

COUNCIL MEETING

26th JUNE 2017

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(A) Questions for Oral Reply

1. From Sam Russell to the Leader of the Council

Following the tragic events in Grenfell Tower, residents in and around Essex Tower in Penge are rightfully concerned about their safety. Given the privatised nature of the Council's housing stock, is the Portfolio Holder satisfied that the information provided by the housing association is accurate, timely and independently verified?

Reply:

Yes, I am satisfied at this stage with the information that I am receiving, given that much of it is being independently provided from organisations outside Clarion. The Fire Services and other specialist contractors are providing independent advice. Not only that, but I have been personally contacted by the Chief Executive Officer of Clarion, not only expressing his heartfelt sympathy for those affected, but also informing me of what they will be doing to reassure local residents of their safety. This goes much beyond some providers in the public sector.

Supplementary Question:

I would be interested to know if there is any information that you feel you have not received yet, and if so, when you expect to receive it and, in general, if you feel that there is anything further that is causing you concern that we are not currently aware of?

Reply:

Do I know what I do not know? It is a very serious question. I am confident at the moment that we have got most of the boxes ticked, if not more. What I can say is that, and I talk about Clarion because your question is particularly related to accommodation under the Clarion umbrella, I have been on the phone to their Chief Operating Officer this afternoon and I am meeting with their Chief Executive later this week, to ensure that I am even more confident than I am today speaking to you of all the things we can think of. If you would like to contact me and raise any issues that local residents want to deal with I'll pick those up and take them to that meeting. At the moment I am as confident as I can possibly be, without knowing what I do not know.

2. From Sam Russell to the Leader of the Council

Given the unique nature of Essex Tower within Bromley, and to reassure residents, would the Portfolio Holder agree to support and encourage some additional inspections led by council officers and the fire brigade and including the housing association?

Reply:

In preparing the answer to these questions, I spoke this afternoon with the Head of Corporate Affairs at Clarion who assured me again that all the work that is being done in the light of the Grenfell Tower disaster is being conducted independently.

If, sometime in the future, further reassurance was needed then I would take such action as you are requesting this evening.

Supplementary Question:

If there continues to be a concern from residents in and around Essex Tower in the coming weeks and months, would the Leader consider visiting Essex Tower personally to provide some direct reassurance to the residents

Reply:

I will do anything I can to try to reassure residents, whether living in Penge or elsewhere in the borough, that they are living as safely as possible. So the answer to your question is yes, of course I will.

(B) Questions for Written Reply**1. From Sophie Shaw to the Chairman of Development Control Committee**

Given the dire shortage of social and affordable housing in Bromley, why is the Council not enforcing the minimum 35% provision for this type of accommodation on developers?

Reply:

Development Plan and national policies do not simply require 35% of Housing to be Affordable housing. They include a viability stage where the developer can seek to demonstrate that the scheme with 35% is not viable unless a lower proportion of Affordable Housing is included. The Council follows those policies and normally refers such cases for an independent check as well before deciding on the application.

2. From Simon Jeal to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation

Could the portfolio holder please explain why pavement works on Penge High Street have stopped before completion, why they are apparently not going to resume for at least eight weeks and whether the reason for the stoppage is that the contractors completing the work have not been paid?

Reply:

Completion of the footway improvements in Penge High Street have been delayed to allow TfL to install the new traffic signals at the Green Lane Junction. The project also includes improvements to Empire Square and Arpley Square, and once the special paving materials for these have been delivered the works will recommence.

3. From Simon Jeal to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation

After the pavement has been re-laid, could the portfolio holder explain why it is then being dug up again two weeks later by UK Power Networks and how long this further work is expected to take?

Reply:

UKPN needed to excavate the footway in Penge High Street to deal with an emergency. The paving will be reinstated in matching materials once their works have been completed.

4. From Simon Jeal to the Portfolio Holder for the Environment

Since pavement works on Penge High Street have now stopped, the bollarded-off areas have become full with litter. Does responsibility for cleaning these areas rest with the council and will they commit to ensuring the areas are cleared of litter throughout the eight weeks in which the works have stopped?

Reply:

I am advised that the area has been checked by Neighbourhood Management and Highway Network Management since receipt of Mr Jeal's question and that they were unable to locate any areas which were full of litter.

If Mr Jeal could possibly provide further information as to any specific area he might have in mind, ideally via 'Fix My Streets' if possible to ensure the swiftest response, I know that they will be very pleased to recheck the area again at his direction.

Some litter was spotted behind the Heras fencing next to the old toilet block and that will be removed presently, if indeed it hasn't been already.

The contractor responsible has been reminded that the barriers left on site around the lamp column need to be checked daily until this work is completed.