

1. **Question from Councillor Caroline Jackson to Councillor Hanson**

Why is Lancashire not involved in the Great Northern Forest?

ANSWER

This has only just been announced by the Prime Minister not long ago. The principal aim of the concept appears to be the re-introduction of afforestation into the major urbanised belt of the UK between Liverpool and Hull. In short, the principal urban belt in the north. Most of Lancashire sits above that belt and is characteristically more rural and sitting outside that major belt of urban conurbations.

The emphasis of the project will be to increase tree cover around major conurbations to 20%. There will also be a focus on river valleys, where there are benefits for flood prevention and soil loss.

Supplementary: *In view of the benefits for river valleys and flooding, could a special application be made to government to be included in those areas?*

Response: Councillor Hanson agreed that, yes, it could.

2. **Question from Councillor Caroline Jackson to Councillor Hughes**

What progress has been made since the floodline was set up last month? I'm thinking, for example, about the number of contacts it has had and the number of blocked gullies that have been reported, etc.

ANSWER

Immediately following the floods on 22nd Nov the City Council set up a dedicated email address and mobile phone number that residents affected by flooding could contact. Besides this the Council website provided links to other partners (Environment Agency, County Council) and comprehensive advice. The dedicated email address has so far received 64 emails and the mobile number over 60 calls (Total duration of calls received / made on the mobile – 5 hours 23 minutes 58 seconds). The majority of contacts were in relation to request to remove soiled household items, and general advice. Contacts that weren't the direct responsibility of the City Council (eg blocked gullies, blocked culverts, damaged roads) were then referred directly to the relevant agency for action. Providing direct access to the Council in this way following the flooding has proved to be extremely successful and was very much welcomed by those who contacted us. It worked well having one point of contact.

Supplementary: *Of the number of blocked gullies that have been reported, how many have been cleared?*

Response: Responsibility for surface water drainage systems rests with Lancashire County Council. As previously stated we have made it straightforward for residents to report problems for us to pass on to the County Council. The County Council has provided an update on gully emptying following the floods – they have attended to

4000 gullies in the District since the floods so far and have increased capacity by using sub-contractors. I have also requested a meeting with the responsible Cabinet Member at County, Councillor Iddon. There has been no reply so far, but I will phone and chase that up with him.

3. Questions from Councillor Peter Williamson to Councillor Blamire

Question 1: *It is understood that this Council has recently been paying £81 per hour for an Interim Legal Services Manager.*

Did the Council Leader agree to this level of hourly payment?

ANSWER

All Chief Officers, including the Chief Executive, have delegated responsibility for the appointment of permanent or temporary posts (below JNC Chief Officer level) within their service and to determine commencing salary. This post was an interim Legal Services Manager, who then took on the additional duties of Monitoring Officer. At the time, the Council did not have a permanent Chief Officer for Legal and Governance or a Legal Services Manager.

Question 2: *Why was an Employment Committee not set up to oversee this appointment?*

ANSWER

The appointment did not require the approval of any Council Committee and the majority of the cost was offset by the Chief Officer vacancy position.

Supplementary: The hourly rate equates to a rate of pay of £176k per annum. Are there any other employees, agency staff or consultants receiving a similar rate of pay?

(Answer to be provided in writing)