

Questions for Cabinet 19 February 2014

1 Agenda Item 15. This council would like to create 600 or more new council houses, whether by new-build or acquisition. Clauses 5.1 and 9.2 make it clear that the HRA will be used, as will access to borrowing. Will today's proposals have any effect upon the existing debt repayment plan, for example, by extending the previously published repayment period ?

The decision to deliver 600 new and additional council homes over 30 years will not negatively impact on the capacity of the business plan to repay debt over the long term.

2 (3rd party) With respect to the alleged difficulties with a group in the SW housing area, an offer to the CEO to have KPMG go through the group's books that would have sorted the issue out once and for all has been ignored. Why ?

Advice was taken from Internal Audit on this matter. This was included as part of the outcome that was agreed with the Area Board and communicated to this TARA. It is not appropriate to discuss the financial accounts of a third party with another individual.

3 (3rd party) Use of FoIA has returned about 200 pages of council documents from named council officers that contain a plethora of highly personal insults and inaccuracies about a community group over several years as part of a malicious campaign.

Does this council think that the use and distribution of such defamatory and wilfully inaccurate material is acceptable, and if not, what steps will it take to provide redress ?

A detailed investigation was undertaken in October last year that resulted in the derecognising of the new Batemoor TARA by the Interim Director of Housing Services (Janet Sharpe). The 200 pages was included in the information that was considered. The outcome of that investigation was communicated to the TARA. There was no evidence to suggest that any Elected Member, Officer or communication from the Council/Housing Service was nothing other than professional in delivering high quality services, and providing advice to Elected Members and Boards.

4 The proposed Sheffield Federation for tenants has issued a statement saying that TARA membership will be automatic. This is wrong, as it is tenants who must decide and instruct their TARAs whether to opt in. What is this council going to do to redress this ?

The Tenant Federation is currently in the process of developing its business case and firmer proposals for how it intends to operate. These proposals will then be discussed with Members, and will include the arrangements for membership.

5 The proposed Recognition Policy states that tenants from any area can join any TARA. What's the point of having area-based TARAs at all and how can legitimate area tenant representation be demonstrated if this is allowed ?

The question is incorrect. The recommendations about TARA membership in the Recognition Policy are as follows: -

- All members of the TARA Committee must live within the TARA boundary.
- Anyone who lives outside a TARA boundary can be co-opted as a non-voting member for a specific task.

6 What policies or procedures are in place that permit:

6.1 elected members of the current administration to order their lower-ranking members not to communicate with any individual, and

6.2 elected members to manipulate groups, whether through individuals within the group or by imposing a pre-set agenda by stealth ?

We are not aware of any situations where this has happened.

7 What can this council do to correct the situation in the SW where 3-bed properties have become unlettable, allegedly because of the Bedroom Tax ?

There is a project currently happening to look at the specific issue, based around small pockets of 3-bedroom properties in Gleadless. The intention is to help sustain these tenancies, and this involves looking at the housing stock and tenants that we rehouse into the properties. This involves considering the size of the households, their income, their needs, etc. We are aware that turnover is too high in this area and we are taking steps to tackle that. Once the outcomes from the project are known we will be able to give a fuller response on this.

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