



Oversight and Governance
Chief Executive's Department
Plymouth City Council
Ballard House
Plymouth PL1 3BJ

Members' Written Questions

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QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR**Question submitted by: Councillor Beer****To Cabinet Member:** Cllr Patel, Cabinet Member for Culture, Customer Services, Leisure and Sport**Question:**

Please can you update me on the opening of the one stop shop? Every other shop is open, Hospitals are working, buses are running but Plymouth City Council is closed for business? Also if this shop is not to be used again, do you plan on selling it?

Response: (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members)

We know that for the majority of our customers it is simpler, quicker and more convenient to transact with us online and we continue to invest in our online service to further improve them. However, we do also know that this isn't possible for all of our customers and we need to offer a range of ways to access our services to meet the needs of all our residents.

Since February this year the Council have been running a pilot to offer vulnerable and digitally excluded customers an appointment to meet face to face with staff in Central Library. Customers who need this service can still talk to staff about the same range of services that used to be offered in the "First Stop Shop": parking, blue badges, bus passes, Council tax and/or Housing Benefit. Customers calling 668000 will be supported by our call centre staff and where they need something that can't be resolved over the phone they can organise to meet with a member of staff at the Library. Alternatively, customers calling into the Central Library can request an appointment whilst they are there.

For customers without an internet connected device at home, all our libraries offer free access to a PC. Staff in libraries will also assist customers with basic help such as: understanding questions they have been asked, printing forms out and locating a website.

The First Stop Shop in New George Street is currently offering services to anyone at risk or dealing with homelessness. The team providing this service are looking for more suitable locations to work from, when they move from the shop, it would be available for disposal or leasing to generate a receipt or income stream for the Council.

Signed:**Dated:** 29 July 2022

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QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR



Question submitted by: Councillor Mrs Terri Beer

To Cabinet Member: Councillor Mark Shayer (Deputy Leader and Finance and Economy)

Question:

Can you confirm the number of Councillors and their partners attended the Adrenalin Lounge at the SailGP? The cost of these tickets? Who paid for them?

Response:

I can confirm that three Councillors attended and two of them brought a partner. There was no cost to the Council as they were the guests of SailGP.

Signed:

Dated: 10 August 2022

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QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR

Question submitted by: Cllr Terri Beer

To Cabinet Member: Cllr Rebecca Smith, Cabinet Member for Homes and Communities

Question:

Can you explain to me why it's reported that Afghan refugees have been left unsupported? What is the council doing?

Response: (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members)

The Council has commissioned support for Afghan refugees arriving via the Afghan Relocation Assistance Policy (ARAP) or the Afghan Citizen's Resettlement Scheme from the Refugee Integration Service. Support includes casework support through Students and Refugees Together (START), tenancy management with Landlords from Plymouth Access to Housing (PATH), ESOL lessons for spouses and partners where required, employment mentoring for those with higher language levels provided by ODILS learning foundation.

Further support is also offered to refugees in the city to support with integration via Plymouth Hope and the British Red Cross if legal advice is needed to support family reunion applications.

Signed:

Dated: 24/08/2022

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QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR

Question submitted by: Councillor Terri Beer

To Cabinet Member: Councillor Bingley (Leader of the Council)

Question:

What are YOU doing to avoid illegal encampments and reduce the cost of such legal action?

Response: (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members)

I am ensuring that the Portfolio Holder works with Officers to make sure we are doing what we can to prevent Unauthorised Encampments. Whilst doing this we need to ensure that we respect the rights that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people have under Human Rights legislation and that the Council need to ensure we are fully compliant with them.

We have put in place a Target Hardening plan with Ward Councillors where sites have experienced Unauthorised Encampments this year. Following a UE at a site there is a meeting between Ward Councillors and Officers to discuss potential improvements that could be made to the site. This needs to be balanced against the need to ensure sites remain accessible and attractive for members of the public wishing to use the green spaces, this includes ensuring Council and emergency vehicles are still able to gain access to the site where required.

