

COUNCIL - 16 NOVEMBER 2023

QUESTIONS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

1	<p><u>Question submitted by Councillor Pugh (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) to the Cabinet Member for Children’s Social Care (Councillor Doyle)</u></p>
	<p>Subject: Children placed in Care by Sefton</p>
	<p>Of the children currently placed in care by Sefton:-</p> <p>(a) what percentage suffer with a serious mental or physical disability or illness?</p> <p>(b) what percentage have a primary carer or parent with addiction issues?</p> <p>(c) what percentage have a primary carer or parent incapacitated by serious mental or physical illness?</p>
	<p>Response:</p>
	<p>(a) “Before we can be assured of supplying a correct answer, we would require further clarification on the definition of “serious mental or physical disability or illness”.</p> <p>(b) We would require further definition on what is meant by “addiction issue”.</p> <p>(c) See above.</p> <p>In relation to all three questions, it is important to note that even if parents have problems with substance misuse or physical illness, this may not be the reason why a care episode has taken place.”</p>
2	<p><u>Question submitted by Councillor Prendergast (Leader of the Conservative Group) to the Cabinet Member for Locality Services (Councillor Fairclough)</u></p>
	<p>Subject: Financial Interests</p>
	<p>At the Council Meeting of 14th September 2023, the Deputy Leader stated as part of his answer to a question submitted concerning his failure to declare property interests, that he owned a 50% stake in Fairclough Properties Limited, which apparently means the company belongs to the Deputy Leader’s son.</p> <p>Yet, on the day of the Council Meeting, records at Companies House indicated that the Deputy Leader in fact owned a 75% stake in the company.</p> <p>It was only on 21st September, a full week after the Council Meeting, that the Deputy Leader filed papers at Companies House changing the beneficial ownership at the company from 75% to 50%.</p> <p>Can the Deputy Leader explain:</p> <p>A. Why did he tell this Council on 14th September that he owned 50% of the share capital in Fairclough Properties when Companies House stated he owned 75%?</p> <p>B. Why did he wait a week to update the records at Companies House to bring his</p>

	ownership in line with what he told this Council?
	Response:
	“At the Council meeting on 14 th September my comments regarding 50/50 stake in Fairclough Properties Ltd was correct.”
3	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Prendergast (Leader of the Conservative Group) to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing (Councillor Hardy)</u>
	Subject: Cost of Living Payments
	Can the Cabinet Member confirm how much funding has been allocated to households in Sefton from the Conservative Government in respect of this winter’s first set of Cost of Living payments (payments of £300 to those eligible) and how many households have received such payments?
	Response:
	“The cost-of-living payments are administered by the Department for Work and Pensions and, as such, the data as to how many households in Sefton have received assistance is not shared with the Local Authority”.
4	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Prendergast (Leader of the Conservative Group) to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing (Councillor Hardy)</u>
	Subject: Household Support Grants
	Can the Cabinet Member confirm how much funding Sefton Council has received from the Conservative Government in respect of Household Support Grants and how many households have received support in Sefton as a result?
	Response:
	<p><u>Household Support Fund 1 - 1 October 2021 – 31 March 2022</u></p> <p>£2,435,111 – 56,777 volume</p> <p><u>Household Support Fund 2 - 1 April 2022 - 30 September 2022</u></p> <p>£2,435,111 – 94,050 volume</p> <p><u>Household Support Fund 3 - 1 October 2022 - 31 March 2023</u></p> <p>£2,435,111 – 77,408 volume (24,565 households assisted)</p> <p><u>Household Support Fund 4 - 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024</u></p> <p>£4,870,222 - 101,099 (24,165 households assisted) - this covers the first 6 months of the current financial year - 1 April 2023 - 30 September 2023.</p> <p>For Household Support Fund 1 & 2 the DWP asked the Local Authority to report volume (i.e. the number of vouchers issued) and therefore we did not record the number of households assisted.</p>

	<p>It was only from Household Support Fund 3 onwards that the DWP asked the Local Authority to report on the number of households assisted.</p> <p>Households will be able to access a number of provisions that the Household Support Fund provides and so there may be an element of double counting in terms of the number of households assisted.</p>
5	<p><u>Question submitted by Councillor Prendergast (Leader of the Conservative Group) to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Ian Maher)</u></p>
	<p>Subject: Registers of Interest</p>
	<p>In his written response to a question at the Council meeting of 14th September, the Leader of the Council stated that Registers of Interest are the responsibility of each and every individual Member.</p> <p>Does he have confidence, in light of recent issues, that the Registers of Interest for all Members of his Cabinet are now accurate and has he reminded them of their obligations in that regard?</p>
	<p>Response:</p>
	<p>“I refer to my previous answer in that registers of interest are the responsibility of every individual member of the council. This, of course, includes Cabinet Members.”</p>
6	<p><u>Question submitted by Sir Ron Watson CBE to the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services (Councillor Lappin)</u></p>
	<p>Subject: Blue Badge Applications</p>
	<p>I have been advised by a constituent over a situation which seems to have developed when a Blue Badge Parking Pass is lost.</p> <p>My constituent unfortunately did lose his pass - something which could happen to anybody - and filled in the appropriate documentation and sent the required £10 fee for a new pass to be issued.</p> <p>He was advised by the Department that there was a significant delay and that no post from the 15th September 2023 had as yet been opened and this would include his individual situation.</p> <p>Would the Cabinet Member please advise the Council of the current situation with an explanation as to how this situation has developed and confirm what arrangements have been made to issue a temporary document which could replace the Blue Badge Pass and would be accepted by those checking that cars are parked appropriately in the designated areas.”</p>
	<p>Response:</p>
	<p>“There has been a significant increase in the volume of Blue Badge applications in recent months and they are currently running at 624 per month - a 39% increase on 2019 and 22% increase in the last year alone. In order to meet this demand staffing levels have recently been increased, but inevitably this has caused a delay in dealing with applications and contacts.</p>

