

Meeting of the Council  
Thursday, 2 February 2017

Questions Under Standing Order A13

A member may only submit three questions for consideration at each Council Meeting. Each member will present their first question in turn, when all the first questions have been dealt with the second and third questions may be asked in turn. The time for member's questions will be limited to a total of 30 minutes.

<p><b>Question (1) by Councillor Thomas (J) to the Executive Lead for Planning, Transport and Housing (Councillor King)</b></p>	<p>I understand the Council has been awarded a one off grant of £400,000 to help with our current homelessness issues, could the Executive Lead please advise:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) what are the priorities for these monies and</li> <li>ii) specific examples where this money is to be spent and</li> <li>iii) the projected outcomes this should achieve.</li> </ul> <p>Would the Executive Lead also outline how this money is being prioritised against the Torbay Homelessness Strategy 2015 to 2020.</p>
<p><b>Councillor King</b></p>	<p>The funding has been made available as a result of a grant application that was made last year to DCLG.</p> <p>The money spent by providing assertive outreach, extra safe beds and offering accommodation solutions bases on assessment needs.</p> <p>The projected outcomes will meet criteria set in the Torbay Homeless Strategy 2015 to 2020.</p>
<p><b>Question (2) by Councillor Carter to the Mayor and Executive Lead for Finance and Regeneration (Mayor Oliver)</b></p>	<p>In light of the recent fire at Crossways, could you advise me if there is a deadline for serving a compulsory purchase order for Crossways and if so what that date is?</p>
<p><b>Mayor Oliver</b></p>	<p>The Council can progress the use of its powers of compulsory purchase on any site in order to deliver development, redevelopment or improvement where it is expedient and where there is a compelling case in the public interest to do so. The Council agreed to do just that in October last year. The Town Centre Regeneration Board, led by Cllr Haddock, will actively consider use of the Council's powers in this respect, and will bring individual cases forward for decision as appropriate. But Council should note that CPO is a power of last resort and the Council must seek a negotiated acquisition before it can move to compulsory purchase. A negotiated outcome is only possible where there is a viable and deliverable business or development proposal.</p>

<p><b>Question (3) by Councillor Sanders to the Mayor and Executive Lead for Finance and Regeneration (Mayor Oliver)</b></p>	<p>What representations has he made to the Prisons Minister to act on the number of prisons in the South West and in Devon whom he claims recommend prisoners on release to come to Torbay?</p>
<p>Mayor Oliver</p>	<p>Yes I have made written representations and these are appended.</p>
<p><b>Question (4) by Councillor Darling (S) to the Executive Lead for Planning, Transport and Housing (Councillor King)</b></p>	<p>Residents along Moor Lane Torquay and adjoining roads are concerned that over many years there has been an increasing problem with anti social driving and parking along this road. How has the Council engaged with the three schools to ensure that they play their part in reducing this problem.</p>
<p>Councillor King</p>	<p>Whilst the authority has previously written to all of the schools on Moor Lane with regard to access issues in the surrounding area, we have never been made aware of any issues that have resulted in a need to write to them with regard to poor parking and driver behaviour. However, if the local ward members feel there is a need for us to do so and can provide information on the specific issues, we would be happy to write to them.</p>
<p><b>Question (5) by Councillor Doggett to the Councils Representative on the Devon and Somerset Fire Authority (Councillor Ellery)</b></p>	<p>In light of the fire at the Royal Clarence Hotel Exeter, what lessons have been learnt by the Fire Authority that would assist in a similar fire in Torbay?</p>
<p>Councillor Ellery</p>	<p>After the tragedy of the Clarence Hotel Fire in Exeter, Cllr David Thomas and myself decided we would instigate a Business Fire Safety Seminar for small and medium sized businesses in Torbay. I am delighted to announce that this event will take place on February 13th in the Redcliffe Hotel Paignton with three 2 hour sessions at 10am, noon, and 2pm. The Seminar is titled "I lost my Heart to a Fire", there will be powerful personal accounts from business owners including Cllr Thomas who have lost their entire life's work to a fire in Torbay and the effect on them both personally, economically, and financially. Devon &amp; Somerset Business Fire Safety officers will be answering questions and there will be Commercial Fire Protection advisors giving advice on the best equipment to use to keep your businesses safe from fire. The Community Safety Team from Torbay Council will also be in attendance with a stand and advice.</p> <p>I formally invite any councillors and officers to attend one of the sessions, especially if they operate a business, or are landlords in the bay.</p>

