

Agenda Item 15 - Councillor Questions, Supplementary Questions and Responses

No.	Received from	Executive Member Responsible	Question	Answer
1.	Cllr Anne Lee	Cllr Helen Howell	‘What measures are NNC taking to help support the people who would normally use Kettering library, in order to provide access to books on loan, computers, public wifi, and a warm space?’	<p>Several Member briefings have been circulated in the last month regarding the closure of Kettering library and what services are currently being offered when and from where, and the options that were considered for an interim relocation of the library. These briefings were circulated on 27th October, 7th November and 24th November. The Briefing circulated on 24th November updated Members on the decision to relocate the library to the upper floor of the new Cornerstone extension, from where a full service offer will be delivered. A further Member briefing was circulated earlier this week on Tuesday 5th December to confirm the new library space will be open from Monday 11th December. Library services will be available during our normal opening times: Monday - Friday 9-6 Saturday - 9-5</p> <p>We will be offering our full range of library services, but on a reduced scale, with library staff on hand to offer assistance to customers. From Monday 11th December we will be offering the following:</p>

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			<p>Supplementary Question In terms of the last paragraph of the answer, doesn't informing users via the webpages and social media leave behind library users who are either computer illiterate or who depend on the library's computers which are not</p>	<p>Selection of book stock for browsing and borrowing and we will be able to take reservations for specific requests Under 5s Events - Rhyme Time, Explore A Story Free WiFi Warm Space Bus Passes Toilets – with disabled & baby change available</p> <p>We will continue to offer Blue Badge appointments on Tuesdays and Fridays from the Council Offices.</p> <p>Public computers, photocopying, printing and scanning will not be available immediately on opening, but we are working on providing these services as soon as possible.</p> <p>Residents have been kept informed via the NNC webpages and the Library service social media sites and various press releases have been issued.</p> <p>Supplementary Response There are always going to be certain elements of the public who we aren't able to approach because we don't know who they are. We have tried every aspect including articles in the press. If you have a list of people who may need further communication, I am happy to send out to them.</p>

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			available actually be best informed through an informative notice on the front of the library door?	
2.	Cllr Anne Lee	Cllr Jason Smithers	‘Can we have a list of the total expenses claimed by all NNC councillors this year, stating the allowance payable for their specific role and the amount they claimed in addition?’	<p>The list of members’ allowances payable each year is detailed in the Council Constitution at Part 8.6 – Scheme of Members’ Allowances.</p> <p>The list of total allowances payable and claimed this financial year to date is attached at Appendix A to these councillor questions and answers.</p>
3.	Cllr Jean Addison	Cllr Mark Rowley	What progress is being made on treatment of mould growth in council properties? Can I have reassurance that proper investigations are carried out in each case to resolve problems at source, and that a quick fix is not being carried out by painting fungicides each time the mould grows back?	<p>The Housing Property Services team have been providing data on a weekly basis to the Chief Executive on the number of properties with damp and mould repairs reported since 15 May 2023, when the repairs backlog project reporting commenced. At this point, we had 188 open damp and mould repair jobs.</p> <p>On 15 November this had been reduced to 80 open damp and mould cases. The 80 cases will not be the same cases as those reported in May 2023. Inspections are arranged for properties where damp and mould repair requests are raised, and a full property inspection is completed. The inspection will</p>

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			<p>Supplementary Question When will these cases be dealt with prior to 2023? Why are these people who have already been run down by the government be further run down by this Council not dealing with repairs in a timely manner.</p>	<p>identify what works are required to tackle the causes of the mould as well as treating any mould that is present. In addition, advice is also provided to our tenants on how they can assist to reduce the likelihood of mould reoccurring at their property.</p> <p>When required, we also work with specialist contractors to resolve damp and mould issues.</p> <p>Supplementary Response I cannot comment on individual cases but I will investigate and come back to you if you send it to me.</p>
4.	Cllr Zoe McGhee	Cllr Jason Smithers	Can the Leader give an update on members' complaints and enquiries with relation to timescales on replies. What is in place if members feel it is an emergency for our residents?	<p>Over the past three months, the Members Enquires team have assigned 524 cases to services,</p> <p>90% of cases that have been responded to have been completed within SLA, with an average response time of seven days. The response rate has steadily improved since the introduction of the service.</p>

