

COUNCIL MEETING

24th February 2020

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC FOR ORAL REPLY

1. From Nelson Pallister to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

In the event of a disciplinary foster panel, under what government legislation or local rules, regulations or guidance -

(a) is the panel permitted to hold a pre-meeting with Social Services from which the accused foster carers are excluded, and

(b) are the accused foster carers forbidden to have anyone speak on their behalf, bearing in mind that foster carers, whose expertise is in offering care not engaging in legal activities, may well be totally unfamiliar with the formality and confrontational approach of a panel meeting, whilst Social Services has access to all the legal and other resources of the Council as well as having individuals trained in appearing before a panel?

Reply:

In response to parts (a) and (b) of the question, the legislation is the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 - Regulation 28 covers the Reviews and Terminations of Approval - and in terms of the national minimum standards for fostering, we are looking at standard 22, which is Handling Allegations and Suspicions of Harm, and 14 - Fostering Panels and the fostering service's decision-maker.

Supplementary Question:

If an account by a foster parent and a child agrees and has never differed, do you have any guidelines for the social worker to base an allegation on the basis of their assumptions rather than the eye witness accounts of those present?

Reply:

In terms of the processes and mechanisms of these things, the regulations cover most things that could occur. If anyone is unhappy with what happens during those meetings it can be referred to an independent review mechanism. I am aware that parts of this question may be based on a live case so if there are any further details feel free to write to me and I will follow up any specifics.

2. From Sheila Grace to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management

Why, when there is a widely accepted Climate Emergency and the Council has committed to achieving net zero from its own emissions by 2029, is the Council's Annual Investment Strategy completely silent on the impact and risks of fossil fuel

investments on the climate and makes no moves to divest from such harmful investments?

Reply:

It is not the authority's intention to divest of any fossil fuel investments which we have because we have not got any.

Supplementary Question:

The ex-Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, has warned of the risk of fossil fuel dependent investments and those at risk of a changing climate. Has the investment strategy heeded this warning?

Reply:

His warning is extremely correct, which is why we have already done so.

3. From Sheila Grace to the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management

Is the Council satisfied with the PDS scrutiny of the Annual Investment Strategy, given that it dismisses consideration of the environmental policies of organisations in which it invests on the grounds that 'it would be a significant piece of work to conduct the necessary due diligence' and 'the market was "doing a good job" filtering out companies that had a more negative impact on the environment'? (Page 156, 2nd paragraph)

Reply:

The Council prepares an annual Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy in line with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services. The Council also published Prudential Indicators and a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) statement, as it is required by statute to do. Therefore, the Council complies fully with its statutory obligations as well as CIPFA management in relation to Treasury Management. As stated above, the Council has no direct investments relating to fossil fuels.