

## Leader's Q&A session

Held at: Zoom - to be streamed live to Youtube.

Date: Wednesday, 24 March 2021

### 1. Questions from the public

#### 1. From Ms A Dakin to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council

Why was ground clearance work, including the removal of trees and shrubs, undertaken at Princes Parade during nesting season, in clear contravention of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and who was responsible for this decision?

#### **ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question Ms Dakin.

All ground clearance works for the whole project are undertaken not only by using our in-house qualified staff, but also by using independent ecological consultants- Lloyd Bore consultancy. They have been appointed to provide an independent overview of the ecological aspects of the project and ensure the appropriate measures are in place and that the council acts legally and in line with the overall ecology plan. The consultants have overseen and have had full view of all the works undertaken and have not identified any contravention of the above act mentioned. I do also have to say that our staff are fully aware of the Act and are suitably qualified to ensure that all measures are in place to avoid harm to any nesting birds.

I am also aware that separately representations have been made to the police about breaching the above Act. The police have responded that as far as they are concerned the Council have undertaken appropriate due diligence and that there is no indication of any criminal offence having taken place.

In summary, the Council has been responsible in carrying out its responsibilities and I reject your assertion that we have acted in contravention of the law.

**2. From Ms M Lawes to Councillor Peall, Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Regulatory Services, Waste & Building control**

What planning and preparedness has this council put in place to address the issues that occurred last spring/summer (to include damage to coastal park, parking issues, insufficient toilets in beach areas of the district, lack of bins, residents blocked from getting in & out of The Stade, lack of bin collections, harm to the Warren, coach loads turning up to party on our beaches etc), to ensure this does not harm our coastal areas this spring/summer?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question Ms Lawes.

Last summer due to the Covid-19 pandemic the District experienced a massive increase in visits from tourists and higher use from residents across all of our parks, open spaces and beaches. Officers worked tirelessly throughout the summer to address the issues as they arose and to try to pre-empt what the next behaviour change would be. Particular issues arose in our key coastal spaces such as the Warren, the Coastal Park, Sunny Sands (The Stade) and the popular beaches on the Marsh such as at Greatstone, Littlestone, Dymchurch and St Mary's Bay.

In anticipation once again of the expected larger than normal visitor numbers officers have been working as a cross organisation group to discuss lessons learnt, and the steps that will be put in place for this summer to minimise disruption for our residents across the District.

The Warren experienced vast visitor numbers and FHDC has been working with the White Cliffs Countryside Partnership to address issues that have occurred. This includes additional large capacity bins to cope with the extra rubbish and to support the clean-up initiatives in the area.

The Coastal Park and beach front were inundated with visitors. ASB such as littering and parking violations were common issues and— after the success of last year's ban all BBQ's will continue to be banned and the rules put in place will remain. The parks internal car park will continue to be closed between the hours of 8pm and 8am. This will prevent overnight parking and reduce late night ASB. Signage prior to Radnor Cliff Road will once again aim to divert visitors to the larger town centre and harbour car parks. Park keepers will be operating 7 days a week to educate visitors and ensure the park is clean. The new large capacity 1100 litre bins and the existing big belly compactor bins should help alleviate some of the littering issues.

With the Stade, Sunny Sands and the Harbour Arm growing ever more popular visitor numbers were very high, often overwhelming the small parking area that is found here. Discussions have been ongoing with the harbour company who have committed to opening the harbour arm car park 24/7 and the overflow car park which can serve both the harbour area and

the coastal park at weekends and bank holidays. The harbour company are open to further discussion if capacity is reached outside of these times.

FHDC Grounds Maintenance, Enforcement and Parking Teams will continue to work together with the wider Community Safety Partnership to have a coordinated and targeted response to issues as and when they arise.

In terms of litter bin capacity, the council already has over 820 litter bins installed across the district, of which 357 are along the coast and nearby high streets. In addition, the council will as in previous years be installing extra capacity bulk bins at popular locations like Sunny Sands, Sandgate Promenade and Dymchurch. Last year, we added to these as the season progressed and we will do the same this year if needed. These extra bulk bins have already been installed in anticipation of the Easter weekend. Veolia are in the process of moving street cleansing staff onto a more flexible rota so more staff can be available to meet seasonal demands notably over the weekends. In previous years there have been times when gaining vehicle access to areas has been difficult due to the sheer number of visitors. This year, Veolia will be making use of electric Bradshaw carts and bulking points to work around crowded areas.