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			<p>Supplementary Question Does the Leader have a justification for whilst this process is going on the standards of living for our residents and their mental health is going into absolute disrepair while we wait for a broken system and we wait for this to arrive?</p>	<p>We currently have 139 enquiries which are in progress, 92 of these are outside of the ten-day Service Level Agreement. This amounts to 66%.</p> <p>The current Members Enquires process details the steps to follow should an escalation be required (point 5) to ensure that should there be an emergency, the matter is dealt with urgently. This is currently under review and Members will be updated on this shortly, along with a virtual Q&A session on the process with the team.</p> <p>Supplementary Answer The system is not broken, we are working with it which has dealt with many member communications over the last six months. Yes, any new system isn't perfect however we are working at pace to deliver a solution that gets to a higher level than where it is at the moment. All I ask is that members appreciate the amount of enquiries that come through that system and the ability to streamline those and in order to give members updates in a timely fashion we're going to work doubly hard to ensure that it fits the bill.</p>

5.	Cllr Lyn Buckingham	Cllr Mark Rowley	<p>Has North Northants Council completed the Statutory Homes Energy Conservation Act Report for 2023 and what have been the Key achievements from the last report?</p>	<p>The authority is required to submit a HECA survey every other year for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The survey was last completed in 2021. Progress since then is currently being reviewed and the survey link has been requested from BEIS for the council to complete the update. Once the questions on the survey have been validated, reviewed and progress updated this will be submitted to BEIS and the answers will be published on the council website as per BEIS requirements. The Executive Director for Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing (DASS) and Children’s Services (Interim DCS) is co-ordinating this review.</p>
6.	Cllr Valerie Anslow	Cllr Mark Rowley	<p>As the weather gets colder and severe weather warning become more common, can members be assured that SWEP will be triggered if the temperature is forecast to be below zero and if the wind or rain is severe, as per the agreed policy?</p> <p>Supplementary Question Can I please ask that members are informed when SWEP is called?</p>	<p>North Northamptonshire Council is operating Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) as per the agreed policy. It was triggered for the first time this financial year on 29 November 2023, based on cold temperatures forecast for the following week and is likely to be in place until 04 December 2023.</p> <p>The Rough Sleeping Team will increase outreach during periods of SWEP to ensure known rough sleepers are offered accommodation and to respond to new reports of rough sleeping being received.</p> <p>Supplementary Response Every councillor was informed on 29 November when SWEP was put in place.</p>

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7.	Cllr Valerie Anslow	Cllr Mark Rowley	<p>The KPIs show that the number of street homeless is reported to be around 13 people although community groups who work with the homeless will report much higher figures. What is the number of street homeless in each of the former sovereign Boroughs?</p> <p>Supplementary Question Could the same breakdown be given for the number in temporary accommodation who accessed this via the rough sleeper team?</p>	<p>Please note this is a snapshot figure of a single night within the month and which is required to be reported to DLUHC monthly. This figure does fluctuate month on month and is not the overall number of rough sleepers seen across the month.</p> <p>During September 2023, the number of rough sleepers seen by area were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kettering – 2 • Corby – 6 • Wellingborough – 4 • East Northants – 1 <p>Supplementary Response I will respond via email.</p>
8.	Cllr Valerie Anslow	Adele Wylie, Petitions Officer	<p>How were the decisions made regarding the places at which members of Wellingborough Constituency could sign the recall petition of Peter Bone MP?</p>	<p>When designating the signing places the Petition Officer was required to comply with The Recall of MPs Act 2015 and associated Regulations which specify that the number of signing places in the constituency must be no fewer than 4 and no more than 10. Further, each signing place must be open from 9am until 5pm every weekday for a period of 6 weeks. The signing places also had to open to electors to sign the petition within 10 working days of the Speaker of the House of Commons notifying the Petition Officer that the recall petition had been triggered.</p> <p>The preferred option was to designate a signing place in</p>