<p><b>Question (6) by Councillor Darling (M) to the Executive Lead for Planning, Transport and Housing (Councillor King)</b></p>	<p>I have been lead to believe that a property in Torre, Torquay has been converted into a house of multiple occupation (HMO) without planning permission. What enforcement action is being considered?</p>
<p>Councillor King</p>	<p>The use of this property as a house of multiple occupation (HMO) appears to be lawful. The property was granted planning permission in 1998 for use as a student house of residence. No conditions were imposed restricting occupants to being in full time education and therefore occupation of the property is not restricted to students only. The approved floor plans show 12 letting rooms with a kitchen on each of the ground and first floors. No enforcement action is proposed as there is no evidence of a breach of planning control.</p>

**Second Round**

<p><b>Question (7) by Councillor Carter to the Mayor and Executive Lead for Finance and Regeneration (Mayor Oliver)</b></p>	<p>No action appears to be happening with regard to Oldway and surrounding area, could you advise me of the plans for action with regard to Oldway, the tennis courts, the parking and the bowls club, and when action is likely to take place.</p>
<p>Mayor Oliver</p>	<p>At a meeting of the full Council on the 22nd September 2016 it was agreed that an Oldway Mansion and Estate Working Party should be established. The Terms of Reference are :-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. to review any condition surveys for buildings on the site;</li> <li>2. to review proposals for the use of buildings and grounds;</li> <li>3. to ascertain community views in respect of these matters; and</li> <li>4. to make recommendations about how future use of building should be taken forward.</li> </ol> <p>I understand that the Working Party has now met on three occasions. Minutes of these meetings are available and the Working Party is Chaired by Councillor Robson. I will also be asking the Strategic Land Task Group to consider the future of the Mansion and surrounding estate.</p>
<p><b>Question (8) by Councillor Sanders to the Mayor and Executive Lead for Finance and Regeneration (Mayor Oliver)</b></p>	<p>What was:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the total expenditure on new beach huts at Meadfoot;</li> <li>b) the estimated income from the beach huts at Meadfoot over this financial year; and</li> <li>c) the actual income from the beach huts so far this financial year?</li> </ol>

<p>Mayor Oliver</p>	<p>A total of £2,199,220 has been spent on the provision of the new Meadfoot Beach huts. The estimated income for this financial year is £190,400 with the actual income so far this financial year being £177,377.</p>
<p><b>Question (9) by Councillor Darling (S) to the Executive Lead for Planning, Transport and Housing (Councillor King)</b></p>	<p>Torbay Council is set to introduce a 20mph zone on Moor Lane Torquay. However, a representative of Devon &amp; Cornwall police has advised residents that they are unlikely to have the resource to enforce the speed limit. Without enforcement this appears to make this and other 20MPH zones outside schools a paper tiger. How do you plan to ensure that the Police do enforce these speed limits?</p>
<p>Councillor King</p>	<p>The authority cannot require the Police to enforce this or any other speed limits within the bay area. The police prioritise their resources target enforcement as and when appropriate. The Council continues to work with the local Police Road Casualty Reduction Officer (RCRO) to shared intelligence. However, this particular scheme has been engineered with a number of traffic calming features (both physical e.g. build-outs and non-physical e.g. signs, lines and roundels) to make it more difficult to drive at speed and is therefore considered as largely self regulating.</p> <p>Unfortunately we are aware that some drivers will make the conscious decision to ignore the posted speed limit and put at risk other road users.</p>
<p><b>Question (10) by Councillor Doggett to the Executive Lead for Planning, Transport and Housing (Councillor King)</b></p>	<p>I understand that over £400,000 has been spent on developing the Edginswell rail halt with little chance of a successful scheme. Has this scheme hit the buffers and wasted hundreds of thousands of tax payers money?</p>
<p>Councillor King</p>	<p>The Council have been successful in achieving £4m towards the delivery of a Railway Station at Edginswell from the LEP Growth Deal Settlement. In order to achieve all of the funding necessary to deliver the Railway Station the Council have also submitted a bid to the DfT and Network Rail for New Stations Fund. The outcome of the bid is expected to be announced in the Spring. It was always expected that funding would be required from the New Stations Fund, but this opportunity was delayed by Government. This is why there has been a delay in the programme and it can be assured that the scheme has <b>not</b> "hit the buffers". The Council is looking at alternative funding mechanisms for delivery in case the current bid is unsuccessful. The new Railway Station will help to deliver hundreds of new homes, as well as new jobs particularly in the Edginswell Growth Area but also other surrounding sites. It will also help to ease the existing local parking problems and improve accessibility for patients, visitors and staff to Torbay Hospital. It is therefore strongly believed that the business case for the new Railway Station is robust. A level of investment is always required to develop, option assess, and design any capital scheme.</p>