The Council will always review the most cost effective legal action to take and where appropriate Negotiated Stopping agreements will be made with groups who abide to the terms of the agreement to reduce need for legal costs by agreeing to a planned move-on date. When an eviction is arranged Officers attend the site to give advance warning to the group that bailiffs will be attending and the day this is due to occur. In many instances, groups choose to move-on voluntarily prior to eviction.

Signed:

Dated: 25/08/2022

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QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR

Question submitted by: Cllr George Wheeler

To Cabinet Member: Cllr Jonathan Drean, Cabinet Member for Transport

Question:

Can you tell me any more about the future of bus services in Plymouth after the withdrawal of grant in October, please? I asked about this at the last full council meeting but you were not able to tell me anything at that time. I'm pleased to see that Mr Shapps has offered £165million to operators to allow a maximum fare of £2 but that will be of little use if there are no buses. I noticed a press cutting today (16th August): Northern mayors warn of cuts to hundreds of bus routes The mayors of the Liverpool City Region, North of Tyne, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire have jointly written to the Prime Minister, Chancellor and Transport Secretary to warn that hundreds of northern bus routes are set to be cut unless the Bus Service Recovery Grant - introduced to help services continue during the pandemic - is renewed. The latest Government figures, the BBC notes, show that weekday bus usage is still at around two-thirds of pre-pandemic levels, and the mayors have warned that half of all route will be affected "in some form", with some cut entirely after 7pm. Elsewhere, Somerset County Council is to introduce new lower fares in and around Taunton thanks to £11.9m in funding from the Department for Transport to improve services. Unlike Somerset but like Liverpool and the northern areas given above, Plymouth got nothing from the "Bus Back Better" funding so without continuation of BSRG, our services can expect to be badly cut. Thank you.

Response: (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members)

On 19 August the Government announced that it is making a further £130 million available to bus operators as an extension to the Bus Recovery Grant for a further 6 months to the end of the current financial year. Specific details on how much will be received by bus operators operating services in Plymouth has yet to be confirmed, but officers will continue to review the network with the operators to maintain as good a level of service coverage as possible.

Details have not yet been received on the £165 million funding stream to cap fares at £2.

We will be refreshing our Bus Service Improvement Plan over the coming months. This is to allow us to be fully prepared in the event that, should a further funding opportunity be announced by Government in support of their National Bus Strategy "Bus Back Better", to enable an offer of improved services and lower fares in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Signed:

Dated: 30 August 2022

QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR



Question submitted by: Cllr Holloway

To Cabinet Member: Cllr Smith, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Homes and Communities

Question:

To ask the Cabinet member how many enforcement cases have been raised against HMOs in Drake ward in breach of their licence in 2021-2022, 2020-2021, 2019-2020, 2018-2019, 2017-2018? To additionally ask the Cabinet member the number of enforcement cases against HMOs in Drake ward are currently live or ongoing?

Response: (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members)

Across Drake Ward and indeed the city, there is significant activity being undertaken by services to ensure the standard of housing provision is acceptable and that residents are managed appropriately. In the city there are believed to be in the region of 5,000 HMO's of which approximately 1,400 are considered licensable due to relevant factors such as occupation levels, of these approximately 519 are in Drake Ward.

A non-enforcement based approach is the starting point of activity where appropriate, and this seeks to encourage landlords, agents and residents to conduct themselves in the manner seen as acceptable. Where this approach is not viable or conducive to achieving the desired outcomes, enforcement activity is undertaken, this can be low level intervention or high level sanctions. Since the inception of the Civil Penalty Policy in November 2018, seeking to drive up the standards and management of accommodation, 49 fines equating to £181,515 have been issued against HMO landlords and agents in Drake Ward. This equates to approximately 9% of the licensable HMO's in the ward.

Since 2017, 369 category 1 hazards have been removed, 232 notices have been issued and 2,000 improvements to dwellings across Drake Ward have been recorded.

Of the 519 licensable HMO's in Drake Ward;

- 154 have been inspected and the inspection process for the current licence period complete.
- 31 have been inspected and works have been requested and will be followed up. Should a landlord fail to comply this will result in formal action being taken where appropriate and proportionate.
- 334 are due to be inspected during their current licence period. (5 year license period)

Community Safety activity is also aligned to some of the HMO properties across the ward and work in partnership with landlords and agents is ongoing. This work is directed by local intelligence and data from members of the Community Safety Partnership, 'Safer Plymouth'.