Finally, in response to the comment about coaches turning up for beach parties. The difficulty we face is that party organisers are unlikely to engage with the Council before the event so realistically the first we may know of an illegal event is on the day. We are working with police to share intelligence with nearby forces about potential events and our stance is that we will expect the police to take appropriate action if illegal events occur and as a council will use any legal means before an event to dissuade an organiser or after an event to recover costs or impose fines.

## **2. Questions from Councillors**

### **1. From Councillor J Martin to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

You recently told us that you anticipate building work to begin on Princes Parade in 2022 but there are millions of pounds of costs missing from the financial viability assessment report published by Savills, on the 13th July 2017. The missing costs are caveated by in the third paragraph under Section 1.6 "Background" (page 4). Can the Leader tell me why he has prevented the Council's consultants meeting with me, as previously arranged, to discuss their financial viability assessment?

#### **ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

Due to the 18 month delay in delivering the project, as a result of the unsuccessful legal challenge brought against the council, certain delivery aspects are being re-worked.

In due course relevant documents will be made available to the relevant decision-makers.

In the meantime, we will publish by tomorrow morning, the Princes Parade financial overview on the Princes Parade website, which gives an idea of the decisions made, the costings and timeline for that.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

What is going to happen to the land at Nichols Quarry?

**ANSWER:**

I will find out and provide a written response.

*Following the meeting, the following response was given:*

*The land at Nichols Quarry was provided as an option within the section 106 agreement with the developer. The Council could take this land and use it for sports, leisure and community facilities or, alternatively, the council would be provided with a financial contribution for such facilities elsewhere. The council has decided to build the facility on Princes Parade and therefore will receive a financial contribution from the developer to support that project. This means that the land identified at Nichols Quarry will revert back to the developer and they will be able to consider the future use of the land. If they want to develop this land, then this would be subject to the normal planning requirements including the need for local facilities and developers contributions.*

**2. From Councillor Whybrow to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

Does the council now have permission to stop up and realign the road at Princes Parade?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

You will be aware that there was a statutory consultation on the stopping up of the road. This is a separate application and consultation from the Planning Application and is subject to Secretary of State Approval.

This process was temporarily halted alongside the project as a whole whilst the judicial review was undertaken until the planning application

could be confirmed. Now that this has happened, we will revisit the consultation and the responses received via Secretary of State for Transport's Office to agree the final report. The final decision as to whether a stopping up order is agreed will be with the Secretary of State for Transport's Office.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

If that has not been resolved, was it not somewhat premature to carry out the devastating work on the north bank of the canal bank last week?

**ANSWER:**

If we do not proceed, we would run into time troubles, so we had to proceed, and the decision was taken to do just that.

**3. From Councillor Whybrow to Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and special projects**

The funding for the Princes Parade project includes £1.4m from the off-site s106 affordable housing contribution from the Imperial development. Can you please confirm that this means that there will be additional affordable housing over and above the 30% due from the Princes Parade development itself?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

The answer is no, the application was promoted as and 'enabling development' whereby income generated by the development is used to fund and secure a public benefit in perpetuity in lieu of other contributions/policy aims. In this case the scheme could not afford to provide affordable housing and pay toward the development of the Leisure Centre.

To meet the aspiration for a high quality leisure centre new accessible open space and ensure a mixed tenure community within the enabling residential development, the S106 funds from the Hythe Imperial were proposed to be deployed on the Council owned site, to provide much needed affordable housing in the area.

The alternative would have been to provide the affordable housing on a different site within Hythe if one were available and provide no affordable housing on the Princes Parade development. This would have also met the viability tests and this approach would likely to have necessitated using the contribution towards land acquisition as well as the new build cost element of any affordable housing. This may have resulted in a

corresponding dilution of the capital funds available, most likely resulting in less affordable units for the district.

