

COUNCIL – 14th November 2024

QUESTIONS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1	COUNCIL QUESTION FROM: Mr. Jeff Holloway	
	MEETING DATE:	14 th November 2024
	TO:	Councillor Liz Dowd, Cabinet Member Communities, Partnership & Engagement
	SUBJECT:	Housing of refugees
	QUESTION: My question is how many more immigrants, refugees are going to be allowed to be housed within the Sefton Borough and is this council going to put refugees in the 105 dwellings that is being built on the old Johnston site on Linacre Road before Sefton born residents. And I am a resident that is extremely concerned for cohesion and for risk to council taxpayers as the cost of this is paid for by Sefton council taxpayers in the end and we residents are getting to the point of unaffordability through increased taxation.	
	Response: Sefton Council does not provide housing – it owns no council housing stock. Housing of asylum seekers and refugees is carried out by SERCO as part of a national contract with the Home Office. Properties built on the former Johnsons site by housing association Plus Dane Housing will be let through our Property Pool Plus system to those in the most housing need in the borough in accordance with our published allocations policy.	

2	COUNCIL QUESTION FROM: Maureen Walker-Miller	
	MEETING DATE:	14 th November 2024
	TO:	Councillor Daren Veidman, Cabinet Member Housing and Highways
	SUBJECT:	Removal of Traffic from Church Road and Princess Way
	<p>QUESTION:</p> <p>Bearing in mind Sefton Council is set to approve an update to the ‘Maritime Corridor’ Project, a £25 million scheme to improve the traffic infrastructure of the “business section” of the A5036 corridor, Switch to Netherton Way, and, Peter Dowd’s comments regarding himself and the Labour Party securing the victory of the cancellation of an infrastructure that included a Road across Rimrose Valley, my question is simply this:</p> <p>WHAT are the Elected Members, Cabinet Members and Sefton Council doing, and what funding is being committed to removing the traffic and pollution from the residential and school communities section, of Church Road, Princess Way and all surrounding areas that are used as alternate routes (rat runs) from Netherton Way to the port? (I hope our neighbours who live on other sections such as Park Lane and Copy Lane will be supported by the Maritime Scheme)</p> <p>It is no longer acceptable to say “We don’t own the road”. This protocol has to be withdrawn as Sefton do not own the Dunning’s bridge business section either, but are providing hefty investment. As well as this, the A5036 is a government road and is now owned by the current Labour government. We are residents of Sefton not National Highways and need urgent measures put in place to remove the traffic and pollution from our neighbourhoods, including all areas that are used as alternate routes (rat runs) to protect people from cradle to grave.</p> <p>After 21 years of Sefton, our past councillor, now current MP Peter Dowd (who has admittedly “campaigning for decades against proposals to bulldoze a road through Rimrose Valley”) and many other serving councillors, holding the knowledge of the increased productivity from the port, and the projected increase in traffic and pollution, (evidenced within the 2003 PORT OF LIVERPOOL STRATEGIC TRANSPORT ACCESS STUDY) we would hope that as with the “business section”, an adequate infrastructure and a solution to our major “Here and Now” health and wellbeing problems should be IMMEDIATE. PEOPLE FIRST</p>	
	<p>Response:</p> <p>The Council are keen to start the process of pushing forward with alternative options after plans for the road through Rimrose Valley were formally scrapped.</p> <p>In the government’s autumn budget, it announced that the proposed road</p>	

from the A5036 Princess Way linking the Port of Liverpool to Switch Island would be dropped following years of campaigning from local residents, supported by Labour Councillors, the area's Labour MPs and the Campaign to Save Rimrose Valley.

After years of delay and obstruction by the previous government leaving residents and the council in limbo, the timely decision from the new Labour government will help progress discussions by pressing transport bosses to bring forward alternative plans that will help reduce congestion and improve air pollution for local residents.

We have always been firm in our commitment to Rimrose Valley Country Park. It is a vitally important green space, and we have campaigned with residents to protect this important asset. This announcement from the Labour government is a recognition that the view of the council and residents was the right one.

Getting this proposal scrapped is the first step. We now need to work with the Department for Transport, National Highways and the wider Liverpool City Region area to continue to look at what can be done to alleviate the impact of traffic to and from the port. There is no one solution, and all partners have a role to play to deliver improvement. We believe the answer is not a new road but multiple different alternatives, including better transport links for the public and freight and improvements to encourage people to walk and cycle, that will take traffic off the roads.

Sefton council has an Air Quality Action Plan in place with a wide range of actions to reduce air pollution across the borough and in the two Air Quality Management Areas on the A5036. These include, Comprehensive Air Quality Monitoring, a HGV Booking System to improve movement of HGVs in and out of the Port of Liverpool, and improvements to traffic management and priorities at junctions to reduce congestion and standing traffic. In addition, we have invested more than £10m to improve walking and cycling facilities and junction design to reduce traffic and congestion. Joint work with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) to identify, investigate and take action against HGVs emitting unacceptable levels of pollution, planning conditions requiring actions to mitigate air quality impact from developments and encourage workplace travel plans, tree planting to combat pollution, educating and advising people on simple actions they can take to reduce emissions. These are just a few examples on how we are working to improve air quality.

We acknowledge this is a really important issue for residents and we will keep people informed as plans progress.”

3	COUNCIL QUESTION FROM: Maria Walsh	
	MEETING DATE:	14 th November 2024
	TO:	Councillor Liz Dowd, Cabinet Member Communities, Partnership & Engagement
	SUBJECT:	2024/25 Temporary Accommodation Project
<p>"Why does information about the cost of the 2024/25 temporary accommodation project qualify as "Exempt information"? Particularly as the cost for this year has spiralled to £2.3 million. Why aren't taxpayers allowed to know how the Council is spending their hard earned money?" I will be referring this matter to the ICO too</p>		
<p>Response:</p> <p>Demand for temporary accommodation is an important issue for the council and we are making every effort to address this by preventing homelessness, improving the provision of suitable housing, and so reducing the cost of providing this vital support. This activity includes working with registered providers of social housing and the private rental market to ensure that our most vulnerable members of the community are able to access suitable accommodation.</p> <p>The report you refer to provides necessary detail to councillors to assist them with understanding the financial parameters of the temporary housing provider market in Sefton, how the council is purchasing this accommodation from suppliers, and the efforts being made to reduce this cost through an appropriate procurement exercise.</p> <p>The details of the report remain confidential to enable the council to achieve the best value when purchasing goods and services from the market. Were the specific details of the report to be made public at this time, it would provide potential suppliers with insight to the level of spend per unit by the council and commercial information relating to housing providers in the market. This would potentially hamper the council's efforts to reduce this cost to the public purse.</p> <p>The information relates to the financial affairs of the Council and is considered to be commercially sensitive and should be exempt from publication pursuant to Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The Public Interest Test has been applied and favours the information being treated as exempt.</p> <p>Whilst it is accepted that there is a general public interest in the disclosure of commercial information to ensure that there is transparency in the accountability of public money this must be balanced against the public interest in protecting the commercial interests of the Council and ensuring best value for money.</p>		