Work within this arena has driven new operating models with increased provider interaction, oversight and sanctions for residents. This work seeks to reduce the impact of poorly managed accommodation offerings on local residents by holding the accountable person such as landlord or resident to account for their action or inaction.

Enforcement based tools such as the Community Protection Notice Warning have and will continue to be used as whilst positive engagement is key to making sustainable change, failed outcome delivery needs to held accountable to permit positive change for effected local residents.

This approach has seen a reduction in the complaints received in the area concerning Community Safety matters.

Signed:



Dated: 31 August 2022

QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR**Question submitted by: Councillor Terri Beer****To Cabinet Member:** Councillor Carlyle, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People**Question:**

Are you aware of bed poverty? If so what are you doing to improve things in our city? If you are not aware of this issue, then why are you not aware?

Response: (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members)

I can confirm that both I and the City Council are very aware of the concept of “Bed Poverty” and that this has been discussed on a number of occasions with officers and fellow Councillors. Indeed, it was one of the concepts recently discussed as part of the development of the new Child Poverty Action Plan for 2022 – 25. We know how important it is for a child’s development, especially with regards to their education and ability to concentrate, to ensure they can have a peaceful enough night’s sleep as possible.

As a consequence, addressing families and children’s ability to ensure the environment they live in is appropriate, an action to this effect has been proposed in the new draft plan. The draft plan will be shown to Cabinet on 6th October and will be scrutinised at Management Scrutiny Board during September.

I hope that this assures you that Bed Poverty and indeed all forms of Child Poverty are being addressed. I know that as a member of the Child Poverty Task and Finish Group, you were very influential in its development and I am pleased that your knowledge and experience in this area was able to be incorporated into the new plan.

Signed:**Dated:** 2 September 2022

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QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR



Question submitted by: Councillor Mrs Terri Beer

To Cabinet Member: Councillor Richard Bingley, Leader of Plymouth City Council

Question:

Have you consulted all councillors on your proposal to re-name Sir John Hawkins Square? With regards to your recent suggested name have you followed the Councils policy with regards to renaming?

Many thanks

Response:

The Leader expressed his opinion about honouring Volodymyr Zelenskyy and acknowledged it is not his decision to be taken. It will be a decision taken in line with the relevant procedures if and when the Council considers taking this issue forward.

Signed:

Councillor Mark Shayer
on behalf of Councillor Richard Bingley

Dated: 12 August 2022

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QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR

Question submitted by: Councillor Mrs Terri Beer

To Cabinet Member: Councillor Pat Patel, Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Culture, Leisure and Sport

Question:

Are there any lifeguards covering the swim rafts in Plymouth Sound?

Response: (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members)

There is currently no lifeguards covering the swim rafts in Plymouth Sound, however with 5 designated bathing areas in the National Marine Park, the team are working closely with the RNLI who have been conducting 'beach safety audits'. These risk audits take into consideration the shape of the beach, the tides and currents, as well as shipping, usage of the beaches and other factors. We will be reviewing these audits with the RNLI to determine if any further action is required.

In addition to the audits being conducted, the NMP team, funded by the Heritage Fund, is developing a focus on water safety. Working with the RNLI there is a plan to visit every single Key Stage 2 class in Plymouth in the Spring Term, to promote water safety with a 'Meet the Lifeguard' and NMP Coastal Ranger visit. Offering schools youth education is a proven attribute to the success of water safety campaigns.

Swim England and the RNLI are also working with the NMP Coastal Ranger Team as well as the Ocean Conservation Trust (OCT) to offer Swim Safe training to 7 – 14 year olds on sea awareness, self-rescue, how to spot someone in danger and how to deal with it – **reiterating to call 999, ask for the Coastguard, never enter the water yourself messaging.**

For more information on any of the programmes that the NMP are rolling out for water safety, please contact NMPHorizon@plymouth.gov.uk.

Signed:

Dated: 12/08/2022

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