It should be highlighted that this proposition was set out within the application documents and the committee report. Paragraphs 8.50 – 8.62 of the Planning Committee report (16 August 2018) set the details out in full along with the associated information in Appendix 3.

It is also of note that the contribution from the Hythe Imperial needs to be deployed by 05.10.27 or effectively returned to the developer.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

None.

**4. From Councillor Treloar to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

How many trees have been cut down on the north side of the canal in the recent Princes Parade mitigation work, including live and dead trees?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

FHDC has established a considerable and continuous regime of planting trees on its grounds and supporting ecology and biodiversity, it has also supported numerous partner and external initiatives. FHDC has over 22,000 trees that it maintains throughout the district. Surveys are undertaken on these to care for them and to ensure their safety. Where possible and in the higher risk areas trees are individually counted (typically in places such as Radnor Park), however where there is a large density of trees such as along the canal, trees are grouped into areas as this provides a suitable risk based approach. From 2016 to 2020, 197 trees have been felled, predominantly due to ash die back. In the years 2016-2019, a total of 1031 trees have been planted.

The majority of the recent works along the canal removed dead or dying trees. The remaining trees that were removed mainly consisted of ivy clad elderberry and non-native poplar. Due to the approach taken based upon risk we do not have data regarding the number of trees. However I am certain that with the works ongoing across the district and the long-term increase that will be created through the work on the Canal the council will continue to invest and support ecology and biodiversity.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Would you say that given that this council has declared a climate and ecological emergency, a much more sensitive and detailed approach to land management, including survey work is in order, not just the bare

minimum, and also not just to counter ash being felled which is suffering from ash die back, but also the mass losses that we are seeing from ash dieback across the district.

**ANSWER:**

I will provide a written response to your question.

*After the meeting, the following response was provided:*

*“In response to the declared climate emergency, FHDC has partnered with KCC Highways, The Bumblebee Trust and The White Cliffs Countryside Partnership along with local town and parish councils to increase and improve biodiversity across the district on many former and ongoing projects and, contrary to opinion, have been going above and beyond the bare minimum for some considerable time. We are a large district, which is predominantly rural in its nature and as such many of the biodiversity initiatives we are involved with go largely unnoticed. Our approach to land management has long been recognised by external organisations as exemplary and a demonstration of good horticultural, arboricultural and ecological practice.*

*This is not limited to the response around Ash dieback (despite this being the greatest threat to our native tree stock since Dutch Elm Disease) but has resulted in vast swathes (c70km) of the highway infrastructure around the Romney Marsh being left unmown to promote foraging habitat for bees along with ongoing work to identify other areas within the more urban parts of Folkestone where we are looking at creating wildflower verges. This work is ongoing with regular meetings being held with the various stakeholder groups.*

*FHDC has long promoted biodiversity within the district and are perhaps guilty of not fully promoting our success in this area. Our ongoing partnership management of the Folkestone Warren, along with our own projects within the Lower Lees Coastal Park and all 7km of the Royal Military Canal have served to significantly enhance biodiversity across the district in terms of not only tree planting but the rewilding of parkland and formation of wildflower meadows. These projects are not just limited to our principal parks and open spaces but also small pocket parks, open spaces out in the more rural parts of the district.*

*In addition to the above, FHDC officers work very closely with the planning team and developers who are responsible for providing the new housing schemes across the district to ensure that all new developments incorporate measures to improve biodiversity and retain and protect as many trees as possible as part of all new developments as well as ensuring the planting of as many new trees as possible within them and ensuring that they are managed through to establishment. In the round this has proven to be a pro-active approach to stakeholder engagement and has enabled many of the new developments within the district to be*

*able to boast a greater environmental acceptance than would otherwise have been the case.*

*Tree planting across the district is just one small facet of our land management strategy and our commitment to increasing biodiversity. FHDC prides itself on being a showcase for greenspace and ecological management and will continue to strive for excellence in these fields as our proven track record demonstrates.*

