

## Questions under Procedure Rule 11.2 for Council

### **Q1. Question from Councillor Ball to the Cabinet Member for Major Projects and Economic Development**

Can the Cabinet Member tell us, please, how she feels the collapse of Debenhams, Edinburgh Woollen Mill (owners of Peacocks) and the Arcadia Group will affect plans for Lichfield City Centre?

#### **Response from the Cabinet Member for Major Projects and Economic Development:**

The sad news of the closures of well-known High Street brands, including Debenhams and the Arcadia Group, will no doubt have an impact on High Streets throughout the UK. The enthusiasm for online shopping, an inability or unwillingness to respond to changing patterns of demand on the part of certain retail groups and the effects of the CV19 pandemic has no doubt accelerated the changes which have been taking place in town and city centres for several years.

In October the Council endorsed the Lichfield City Centre Masterplan as a blueprint for the development and regeneration of Lichfield City Centre. This puts Lichfield ahead of the curve in terms of its plans to rejuvenate the city centre, with proposals in place for a mixture of uses and experiences for visitors and residents alike. Work has been ongoing in respect of commissioning detailed plans and strategies to inform the developments to come forward, with the start of the implementation of projects to take place in 2021. The Council is also working closely with the owners of Three Spires shopping centre to understand the impacts on the centre itself and the work that is being done to maintain a vibrant and active destination now and for the longer term.

### **Q2. Question from Councillor Ball to the Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy and Local Plan**

Can the Cabinet Member, please, tell us whether he agrees with me that, in light of the increasing need for decent, genuinely affordable housing across Lichfield District, that, in our new Local Plan, we must insist of developers providing an absolute minimum of 20% affordable housing, ideally at social rents, on all Previously Developed Land sites and on all Strategic Development Allocations on greenfield land, and an absolute minimum of 30% affordable homes on all greenfield sites of from 10 to 500 dwellings, as I suggested at a recent meeting of the Local Plan Subcommittee and was agreed on at that meeting?

#### **Response from the Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy and Local Plan:**

The Local Plan & CIL Viability Assessment that has been prepared as part of the evidence base for our emerging local plan, which Councillor Ball has seen as a Member of the Local Plan Sub-committee and the sub-committee agreed should be added to our published evidence base, indicates that Lichfield District Council should consider;

- 20% Affordable Housing on Previously Developed Land,
- 30% Affordable Housing on Greenfield land where sites provide between 10 and 500 dwellings,

- 20% Affordable Housing on larger allocated sites accommodating more than 500 dwellings

I would expect our emerging local plan and policies going forward to reflect this, as to do otherwise would not be in keeping with our own evidence base.

### **Q3. Question from Councillor Ball to the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Housing and Health**

Can the Cabinet Member, please, tell us how much of the £20 billion in multi-year investment, announced in the Spending Review, to underpin the Government's long-term housing strategy does she expect to come to Lichfield and also how much of the £254 million to support rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness during Covid-19 does she expect to come here?

#### **Response from the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Housing and Health:**

We have had confirmation that the general homelessness funding (flexible homelessness support grant and homelessness reduction grant) will be at least the same as this year and probably higher, although we will not have confirmation until January.

We will also have the opportunity to bid for additional funding through the RSI funding and the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Fund.

The Protect programme (£15 million) will not be open to us, as it is targeted funding for those with more complex rough sleeper problems e.g. Birmingham, Manchester Bristol and London.

### **Q4. Question from Councillor Ball to the Leader of the Council**

Will the Leader of the Council tell us, please, how much he feels that we should bid for from the so-called Levelling Up Fund of £4 billion, which is to support investment in town centre regeneration and better transport infrastructure?

#### **Response from the Leader of the Council:**

The full details of this scheme are still not announced so this is difficult to answer - however, earlier this year we created a new officer role to focus specifically on accessing funding, and I know that she will, quite rightly, be incredibly ambitious in the bids which we submit.

### **Q5. Question from Councillor Anketell to the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Housing and Health**

I and other members have been contacted by residents concerned over the stress caused to their pets, wildlife and farm animals from fireworks.

The RSPCA wants the regulations on fireworks to be amended to reduce the stress to pets, other animals and vulnerable people namely:

- to require all public firework displays within the local authority boundaries to be advertised in advance of the event, allowing residents to take precautions for their animals and vulnerable people

- to actively promote a public awareness campaign about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people — including the precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks
- to write to the UK government urging them to introduce legislation to limit the maximum noise level to 90 dB for those sold to the public for private displays
- to encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock 'quieter' fireworks for public display

Would the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Housing and Health write to our two Members of Parliament urging them to use their influence to get a change in the law?

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Housing and Health:**

Together with many of my fellow councillors I was contacted by concerned residents highlighting the campaign of the RSPCA over the issues around fireworks. The regulation of fireworks is governed by national legislation.

The local authority for the control of fireworks is Staffordshire County Council and their trading standards team works with retailers to ensure that the fireworks sold are safe, and they have powers to enforce against those who place non-compliant fireworks on the market, including those imported illegally or via the internet.

The regulation of fireworks, their sale and public displays is not something which comes under the remit of LDC. However, public displays for Bonfire Night are well advertised in advance locally, which is one of the aims of the RSPCA campaign.

With regard to the many and complex issues raised around fireworks I can do no better than refer members to the following report published on 20 March 2020 setting out the Government's response to the Petitions Committee's First Report of the Session 2019-21.

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/421/documents/1566/default/>

This was debated before the petitions committee on 2 November 2020 and has cross party support. The following update was given by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in which he advised that he had commissioned a report by the Office for Product Safety (OPPS) to consider decibel levels and obtain evidence on the impact of fireworks on animal health to inform any changes in legislation. Separately the OPSS has commissioned a programme on the decibel levels of fireworks on sale to the public.

Many of our residents are concerned about animal welfare and vulnerable people being affected by fireworks. It is good to see Government will use the pending report to drive changes to the existing legislation. Therefore it makes sense to ask for our MP's support for a safe environment for the enjoyment of fireworks and address all the issues raised around fireworks once the report is published.

**Q6. Question from Councillor Anketell to the Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy and Local Plan**

Given the acknowledged Climate Emergency, would the Cabinet Member make it mandatory that

- photovoltaic cells are fitted on all pitched roofs and that electric vehicle charging points are fitted on all new housing and other buildings, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, and that this is included in the new Local Plan?

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy and Local Plan:**

I would confirm to Councillor Anketell that our emerging local plan will recognise the need for appropriate provision of electric vehicle charging points. Lichfield District Council will not however mandate charging points are provided on all new housing and other buildings, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, as such a policy would be disproportionate and take no account of the choice motorists may make in the future in terms of alternative fuels such as hydrogen.

As there are many forms of renewable energy available, for the same reasons Lichfield District Council does not expect to mandate that photovoltaic cells are fitted to pitched roofs of all new housing and other buildings, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings. The choice of renewable energy source should be one for the person(s) living in the dwelling.