<p><b>Question (11) by Councillor Darling (M) to the Executive Lead for Planning, Transport and Housing (Councillor King)</b></p>	<p>As Part of the 60 &amp; 61 motion passed at Full Council on 11 May 2016 it was agreed that "That the Council will develop a user group for bus users in Torbay and will hold regular meetings with bus operators to assist in the future of transport provision." When does the Council plan to act upon this minute?</p>
<p><b>Councillor King</b></p>	<p>The Senior Traffic Engineer and Public Transport Officer, along with the Executive Lead for Transport meet with Stagecoach every six months and with the other operators, as and when required. Through the Community Development Trust a bus-sub group has been established, which both myself and Cllr Doggett attend.</p> <p>Discussions are ongoing as to whether to develop this into a Public Transport user group, dealing with both bus and rail transport issues.</p>

### Third Round

<p><b>Question (12) by Councillor Sanders to the Executive Lead for Planning, Transport and Housing (Councillor King)</b></p>	<p>What progress has he made over the past year ensuring the protection of disabled parking bays in residential parking zones?</p>
<p><b>Councillor King</b></p>	<p>Current policy is that advisory disabled bays are not positioned within the boundaries of Controlled or Residents Parking Zones (CPZ). In such areas, all areas of carriageway must be covered by enforceable parking restrictions, which an advisory disabled bay is not. The presence of such a bay, breaks up any existing parking restriction, therefore making them unenforceable.</p> <p>However, we would be happy to implement an enforceable disabled bay, but this would have to be at no cost to the authority, where the cost of implementing the bay (i.e. preparation and advertising of the required Traffic Regulation Order, erection of signs and placement of lines) would have to be covered by the householder.</p> <p>It should be noted that, as with the advisory disabled bays, these bays are not normally reserved for a particular Blue Badge holder and unfortunately the costs involved are considerably more than for advisory disabled bays.</p>
<p><b>Question (13) by Councillor Darling (S) to the Executive Lead for Community Services (Councillor Excell)</b></p>	<p>Local residents feel that to reduce parking problems on and around Moor lane schools should be encouraged to use the car park for Watcombe beach. Can the Council enter into negotiations with the schools with a view to introduce the use of the car park for them?</p>

