

## **Council – 19<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

### **1. Question from Councillor Charlie Edwards to Councillor Andrew Warriner**

*What steps are the Council taking to ensure that all Council Housing and Housing Association properties, and building materials used are properly safe and secure from any and all fire hazards.*

#### **ANSWER**

In the wake of the severe fire at Grenfell Tower, in North Kensington, London, I want to reassure our residents that Lancaster City Council takes fire safety very seriously.

In respect of our own council housing, residents' safety has and always will be our number one priority. Lancaster City Council works to ensure that all our buildings are safe and comply with Fire Safety regulations. Every building has a current Fire Safety Assessment and we ensure that the building and all Fire Safety Equipment installed is properly tested and alarms, fire doors, lighting and escape routes are properly maintained.

The Council has a published Fire Safety Policy Statement which set out our policy to protect all relevant persons from the fire hazards by ensuring safe premises are provided and safe systems of work followed, so far as is reasonably practicable.

Regular Fire Risk Assessments are carried out by an independent assessor in order to ensure Lancaster's blocks meet the highest possible fire standards. In addition to this Lancaster City Council has developed a programme of fire safety improvements across the city to keep you, and all of our residents, as safe as possible. The construction of our blocks means individual flats are compartmented (individually boxed in), which effectively protects residents in the event of a fire. We also work closely with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service to ensure that all our buildings are as safe from fire as possible.

In response to the tragic event at Grenfell Tower a full statement of the current matters relating to fire safety in Lancaster City Council high rise properties has been issued to all residents in the high rise blocks on Mainway, and has been circulated to all councillors setting out the current measure in place and the actions being current taken to maintain the level of assurance on fire safety.

Fire Risk Assessments are undertaken by independent fire risk assessors and are then periodically reviewed. The most recent review of Mainway was in 2016.

Council Officers have six monthly meeting with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) to discuss future and ongoing projects. Where the Lancashire fire and Rescue Service have any areas of concern these are highlighted and are addressed as soon as it is possible to do so.

Officers have met with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service on 16th June 2017 and undertook a safety inspection of the flat blocks on Mainway. The outcome of the

inspection confirm the action the Council was already had in place as part of the planned maintenance of the estate which includes the renewal of existing front doors and fire safety measures – renewing and upgrading the existing door closers. Through an adjustment of the existing programme the completion of this work will be brought forward to be contained within this year's works on the estate. The inspection also highlighted some minor works to repairing render damage, and this work will also be programmed. In addition we are also commissioning an independent survey, which will assess the long term maintenance requirements of the tower blocks, and other flat blocks on the Mainway estate.

In relation to Housing Association properties within the District the scrutiny of the response by Housing Associations to the recent events has been directly undertaken by the Homes and Communities Agency as the regulator. The Department for Communities and Local Government have also established a team that is directly talking to and monitoring the actions being taken.

In addition the Fire and Rescue Service have carried out a fire safety audit of all private dwellings over 6 stories, and our Private Housing Services have been liaising closely with colleagues in the fire service. The Council's Housing Standards Manager is meeting with the Fire and Rescue Service this week to reflect on the outcomes of these audits and any future implications. Housing Associations have set up their own programme of checks, and officers will also be contacting each association through our Registered Provider Strategic Partnership Meeting for further details of these checks and how they will be monitored.

The Council has always worked closely with the Fire and Rescue Service to prioritise fire safety both with the Council's own housing stock and within the private rented sector, and we will continue to do so.

**Supplementary: Can the response be electronically circulated to all members and communicated to residents?**

Response: Councillor Warriner confirmed that this was appropriate.

## **2. Question from Councillor John Reynolds to Councillor Darren Clifford**

*Our local community swimming pools are a central part of our communities. In rural areas like Carnforth and Millhead, they provide access to swimming facilities that residents would otherwise not be able to enjoy. Carnforth swimming pool also provides swimming lessons so hundreds of school children every year from 16 local primary schools. I have learnt that bid to save Carnforth Swimming Pool being pursued by Carnforth High School now appears to be in jeopardy. What reassurances can Cllr. Clifford offer us that a new bid to save the pool by Residents and Carnforth Town Council will be successful?*

### **ANSWER**

**This question was dealt with under the Urgent Business Report at Agenda Item 4.**

**3. Question from Councillor John Reynolds to Councillor Darren Clifford**

*Cllr. Clifford outline the actions that this council will take to ensure that the doors remain open, and that a smooth and seamless transfer takes place for users and staff?*

**ANSWER**

**This question was dealt with under the Urgent Business Report at Agenda Item 4.**

**4. Question from Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox to Councillor Anne Whitehead**

*What is the current (2017-18) expected expenditure against the earmarked £1m budget support reserve and for what purpose(s)?*

**ANSWER**

Known spend is estimated in the region of £153K. This covers costs associated with the Assistant Chief Executive post approved by Cabinet back in February, and community pools (as covered by the urgent business item earlier tonight).

Further allocations will be made during the course of the year, and they will be published either as part of any key decision-making process, or retrospectively through financial reporting if below the key decision threshold. The quarterly monitoring reports will include a statement on the reserve, identifying any allocations.

**5. Question from Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox to Councillor Janice Hanson**

*What is the current estimate for the road infrastructure costs - including, but not limited to, the current plans for two crossings of WCML, one crossing of the M6 and a revised J33 layout - of enabling the development of Bailrigg garden village?*

**ANSWER**

The current estimate of costs for the major revisions to Junction 33 required to facilitate additional growth in South Lancaster is between £50m-60m. As yet there are no estimates relating to crossings over or under the West Coast main line. It should be noted that the junction improvements are not related solely to Bailrigg Garden Village. They are also required to address capacity issues on the A6 generally.

**6. Question from Councillor Dave Brookes to Councillor Darren Clifford**

*When will the Council confirm its intentions regarding the continuation of the Beyond the Castle project?*

**ANSWER**

The Council is currently undertaking some research to bring together a range of information on work undertaken so far, as part of the Beyond the Castle project. A

report is expected to be available for Cabinet in the autumn and will propose a way forward for management of the archaeological potential of the site.

The Council will be making some critical decisions about Place Shaping during the remainder of this financial year and from that it will be able to start mapping out its capacity to bring together a number of important projects in a sequence and order which it can practically manage. It is very important that the Council deploys its skills and resources on the top priority projects first then aligns others in the right order to follow on when capacity and funding permits. Beyond the Castle is a project that will be considered as part of this process.

**Supplementary: Isn't it regrettable that the county council officer has now left and we have lost the opportunity to employ someone ourselves?**

Response: Councillor Clifford responded that it was indeed sad that this had been the case but no project would be dependent on one individual and this would be a 20/25 year project which would move forward.

**7. Question from Councillor Caroline Jackson to Councillor Darren Clifford**

*Following the Cabinet Members enthusiastic description of the way work is going forward on Castle Fields at O&S, please could he give us the names of those involved on the new group and where we can access minutes for their latest meetings?*

**ANSWER**

Up to the present time, the Beyond the Castle project has been managed by Lancashire County Council but new arrangements are now required. A report is expected to be available for Cabinet in the autumn and will propose a way forward, including management arrangements.