	<p>There is a delay in opening post but it does not go back to the 15th September.</p> <p>The Council is not allowed to issue temporary Blue Badges and will not issue temporary “permits” to Blue Badge holders as it feels such permits would be confusing to motorists, as they would only be recognised in Sefton Council owned parking areas and would not allow motorists to park in private car parks, hospitals, supermarkets and other Local Authority areas.”</p>
7	<p><u>Question submitted by Councillor Prendergast (Leader of the Conservative Group) to the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services (Councillor Lappin)</u></p>
	<p>Subject: Fixed Penalty Parking Notices</p>
	<p>Why were fixed penalty notices issued to veterans and those attending the Remembrance Sunday service in Southport when pay and display machines in numerous locations across Southport town centre were not working?</p>
	<p>Response:</p>
	<p>“A total of five PCNs were issued to cars without valid payment in car parks in Southport Town Centre <u>after 12pm on Sunday</u>, including four PCNs issued to cars parked on Tulketh Street without evidence of valid payment.</p> <p>We were later made aware of an intermittent fault with the card payment transaction processing system which resulted in some people being unable to pay by card, or by cash.</p> <p>This fault was not something we had any control over and as soon as it was brought to our attention, we stopped enforcement of paid for parking places.”</p> <p>While we do have an operational phone payment system and ability to pay via smartphone app, we will, as we always do, assess any appeal for tickets issued during this time and take into account these factors.</p> <p>There is evidence that the ticket issuing machines on the two Tulketh Street car parks were functioning on Sunday and processed 396 transactions (122 card, 274 coins). There doesn’t appear to have been any issue with the pay by phone facility.”</p>
8	<p><u>Question submitted by Councillor Pugh (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) to the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services (Councillor Lappin)</u></p>
	<p>Subject: The Pier Insurance</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. With whom is Southport Pier currently insured? 2. Does this insurance cover public liability and what is the premium for that public liability cover? 3. How many claims have been made under public liability insurance for accidents on Southport Pier during the last five years and what has been the cost to the Council of settling them (include anywhere the council has acted as its own insurer)?

	4. What is the Council's total bill for public liability across all its assets?
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	Response:
	<p>1) "The Pier is currently insured via Zurich Municipal for Material Damage insurance (fire, storm etc), QBE for Public Liability insurance and Bowring Marsh (Lloyds) for Terrorism.</p> <p>2) Yes, there is public liability cover for the Pier as well as for all Council's activities and services. The cost of the insurance premium is seen as being commercially sensitive. The premium is based on the Council's overall risk/footprint and taking into account the claims experience across the Council, as well as the insurer's perceived effectiveness of the Council's risk management process.</p> <p>3) Claims experience (financial years 2018/19 to 2022/23, plus 2023/24 to date) shows that 15 claims have been received (all personal injury).</p> <p>Of these, eleven have been finalised as below: –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Liability admitted - five with total payments made of £38,430.20 ○ Liability denied - four ○ Not pursued - two <p>The remaining four open claims are currently being investigated or negotiated.</p> <p>Note: All values stated above relate to damages, third party costs and defence costs where applicable.</p> <p>4) The public liability insurance premium that the Council is charged for all of its assets and activities is seen as being commercially sensitive."</p>
9	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Pugh (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Skills (Councillor Atkinson)</u>
	Subject: Demolition of Floral Hall
	<p>1. At what date is the demolition of Southport Floral Hall and Theatre scheduled to begin?</p> <p>2. Who is the appointed contractor for the demolition?</p>
	Response:
	<p>1. "Spring 2024.</p> <p>2. The Council is in a pre-construction services agreement with Kier Group. The main construction contract and in turn a demolition subcontract, have not been appointed at this time."</p>
10	<u>Question submitted by Councillor Pugh (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing (Councillor Hardy)</u>
	Subject: HMO Licensing

	How many landlords in each of the three constituencies making up Sefton have been subject to enforcement action under the Council's HMO Licensing Scheme(s)?

	Response:
	<p>"59 HMO Landlords in Sefton have been subject to enforcement action in relation to HMO licensing since the start of the Selective and Additional HMO Licensing schemes on 1/3/2018. Some of those Landlords have been the subject of multiple enforcement action.</p> <p>The constituency breakdown is as follows: -</p> <p>Southport = 36 Landlords Sefton Central = 0 Bootle = 23 Landlords</p> <p>Enforcement action has included Prosecution, Service of Civil Penalty Fines, Service of Statutory Notices and Rent Repayment Orders.</p> <p>Offences have included failure to apply for a HMO Licence, failure to comply with Licence conditions, or failure to comply with HMO Management Regulations."</p>
11	<u>Question submitted by Sir Ron Watson to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Skills (Councillor Atkinson)</u>
	Subject: Southport Holiday Guide
	<p>I am sure the Cabinet Member will agree that the Southport Holiday Guide is one of the most important marketing tools that we have to promote the tourism industry in Southport.</p> <p>Members have been advised that this will not be available until the end of January 2024 whilst the main holiday booking season usually falls within this month.</p> <p>Whilst I accept that there are other methods of communication and ways in which details of what is on offer can be accessed the guidebook still remains crucial.</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member advise why it is not going to be available until the end of January and will she confirm that in future years we can be assured that it will be printed and published by at least the end of October?</p>
	Response:
	"The 2023 Visitor Guide covers the whole of 2023; the 2024 Visitor Guide will be published in January 2024 to cover the full year. This is the same as previous years."