

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS

<p><b>Question 1</b></p>	<p><b>Colin Woodward to ask Cllr Ben Crystall, the Leader of the Council</b></p>
<p>In September 2022 EHDC formally recognised the Water Lane Hall to be an Asset of Community Value, yet the perception in Bishop’s Stortford is that the Council is still intent on proceeding with the proposal to dispose of the Hall along with its other assets on the Old River Lane site by transferring them to Cityheart for development of the site for a paltry sum or, possibly at nil cost in the case of the Hall, compared with the cost to the Council of their purchase. In the meantime there has twice been an extension of the lease of the hall to the URC church, demonstrating its ongoing utility and value to the community, though without any reasoned reply to alternative bids such as that of 17 March 2023 submitted by Community Initiative (BS) and Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation setting out several ownership and operating scenarios to preserve this asset.</p> <p>Given that the Water Lane Hall was designated by EHC an Asset of Community Value, what process is EHDC now following to allow the community the option to retain the building for community use, noting its (EHCs) own policies including CFLR8, before it takes an irrevocable decision to hand it over to Cityheart, potentially for demolition?</p>	
<p><b>Question 2</b></p>	<p><b>Jill Goldsmith to ask Cllr Carl Brittain, Executive Member for Financial Sustainability</b></p>
<p>It is now 4 months since my last question on EHDC’s accounts and hence the audited values of assets on the ORL site. As of 5/12/23</p>	

the Council website still is not disclosing the accounts from 2020-21 which were completed months ago and the inspection period has not commenced for the 2021-22 unaudited accounts. The 2022-23 accounts have also missed the statutory deadline.

It is my understanding that as yet, no contract exists with Cityheart, but that the terms of the potential contract (Development Management Agreement) could go back to values set when Cityheart was selected as preferred development partner. That is nearly 5 years ago now, so the values then may or may not reflect best value now. The answer to me in July 2023 was that *"The Council would not enter in an agreement with a developer whereby we are not getting best value"*. The FAQs on the Council's website say that *"An updated Section 123 report, with independent valuations, will be produced and agreed before the development agreement is signed"*.

This is such an important scheme for the town and for the Council's finances that residents need to be able to see how the Council is justifying the transfer of our assets before the Development Agreement is signed.

Has the Council now obtained independent valuations for the ORL site; and will it make this information and related 123 explanations transparent, before the Development Management Agreement is signed?