an assessment of works completed we can confirm the company only received funds for works carried out and therefore funds were not misspent.

There was no supplementary question.

Question 5

Cllr Tim Page to ask Cllr Jan Goodeve, the Executive Member for Planning and Growth

Can the Executive Member for Planning and Growth please explain to the Council, and specifically Stortford Fields residents, the reasons for the delay in establishing a working Community Management Trust that meets the Council's planning conditions and can demonstrate that it is both accountable to the Council, and fit for purpose?

Response

The Legal Agreement that was secured as part of the original planning permission for Stortford Fields requires the developer consortium to establish a Community Trust in accordance with the provisions within the agreement. To clarify, whilst the Trust needs to be set up in accordance with the provisions in S106 agreement, it won't be accountable to the Council. It will however, manage and maintain the community buildings and community infrastructure within Stortford Fields such parks and landscaping and will include representatives from the council and the residents of Stortford Fields as well as the consortium of housebuilders, who collectively will be party to decision making and finance governance associated

with the activities of the Trust.

Overtime the housebuilders involvement in the Trust will diminish in favour of greater resident control.

We are aware that the developer consortium has set up the Stortford Fields Estate Management Company (SFEMC) which has taken on responsibility of the community assets delivered to date.

The Council acknowledges that progress on the establishment of the Community Trust has been slow and it has been a bigger task than anticipated. It is recognised that this needs to be addressed as a priority and officers are starting to make good progress.

We are currently working closely with the consortium to understand the workings of the Stortford Fields Estate Management Company in more detail and to ensure that a Community Trust is established over time that fully meets the provisions of the legal agreement. This will take some time but remains a key priority for us going forward and we will ensure that residents are kept informed when there are updates to share.

Meetings between Council officers and representatives for the consortium have recently taken place in order to ensure that the shadow board is up and running over the next couple of months. The Council is also bringing in specialist support to advise of detailed matters.

Supplementary question from Councillor Tim Page

The Executive Member suggests that a Community Trust will be set up in the next few months. Councillor Page asked if Councillor Goodeve could give a more precise target.

Response

Councillor Goodeve said some arrangements would be in place before Christmas.