*The council's partnership with the White Cliffs Countryside Partnership actively engages with a wide range of people, including schools and adults to educate and inform. This partnership also manages and cares for our RAMSAR, SSSI and Nature Reserves, which include some of the district's and country's most important and diverse environments".*

**5. From Councillor Treloar to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

Where does the council propose to site the artificial badger sett that the badgers from Princes Parade are going to be moved to?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

The final location of the artificial badger sett is currently being reviewed with the ecologist, landscape architect and contractor to determine the best location taking into account the scheme layout (that has received planning consent) and ensuring a new location will not be disturbed by any subsequent construction works. It is likely however that the sett will be located at the western end of the site. This will be discussed and agreed with Natural England as part of the formal licence process.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

What will the council do if it cannot find a suitable location in that area?

**ANSWER:**

We don't expect this to be a problem, but we will provide an answer to this question if we do have this problem.

**6. From Councillor J Martin to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

Prior to the felling of over 100 trees, during the first couple of weeks of this month, on the North Bank of the Royal Military Canal at Seabrook, was an ecological survey carried out to establish how many birds had begun nesting in the trees along the Canal Bank?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

The week before the work commenced the Ecologist and FHDC's qualified Arborist walked through the site detailing the works and potential issues, checking for birds' nests. On the morning of each day the arborist walked through with his team instructing and marking the trees allowed to be cut down after inspection. At the point of work (as the tree surgeons began work) a further inspection was undertaken on each tree. The ecologist returned to the site to inspect and further approve the work of the arborists. Where there was ivy clad trees and inspection is difficult we have urged on the side of caution and left the trees alone.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

None.

**7. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

Were you aware that according to the Lloyd Bore report published on 3rd July, 2018, the realigned road at Prince's Parade will be as close as 13.32 metres from the Royal Military Canal?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

The road is at its closest to the canal at the eastern end of the site, at 13.32m as noted in the Lloyd Bore report, and shown on other plans and documents that formed part of the application for the consented scheme. The design of the road will include engineering solutions to ensure the stability of the canal bank and the road itself. The road will be adopted by KCC highways and the design and construction of the road will be subject to their own technical review.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Are you aware that the environment agency has stipulated that there must be a buffer zone of at least 20 metres between the realigned road at Princes Parade and the Royal Military Canal?

**ANSWER:**

If it is clear that a buffer zone is required, it will be put there.

**8. From Councillor McConville to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

In the recent budget, it was announced that a new levelling up fund would be available to local councils. Folkestone and Hythe are in the priority 1 list of councils. What are the council's plans, both in terms of confirming an application and how would an application propose the use of £20 million.

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

The Council is at present reviewing options for an application to the Levelling Up Fund. It is clearly an excellent opportunity to attract significant government support for economic regeneration and there are several Council-led projects that may meet the criteria for the fund. As it is a competitive bidding process, with grants of up to £20million pounds available, it is important that our application is as best prepared as possible and seeks to maximise funding into the District to deliver our bold ambitions. Officers are working through that detail now and will discuss their recommendations for Councillors to approve in due course.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Will there be an opportunity for members to feed into that process as it evolves?

**ANSWER:**

Indeed.

**9. From Councillor McConville to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

With the recent news of the opening of a new Job Centre in Folkestone and records showing an increase in over 2000 unemployed in the last 12 months across the district, on the back of poor retail and hospitality sectors, what strategic plans do the council have to play an active role in increasing employment for the district's residents?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

Without doubt COVID has had a significant impact on many sectors of our economy. This is the reason that economic recovery is one of the key principles underpinning the Council's newly agreed Corporate Plan: Creating Together Tomorrow. One of the four ambitions in the plan is for the Council to enable a vibrant economy. We will achieve this through working with partners to bring forward a range of services and interventions aimed at:

- Delivering business programmes which generate growth and new employment, particularly aimed at new business start-ups, the self-employed and existing businesses wanting to grow.
- Actively promoting the district to attract new business and jobs from inward investment through working with partners such as Locate in Kent.
- Ensuring that the district has sufficient new high quality commercial space to meet existing and new business growth requirements.
- Developing a local contracting policy to give greater opportunities to local businesses to benefit from public spend. We are also adjusting our planning routine, in so far as we are allowing conditions to be sorted out in parallel to work starting, to assist the housing economy.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Would the council have a target of where they would like to see those figures in six months?

