

**Oversight and Governance**

Chief Executive's Department
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CITY COUNCIL – PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Monday 24 November 2025
2.00 pm
Council House, Plymouth

Members:

Councillor Ms Watkin, Chair

Councillor Tofan, Vice Chair

Councillors Allen, Allison, Aspinall, Bannerman, Mrs Beer, Blight, Briars-Delve, Mrs Bridgeman, Coker, Cresswell, Cuddihee, Dann, Darcy, Dingle, Evans OBE, Finn, Freeman, Gilmour, Goslin, Haydon, Hendy, Holloway, Krizanac, Laing, Lawson, Loveridge, Lowry, Luggier, McCarty, McLay, McNamara, Moore, Morton, Murphy, Ney, P.Nicholson, S.Nicholson, Noble, Penberthy, Penrose, Poyser, Raynsford, Reilly, Ricketts, Simpson, M.Smith, R.Smith, Sproston, Steel, Stephens, Stevens, Taylor, Tippetts, Tuohy and Wood.

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf.

You can watch any of our webcast meetings on [YouTube](#). For further information on attending Council meetings and how to engage in the democratic process please follow this link - [Get Involved](#)

Tracey Lee

Chief Executive

City Council

5. Questions by the Public

(Pages 1 - 2)

To receive questions from and provide answers to the public in relation to matters which are about something the council is responsible for or something that directly affects people in the city, in accordance with Part B, paragraph 3 of the Constitution.

Questions, of no longer than 50 words, can be submitted to Democratic Services, Plymouth City Council, Ballard House, West Hoe Road, Plymouth, PL1 3BJ, or email to democraticservices@plymouth.gov.uk. Any questions must be received at least five complete working days before the meeting.

QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC

Please return your completed question form to Democratic Support, Plymouth City Council, Ballard House, West Hoe Road, Plymouth, PL1 3BJ or email:

democraticservices@plymouth.gov.uk

Question to be submitted no later than 5 clear working days before the meeting.

Question submitted by: Mr Mathew Surtees

To the Cabinet Member or Chair for: Planning

To be asked at the next (Council, Cabinet or Planning Committee) Meeting: City Council

Date: 24 November 2025

Question: In a recent meeting, you said: "we are not here to represent the public" this has already been widely publicised. I'd like to ask you Councillor Stevens, why you think you don't represent the public who put you where you are?

Answer:

As Chair of our city's Planning Committee I have a duty to ensure Planning laws are not broken. A key part of this is making sure councillors do not put our Planning decisions at risk or leave council tax payers to foot the bill for legal costs. It is important to understand that applications must be decided on their objective Planning merits alone. That means we do not, indeed cannot, include the number of public comments as part of our decision-making and that is what the comment you have highlighted was referring to. When we are acting in our quasi-judicial roles on the Planning committee we are not representing the residents of our individual wards, we are considering the applications before us on their Planning merits. If there are Planning Committee members who do not understand their legal responsibilities in this regard that is a concern and we may need to identify if further training is required.

I give everyone time to have their say and am proud to have brought in many changes to make Plymouth's Planning processes more accessible and responsive to the public and I'm always keen to hear more suggestions that can help in this way.

To address Mr Surtees' point about representation I want to make it clear, that in my capacity as a ward councillor, I actively and passionately represent everyone in Devonport Ward, which includes Devonport itself, Mount Wise, Granby, Morice Town and Keyham, and have done for more than 20 years.

Being their voice on the City Council, along with Councillors Mark Coker and Anne Freeman, is an honour and a privilege. I regularly speak up for local people on many committees, boards and community groups and I like to think I have a reputation in Devonport for getting things done. I regularly get potholes repaired, fly tipping removed, grass cut and problem parking dealt with and I endeavour every day to represent those to whom I'm accountable to the best of my ability.