				<p>each of the 9 unitary council wards situated within the constituency. Where possible, this would be a building that had previously been used as a polling station. However, due to the very tight timescales, many of the venues that had previously been used as polling stations at elections were unable to commit to their hall or other rooms being used for the petition for the whole 6-week period at such short notice, as they already had bookings scheduled into their calendars, including regular engagements.</p> <p>Regulation 13 of The Recall of MPs Act 2015 (Recall Petition) Regulations 2016 provides that the Petition Officer may use free of charge a room in a school, however, it was felt the level of disruption this may present to schools and the impact on pupils' education was not appropriate given the length of time that the signing period must be open.</p> <p>A number of alternative options were therefore explored within the constituency and in some cases site visits were undertaken to assess suitability. We found, however, that the other options considered were either unavailable for the whole period, not suitable, or the booking agent or venue manager felt it was inappropriate for them to engage in the process.</p> <p>Christmas activities/events at a number of locations presented additional challenges. In some cases, we have had to implement workarounds to accommodate existing bookings or business operations. After a great deal of negotiation, we were able to secure 9 locations that would be able to accommodate the process for the whole of the six-week signing period.</p>
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			<p>Supplementary Question Did the Petitions Officer who decided where the recall petition was going to be signed know that Finedon division included a good part of Wellingborough?</p>	<p>Electors were able to register for a postal vote until 5pm on 4th December 2023 and may still register for a proxy vote until 5pm on 11th December 2023 should they not be able to attend their allocated signing place during opening hours.</p> <p>Supplementary Response The Petitions Officer undertook to respond via email.</p>
9.	Cllr Ross Armour	Cllr Matt Binley	<p>Can we please have an update on the installation of the safety barrier secured for the Oakley Road roundabout and a timeline as to when this will be in place?</p> <p>Supplementary Question The new waymarkings and signs have made a significant difference. What is determining the priority of this project now because we can't just go by the collision numbers since the lane</p>	<p>Since the new signs and lane markings were added in September 2021, as recommended by the Safety Risk Assessment (SRA) for the site, we are pleased to confirm no further collisions have been recorded or reported at this location. The request for a barrier remains on our priority list for consideration as funding permits, although other schemes have been ranked as higher priorities so far. The timescale will depend on the relative priority of any new schemes coming forward, and also on funding in relation to the costs of the highest priority schemes. The service will continue to explore all opportunities for funding this proposal.</p> <p>Supplementary Response There is a matrix that's in place with regards to looking at these things. We have a whole team of people who look at such things as accident reports, hence how we know with this one the significant impact that it has made with regards to this.</p>

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			<p>markings went in, which is thankfully none? I'm sure this information is very useful for the residents living there but they are really still keen to see this barrier and I hope it gets over the line as soon as possible.</p>	<p>We fully accept the work still needs to be carried out but unfortunately there are other areas where we have fatal road traffic collisions which have to be prioritised. That is not to dismiss this scheme and I assure you that officers are working on it and want to see it completed as much as anybody.</p>
10.	Cllr Jim Hakewill	Cllr Lloyd Bunday	<p>What additional financial cost will there be for NNC's 24-25 budget when the National Living Wage rises from £10.42 to £11.44 in April 2024, both for directly and indirectly employed colleagues, and what funding is being offered by government to meet the additional wage bill?</p>	<p>The financial impact of any change in the National Living Wage (NLW) falls predominantly on the Adult Social Care budget. This is as a result of the increased costs to care providers which are subsequently passported on to the Council. This is allowed for within the budget assumptions at an estimated cost of c£5m.</p> <p>There is no direct funding from Government for the costs arising from changes to the NLW, however the Government has increased the funding for Social Care through additional grants in 2023/24 and 2024/25 and provided the flexibility for Councils to increase the precept by 2%.</p> <p>For Council staff, no further cost pressure is forecast outside the pay related budgetary provision already included. The Council's new pay and grading structure will exceed the NLW, as will the pay grades for those staff that have transferred under TUPE arrangements. This is also prior to any pay award being applied to the grades from April 2024.</p>

11.	Cllr Jim Hakewill	Cllr Jason Smithers	In many councils the opportunity is taken up by Executive Members to put forward presentations relating to their respective portfolios at Full Council. At NNC rule 3(vi) enables this opportunity and for Councillors to ask questions. Why are no Executive Presentations given and scrutiny questions invited?	The Scrutiny process is predicated on the posing of and answering of questions. To achieve effective scrutiny, the Councils scrutiny committees develop an annual work programme and can require urgent items to be brought before them. To raise questions relating to scrutiny at full council would be at odds with the scrutiny process and accordingly an inappropriate and unintended use of Executive Presentations. Furthermore, Executive Presentations are not a requirement but will be used by Executive Members where it is appropriate to do so.
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End of Cllr Questions