**ANSWER:**

There is no target. It would be difficult to put a target to it, but we will use our best endeavours.

**10. From Councillor Meade to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

It was noted in the last election that larger text instruction posters and voting forms should have been provided and that all polling stations should have at least one wheelchair access and a lower level voting booth. Can you please inform me what plans / strategies / mitigations are being put into place at Polling Stations for the coming May 6th Kent County Elections to ensure that residents with visual impairment or wheelchair users have the same ease of access to vote?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

All polling stations are supplied with 2 large print ballot papers for each election taking place, one displayed on the wall and one with the staff to hand to anyone that requires it.

A Tactile Voting Device is also ready to use at each polling station for voters that have a visual impairment. This lays on top of the ballot paper with braille to indicate where the voter needs to mark against their choice of candidate.

Instructions to voters are printed and displayed within the polling booths, stations and are supplied with more than they require to display, just in case anyone would like to see it up close.

These three methods of assistance for visually impaired voters have been in place for several elections already and will be used again for the upcoming election in May.

Each polling station has wheelchair access with at least one polling booth with 4 voting sections. Of the 4 voting sections, one has a lower shelf for voters using a wheelchair.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

None. Thanked election team for their hard work.

**11. From Councillor Meade to Councillor Peall, Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Regulatory Services, Waste & Building control**

This council some time ago passed a motion to ban the use of Glyphosates (which are known to cause danger to humans and wildlife, especially when they find their way into the food chain) from our parks, roadsides and other grounds management. As spring is now approaching can you please confirm how much less Glyphosate has been used over the past year and the areas where it is still considered the only option?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question Councillor Meade.

Glyphosate products are still used by the street cleansing contractor for the two annual weed sprays on the public highway. There is no cost effective alternative for the scale of spraying needed. In terms of volumes used it is 560 litres spread over 650 linear miles, which cover the two annual sprays, and any ad-hoc spraying required.

Glyphosate is still used by the Council's Grounds Maintenance team in small quantities where no cost effective option is available. This includes the treatment of invasive species, no glyphosate is used in parks or play areas. 75 litres of diluted glyphosate was used in the year 20/21 (containing 490g/L). This was the same in 19/20. In line with the motion to ban glyphosate from use on Council land the grounds maintenance team are constantly considering ways to reduce usage by exploring different maintenance regimes and methods of control.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Are we at a point where we can trial alternatives around the district? Some reports on marine life in America have shown glyphosate in the blood plasma of sea mammals. My particular concerns are around waterways.

**ANSWER:**

I will speak to the team and provide a written response.

*Following the meeting, the following response was provided:*

*“The trialling of alternative methods places a huge labour and capital burden on the grounds maintenance team. Plans have been created that would allow for a full season to fully understand the implications of the alternative methods currently available. These have been out on hold until after Covid restrictions have been lifted due to the difficulty the team has had in bringing in seasonal staff. If restrictions are lifted in line with the current plan then providing this Autumn/Winter season allows the team to catch up with outstanding work then they can plan to start trials next Spring. In terms of highway sprays I am not sure there is an effective alternative”.*

**12. From Councillor Keen to Councillor Peall, Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Regulatory Services, Waste & Building control**

Other authorities have bulk item vehicles that go out in their areas once or twice a month which give their residents opportunity to dispose of large bulk items easily and without cost. Could this council not offer a similar scheme to those people either on reduced incomes or in receipt of government financial support?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for the question.

We have looked previously in the practicalities of such an option and did in fact trial a scheme in a small area of Folkestone but the outcomes were not encouraging. Aside from the cost of running a scheme, which would be considerable, the end result would be a free-for-all that increased rather than decreased fly tipping. We are aware of other authorities that have had to withdraw similar schemes when costs have spiralled and on street fly tipping has spiralled out of control.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Can we not reduce the cost of bulky waste, and make it free to those in receipt of benefits or on furlough?

