

MEMBER QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS
Council Meeting – 3rd February, 2022

Question: 1.
From: Councillor Osborne
Response by: Councillor Lamb (Cabinet Spokesperson for Environment and Transportation)

Question:

What actions have been taken to alleviate the risk of flooding in Darfield ward, especially in Low Valley?

Information for response:

Thank you, Cllr Osborne, for this question.

Below is an update of the work undertaken in this area, starting with the most recent work then going back to work immediately after the floods in the area in November 2019

With specific regard to Darfield and Low Valley, following the Overview & Scrutiny Commission review of our overall approach to flood alleviation in Barnsley where Cllr Markham and Cllr Smith raised similar queries, I am pleased to report that approximately 227 of the surface water gullies across Darfield have now been inspected.

Of those investigated:

- 73 were required low-level maintenance - which 69 have now been cleared.
- 9 were initially unable to be cleared due to parked cars – all of which have been cleared following a return visit,
- 4 required further investigation with the works now planned to rectify the issues identified.
- The remainder were all free-flowing.

The Enhanced Drainage Programme, commissioned by Cabinet in 2020 as an additional investment programme, saw the following stretches of highway inspected and any blockages cleared:

- Nanny Marr Road (20 Gullies)
- Snape Hill Road (36 Gullies)
- George Street (18 Gullies) and
- Stoneyford Road (10 Gullies)

The reported issues with road flooding on Old Doncaster Road and Pinfold Lane have been remedied, and an extra gully has been installed on Quern Way to cure ponding.

In the aftermath of the floods in November 2019, the Internal Drainage Board undertook dredging and clearance work along Bulling Dyke where it passes under Station Road. We used heavy mechanical equipment to clear the banks in this section and increase the capacity of the dyke.

The bridge on George Street required attention to the downstream walls. This is being dealt with by the Environment Agency and the riparian owner, the owner of land adjacent to the watercourse.

Last week on the 28 January, we were pleased to be part of South Yorkshire's 'Connected By Water Plan' launch. It's great news for our residents that Low Valley has been identified and earmarked in the plan for a flood alleviation scheme. To accelerate the delivery of this plan, we have appointed an experienced flood risk engineer to our newly created Flood Risk Co-Ordinator position.

The 'Connected By Water alliance' will ensure that a collective approach to flood mitigation and protection measures are adopted. For Darfield and Low Valley, we will be working closely with the Environment Agency, the Independent Drainage Board, and Yorkshire Water.

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Council Meeting – 3rd February, 2022

Question: 2.
From: Councillor Kitching
Response by: Councillor Lamb (Cabinet Spokesperson for Environment and Transportation)

Question:

At the last Full Council meeting on November 25th 2021, this council resolved to undertake its own assessment into the financial implications of bus franchising, in order to establish whether their impact on the Council's finances and on taxpayers is reasonable.

Could the Cabinet member please update us on the progress of this assessment so far?

Information for response:

Thank you, Cllr Kitching, for your question.

At the Full Council meeting on the 25th November 2021, it was resolved that the Administration:

- 1) informs the South Yorkshire Combined Authority of its support for conducting a statutory assessment of franchising
- 2) requests a Combined Authority vote to release a "notice of intent to prepare a franchising assessment" within 6 months.

The motion also resolved that these two requests only be implemented once the financial implications become clearer and their impact on the Council's finances and on taxpayers is considered to be reasonable.

I can confirm that a report was submitted to the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority on 24th January with these recommendations.

In addition, a full franchising report is being brought to full council on 24th February.

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Council Meeting – 3rd February, 2022

Question: 3.
From: Councillor Osborne
Response by: Councillor Lamb (Cabinet Spokesperson for Environment and Transportation)

Question:

Following a recent spate of illegal flytipping of tyres in Darfield, waste tyres have been collected by council clean up teams. What happens to the tyres?

Information for response:

Thank you, Cllr Osborne, for your question.

Tyres are recovered to Smithies Depot and separated from other waste.

The tyres are then collected and recycled to produce energy for UK construction aggregate production.

A review is currently underway to look at alternative reuse of the material to move the materials higher up the waste hierarchy and to reduce the carbon involved in the overall operation.

Fly-tipping is a blight on our borough. People can help us tackle fly-tipping across the borough by reporting incidents on our website at barnsley.gov.uk/flytipping. This information will be shared with our teams, who will respond quickly to clear it up.

Information about any person committing an environmental crime, including fly-tipping, can be sent to our teams at safer@barnsley.gov.uk.

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Council Meeting – 3rd February, 2022

Question: 4.
From: Councillor Fielding
Response by: Councillor Cheetham (Cabinet Spokesperson Regeneration and Culture)

Question:

Now that the developer of the allocated housing site adjacent to the M1 at Dodworth is proposing not to use the access point created by the Council demolishing 2 recently improved four bedroomed Council Houses in 2020 on South Road, Dodworth, can the Cabinet Member please detail the financial loss to the Council of this action? In particular can the cabinet member detail the costs of the following:

- The costs of rehousing the sitting tenants including the purchase of alternative accommodation
- The costs of demolishing the 2 houses and making good the site afterwards.
- The loss of rental income from the date that the tenants were evicted to present
- The loss of Council Tax income from the date of eviction to present
- The value of the loss of the assets of the 2 Council Houses

Information for response:

Thank you Cllr Fielding for your question.

