

## **PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 22 MARCH 2023**

### **a) Question from Maureen Potts to Councillor B Lewis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Leadership, Culture, Tourism and Climate Change**

“Last year, Killamarsh library was transferred into Killamarsh Active Leisure Centre and the original, purpose built library was subsequently demolished. Can Cllr Lewis please provide the following information on the new facility and indicate how the figures compare to the equivalent time period in the previous year:

- Number of library visits
- Items borrowed
- Computer reservations
- Active members
- Number of public computers
- Number of books on site for loan
- Indicative running cost of the building.”

### **b) Question from Wendy Bullar to Councillor B Lewis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Leadership, Culture, Tourism and Climate Change**

[Revealed: 1,000 super-emitting methane leaks risk triggering climate tipping points | Greenhouse gas emissions | The Guardian](#)

“The Guardian article (07.03.2030) revealed that more than 1,000 “super-emitter” sites gushed the greenhouse gas **methane** (trapping 80 times more heat than carbon, causing 25% of global heating) into the atmosphere in 2022 ....., mostly (emanating) from oil and gas facilities. Researchers say that this acceleration may be the biggest threat to keeping below 1.5C global heating and seriously risks triggering catastrophic climate tipping points.

I understand that the Derbyshire Pension Fund has a duty to base decisions on financial grounds and also on ethical considerations. Given the highly dangerous impact of these methane releases, does the Authority believe it is acting ethically to continue its investment in fossil fuel corporations, whose actions threaten the very future our existence? Is it ethical to support an industry is destroying our environment and life itself?”

### **c) Question from Kris Stone to Councillor K Athwal, Cabinet Member for Highways, Assets and Transport**

"Considering the disquiet over traffic restrictions in places such as Oxford and Sheffield and that the Derbyshire County Council is part of the UK:100

Membership Pledge, what changes will Chesterfield and Derbyshire drivers face over the next two years?"

**d) Question from Laura Stevens to Councillor B Lewis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Leadership, Culture, Tourism and Climate Change**

"The Pension Committee continues to invest in fossil fuel companies and we know from research and experience that engagement does not work. I am in the Derbyshire Pension Scheme, as is my husband, and I am increasingly concerned about Stranded Assets. This is really a much more serious issue than is realised. To quote Mark Carney, admired for his work as the Governor of the Bank of England, "*All financial institutions must justify their continued investment in fossil fuels. Assets in the sector could end up stranded and worthless*".

The London School of Economics advises people anxious about Stranded Assets to talk to their pension funds managers about reducing climate risk exposure. How will the Pension Committee avoid the danger of Stranded Assets?"

**e) Question from Sylvia Jones to Councillor S Spencer, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Budget**

"Develop Renew, the joint venture set up to exploit DCC assets has interesting connections through its partner - PSP - the London-based management consultancy DCC got into bed with in 2020. Companies House reveals that the PSP CEO and a handful of other directors control a clutch of companies offering services for complete commercial development of potentially lucrative sites like Cavendish Road car park and field. Notably finance, site acquisition, clearance, house construction, building supplies, real estate sales, letting agency, residential property management is potentially available.

Will any of these "hinterland companies" be allowed to tender for work associated with the proposed sell off and development of the Cavendish Road land - or other developments in Derbyshire? If so, what oversight measures are in place to ensure there is no possibility of a conflict of interest or any leak of confidential inside information?"

**f) Question from Markham May to Councillor S Spencer, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Budget**

"I was pleased to see in the response to a recent Freedom of Information request that the Council agreed with me that the Cavendish Road car park is of undoubted value to the local community, and the playing field has the potential to provide much needed amenity land such as allotments which are lacking in

quantity in Matlock. How does this acknowledgment affect the way in which these assets will be disposed of?'

**g) Question from Lisa Hopkinson to Councillor B Lewis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Leadership, Culture, Tourism and Climate Change**

“There is increasing evidence that big oil firms like Shell and BP, despite their claims, are continuing to invest in fossil fuel exploration and extraction rather than transitioning to renewables. Last year they made record profits, but invested much more in new oil and gas projects than renewables – which accounted for less than 5% of their profits.

A [report by Oil Change International](#) also exposed how Shell’s fossil fuel expansion plans are not aligned with the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change. The Derbyshire Pension Fund has previously justified its continued investment in companies like Shell and BP on the basis that engagement is the best way to drive change.

Isn’t it time to admit that these companies are continuing to fuel climate change and move investments out of these polluting companies to more sustainable investments or fossil free investment indices, which have a track record of equalling/outperforming their fossil fuel equivalents?”

**h) Question from Gillian Higham to Councillor S Spencer, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Budget**

“Re: the decision to dispose of the Cavendish Road site in Matlock. Has the detrimental effect of the loss of parking been properly evaluated, and have you fully considered the loss of the social value of this site?”

**i) Question from David Ingham to Councillor Spencer, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Budget**

"I note from the Performance/Budget Monitoring Report (Quarter 2 up to September 2022) that employee sickness levels continue to rise.

That said I do acknowledge the direct steps the Council is trying to take to address the situation along with indirect measures such as the proposed reintroduction of a probationary process and amendment to existing Certificate of Good Conduct arrangements for those who have lived outside of the UK.

However, aside from the millions being spent on combined sick pay and associated overtime and agency cover the current situation regarding the overall health of Council employees and the impact of such really concerns me personally and professionally.

For context, sickness levels are close to 3 times higher than when I was one of the Council's Attendance Managers.

If the situation doesn't quickly improve, what measures can still be taken to turn this concerning situation around?