**ANSWER:**

The cost of bulky waste is part of the contract, and Veolia, as part of their tender, have adjusted their pricing this year. That is reflective of their costs in undertaking the service. What you are asking is who else is going to undertake that cost? The practicalities of delivering a free service for a relatively small number of people, which we are having to assess financially, are extremely difficult. How would we assess this? I can see the system being radically abused. I don't see it being a practical solution. We do have the bulky waste collection service which is available to everyone, and it is a valuable well looked after service, which we won't be looking to change at present.

**13. From Councillor Keen to Councillor Wimble, Cabinet Member for the District Economy**

Could you please inform us what the plans are for the Folca Building (aka Debenhams)? Residents are asking me on a daily basis what it's eventually going to be used for and if the district is going to go out to consultation in order to get the views and wishes of the people.

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

Folca has a significant and positive role to play in Folkestone's future regeneration of the town centre - that is in fact the reason the Council acted decisively and swiftly to acquire the building with a view to it being a catalyst for change. The approach being pursued for its redevelopment is focused on the potential to create new housing, leisure uses and health / facilities in order to generate increased footfall and support the overall ambition of a vibrant and busy town centre. The emerging Folkestone Place Plan will include Folca as a key project and as such people will have the opportunity to share and contribute their views. The redevelopment will however be based upon a commercial proposition that is right for the Council.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

None.

**14. From Councillor Davison to Councillor Wimble, Cabinet Member for the District Economy**

An application has been lodged to convert a former office building in my ward to accommodation comprising 49 flats. The application is strongly opposed by local residents who fear the kind of rabbit hutch housing that has been widely condemned in other parts of the country. Does the leader share my concerns about accelerating permitted development rights which mean that elected councillors have no say in planning applications of this kind?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

It is not appropriate for me to discuss specific applications but in general I sympathise with the point you make about the challenges which Permitted Development rights may bring for Councils across the country.

Our Council submitted its concerns over the use of Permitted Development Rights in a response to consultation on the Government's Planning White Paper, 'Planning for the Future' and we specifically raised the issue of new homes not adhering to space standards, leading to unsuitable developments that could potentially affect residents' health and wellbeing. This is however a national policy and there is very little scope for the Local Planning Authority to intervene if an application falls within the scope of the policy.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Would you join with me in writing to the developer, asking them to reconsider their plans?

**ANSWER:**

Certainly, I have got no problem doing that.

**15. From Councillor Keutenius to Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and special projects**

With eviction notices allowed to go ahead now, will the council ensure local families are given appropriate support for remaining in our district rather than having to move up to 300 miles away in order to be rehoused?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

As the Covid 19 restrictions ease, sadly many households across the district will unfortunately face new hardships. The main focus of our Housing Options Service remains to support affected households and prevent homelessness wherever possible, by assisting people to remain in their current home. Where prevention is not possible, the team are working extremely hard to maximise the supply of good quality accommodation in order to help households affected by homelessness access alternative long-term homes as quickly as possible. This includes homes within the Council's housing stock and within the local private rented sector. No households are forced to accept long-term accommodation outside of this district. In some cases the applicant may

actually request accommodation outside of this area, for example, in cases involving domestic violence. We are not following a policy of removing people from the district in that way.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

So we wouldn't be looking at taking up the scheme to send people further up the country, to places such as places like Durham, like we did two years ago?

**ANSWER:**

The policy was to 'offer' this accommodation, but there are no plans to follow this policy.

**16. From Councillor Keutenius to Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and special projects**

With announced changes on freedoms for Local governments, will this council agree to keep it's Right to Buy receipts ring fenced to support future council house building rather than allowing it to be used to finance new houses for public sale?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

This council has set out an ambitious new council house-building programme and so flexibilities recently announced by government are welcome. Officers of the council are working through the detail of the announcement as it affects our approach and in due course Members will consider the full implications arising.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Do you personally think this decision could lead to a reduction in council house building nationwide?

**ANSWER:**

I don't have an opinion on that. I am anxious to continue build our council housing programme which is ambitious, and wherever possible increase on that, but financially, this would be difficult.