Councillor Excell	<p>The fifty space car park at Watcombe Beach is free and therefore if used by the school would not cause a loss of income for Parking Services. However, Watcombe Beach Road is heavily shaded by trees, has no footway and there is no safe crossing point of A379 Teignmouth Road for pedestrians. The car park is also located just over 300m from the nearest school, some distance for school staff to walk if they are carrying equipment.</p> <p>I will endeavour to meet with all three schools to look at alternative parking or travel arrangements for their teachers.</p>
<b>Question (14) by Councillor Darling (M) to the Mayor and Executive Lead Finance and Regeneration (Mayor Oliver)</b>	<p>The Former B &amp; Q building in Torre continues to be a blot on Torquay's landscape. What options have the Council considered in the last 18 months to force action on this eyesore?</p>
Mayor Oliver	<p>Planning officers have been working pro actively with the owner to find a viable new use for the building which at the same time would respect the appearance and character of the Tormohun Conservation Area. This in itself is a challenge and has taken some time to achieve. The owner has also submitted proposals for the adjoining Martial Arts Academy and the Zion Road Chapel. Cumulatively the three proposed developments would result in a significant investment and regeneration opportunity for this part of Torre. All three applications will be considered by the Development Management Committee on 13th February. If planning consent is granted in February there is no reason why the development will not be implemented.</p> <p>The proposal for the former B and Q site involves refurbishment and extension of the existing buildings to provide 19 residential units, ground floor commercial floor space, 10 car parking spaces and 3 garage spaces.</p> <p>The proposal for the former Martial Arts Academy involves the refurbishment and alteration of the existing building to provide 3 residential units.</p> <p>The proposal for the former Zion Road Chapel involves the refurbishment and extension of the former chapel building to provide 7 residential units and 7 car parking spaces.</p>

11<sup>th</sup> January 2017

The Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP  
The Home Secretary  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Miss Rudd

**Re: Homelessness and Anti-Social Behaviour in Torbay**

We have been experiencing a growth in both these issues in our three towns and on our seafronts. The growth has become very noticeable in the last few months and I have been making enquiries into why we have this problem.

We have housing policies in place according to statute and we have a caring and supportive role in managing such problems. I welcome the Prime Minister's statement of measures to transform mental health support and her desire to see policies in place to deal with this.

I have been speaking to our volunteers who give endless help and support and it is emerging that Torbay is receiving increasing numbers of ex-offenders who are allegedly sent here by prisons, by personal contacts and through voluntary organisations who canvass in other parts of the UK.

It seems as though in policy terms there is a complete vacuum of support in both the Prison and Probation Services.

Many of these ex-offenders come with no training, no clothing and under £50 cash in their pockets. We have established from our volunteers that people are coming from Scotland, Swansea, Newcastle, Bristol, Nottingham, Hampshire and Dorset and they may not have any family connection whatsoever with Torbay

I appreciate that people are free to live where they wish but feel that there needs to be a more coherent and sustainable strategy to help offenders back into society, however it is impossible to do it all with a substantially reduced budget and additional demands on Children's Services and Services for the Elderly in our Community. We have both moral and legal duties to support our own people, to accommodate them, bring them back to health and help them into employment.

Our Housing Benefit Revenue total is, I believe, in the region of £60million per annum. We are a small Unitary Council and by the end of my term as Elected Mayor I will have seen my Revenue Budget decreased by nearly £80million per annum.

Many of the ex-offenders are former members of our Armed Services and although they are not always able to be identified we do our best to seek them out and offer our support. According to some of the ex-offenders Torbay is known as a 'bit of a soft touch' so allegedly it is for that reason they are sent from many parts of England and Scotland.

We have received a grant of £400k as a result of making a BID and for which we are extremely grateful. However, should the trend continue with constant begging – some of which is of a 'professional' nature and anti-social behaviour in our town centres and on our seafronts it will, eventually, overwhelm us.

A further major problem will also arise, it will deter investment in our town centres which we are currently seeking to revive.

I invite you to Torbay to meet the volunteers and the ex-offenders, including former members of the Armed Services, also to meet the Business Community and Elected Members.

I would be grateful to receive your thoughts and any advice you may feel would be helpful concerning this difficult matter.

Kind Regards

Yours sincerely

Gordon Oliver  
Elected Mayor of Torbay

Cc: The Prime Minister  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Prisons & Probation

11<sup>th</sup> January 2017

Mr S Gyimah MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State of Prisons & Probation  
The House of Commons  
London W1A 0AA

Dear Mr Gyimah

**Re Homelessness and Anti-Social Behaviour in Torbay**

We have an increasing problem in Torbay the details of which I have outlined in my letter to The Home Secretary.

I have attached a copy of that letter for your information.

Kind Regards

Yours sincerely

GORDON OLIVER  
Elected Mayor of Torbay

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