Council

16 October 2023

Questions from Members of the Public for Oral Reply

1. From Dermot Mckibbin to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

Why were the two 3 bedroomed Council owned properties recently put up for sale and then withdrawn from the auction, when was the last time these two properties were occupied, why have they not been allocated to rehouse households in housing need and when will they be re-occupied?

Reply:
The two properties have been vacant since 2019 and 2021. The decision was taken to sell the properties as due to subsidence/structural integrity issues, it would not be financially viable to bring them into use as affordable housing. Consequently, the properties are being sold as redevelopment opportunities to raise funds for more suitable affordable housing developments such as those already completed in Chislehurst, Anerley and Burnt Ash Lane.

The withdrawal from auction was as a result of statutory searches undertaken in preparation of the legal pack which discovered that independent utilities services were not available (this would be required to achieve a sale). Work is being undertaken to resolve this.

Once resolved both sites will be put back for auction to ensure the Council meets its S123 obligations under the Local Government Act 1972 to achieve best value.

Supplementary Question:
Is there no way these properties could be used to reduce the amount of money the Council spends on temporary accommodation for the 1,550 households in temporary accommodation? Would it be possible to sell them to a housing association and to provide much needed accommodation for households in need?

Reply:
As I said, both need significant work so are unlikely to be attractive to a housing association but they are welcome to bid for the properties. The funds that we are raising from these disposals will be put to other housing schemes and we have upcoming schemes at West Wickham, which is already under way, and we have just got planning permission for Bromley North, so we are continuing with our programme

of developing more affordable housing. It is just the most efficient way of spending the money.

Additional Supplementary question from Cllr Tony McPartlan:
Do we have a clear criteria for which properties we keep and which properties we sell and if we do would it be possible for us to see that?

Reply:
Are you talking specifically about residential properties? We do not have very many, and indeed there is a question for written reply that asks for a list of them. If they can be economically brought back into use they would be, if not we will dispose, raise the capital and put it to better schemes that make more financial sense.

2.   From John Haddock to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Road Safety

How can the Council justify putting the price of a residents permit up by 50% when state pension only went up by 10.1% and wages far less.

Reply:
This is the first increase for four years. In that period there has been a substantial rise in costs. Our charges, which equate to one tank of fuel, are considerably cheaper than our neighbouring boroughs.

Supplementary Question:
I cannot see how you can justify a 50% rise. You have not increased the number of permit holder bays where I live. There are 107 bays in the five roads surrounding where I live; only 33 are for permit holders only. The rest, apart from pay and display and a few disableds, 61 of them are for permit condition A, or pay and display. Why can't you just take the conditions A away from them so residents can find somewhere to park. Still have them as pay and display, but no conditions. Obviously you know what condition a means. Why can't you give us some more permit bays and take the conditions A away from Florence Road and Hammelton Road where those roads are empty in the daytime and permit holders cannot find places to park.

Reply:
I don't know about where you live; if you care to write to me I will look into it.

(The third question, from Mr Tony Banfield, was taken as a question for written reply.)