Context: The land to the rear of South Road is designated in the Local Plan (HS10) for housing development.

Back in 2018, Persimmon Homes had made a planning application to build 146 dwellings on the private land to the rear of South Road, Dodworth. At the time, the Council entered into discussions with regards to creating access to the site, with the land to the south and west (via the existing housing estate) deemed unfeasible.

The decision to demolish the 2 properties on South Road to provide said access, which was a Berneslai Homes delegated decision, was made on the basis that Persimmon Homes would reimburse the Council's costs of demolition, cost of dispersal and professional fees, upon securing the site etc. The Council would have received a capital receipt of approximately £0.8M from the sale of the land as

well as securing new council tax receipts and new homes bonus from the new development.

Persimmon Homes subsequently withdrew their planning application.

The Council's land (playing fields) is still designated for housing development in the Local Plan (HS10) and therefore the access issue remains a Council priority.

- The cost of rehousing the sitting tenants was £12,656 (dispersal compensation / home loss).
- The cost of the purchase of alternative accommodation was £133,900 for the purchase of a 4 bedrooed property in Dodworth (Hawthorne Crescent) with associated works to bring up to the Barnsley Homes Standard of c. £6,100 bringing the total cost to £140,000. The Council funded this from its approved acquisitions programme and voids budgets respectively.
- The costs of demolishing the 2 properties and making good the site was £28,604, including service disconnections.
- The loss of rental income since the time of the cessation of both of the tenancies to the 27th January 22, equates to £24,472. This has been offset with the rent yielded from the purchase of the alternative accommodation (Hawthorne Crescent), which equates to £12,529, from the period of the tenancy start date and the 27th January. Together, the net rent loss totals £11,943.
- The loss of council tax to the Council, since the time of the cessation of both of the tenancies, to the end of January 22 totals £5,627.

Both properties were written out of the Council's accounts at £46,207 each (£92,414 in total), based on the prescribed methodology under the RICS Red Book / CIPFA Accounting Code of Practice, at its existing use value – social housing. This does not reflect the market value as the existing use value takes into account a secured tenancy where the tenant enjoys lower than market rents / right to buy etc.

Additional Information:

The decision to demolish the pair of semi-detached houses on South Road was made following a careful assessment of all other possible access points into the land next to the motorway slip road that is allocated for residential development.

This included the access that Keepmoat is proposing off Keresforth Road as well as Bark Meadows, which Permission had proposed in their planning application previously.

Ultimately, it is up to an applicant to decide what to include in their planning application and whether or not to take on board any informal advice that the

council has provided about the suitability of their proposal. An applicant is therefore entitled to argue that alternative access is not necessary but that doesn't mean the Council agrees.

Now that we are in receipt of a planning application, it has to follow due process and so until all comments are received and planning considerations have been assessed, we are unable to say what the officer recommendation to the Planning and Regulatory Board will be.

The question pre-supposes that the Council is going to grant planning permission for access off Keresforth Road, and so it is inappropriate to respond or devote time to the matters raised ahead of Planning and Regulatory Board determining the planning application.

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Council Meeting – 3rd February, 2022

Question: 5.
From: Councillor Hunt
Response by: Councillor Franklin (Cabinet Support Member Core Services)

Question:

At the Full Council meeting in July 2021, in response to my question, the Cabinet Support member confirmed that the Digital First project had created the capability of providing status updates to residents in relation to online requests. It was indicated that residents would start to receive these status updates by the end of last year. This timescale does not appear to have been met. Please can an update be provided?

Information for response:

Thank you, Cllr Hunt. We have previously indicated that the project would be live by the end of 2021.

Regrettably, there has been some slippage to the launch date. Like many other services, we have been supporting the COVID response for our residents, alongside dealing with reduced staffing capacity.

I'm pleased to confirm that the rollout of this functionality is due to start by the beginning of March at the latest, initially providing updates to residents who report fly-tipping issues online.

The IT and Waste services teams have worked together to ensure that back-office systems are ready for the change and accurately show this status.

The work to obtain status updates will then be rolled out to other transactions, offering our residents status updates for their online enquiries.

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Question: 6.
From: Councillor Hunt
Response by: Councillor Lamb (Cabinet Spokesperson Environment and Transportation)

Question:

In 2020 the council purchased new speed indicator devices and radar boxes. Please provide the locations where the speed indicator devices have been deployed over the last 3 months.

Information for response:

Thank you, Cllr Hunt, for your question.

Owing to a number of operational impacts, it has been difficult for our officers to implement the expected programme of Speed Indicator Devices and Radar Box deployments.

As I'm sure you understand, the 4th COVID wave impacted many organisations across the country, and the council was no exception, dealing with supporting the COVID response alongside reduced staffing capacity.

A number of key vacancies within the section have also been hard to fill - there are over 100 public sector engineering vacancies in our patch. This has forced us to prioritise our capacity where it is needed the most. Unfortunately, this has resulted in the Speed Indicator Devices not being deployed in that time.

However, I am pleased to report to Members that this is a temporary situation, which officers are working tirelessly to resolve.

In the coming weeks, we will deploy Speed Indicator Devices to Staincross Common (Darton East), Intake Lane (Darton West) and Racecommon Road (Kingstone) - each for a period of 4 weeks.

The programme of locations beyond these sites is being reviewed and will be shared with Members in due course.