

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 (not attending)

“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.”

Response:

“I am quite proud of this piece of work that we did with Killamarsh Library and North East Derbyshire District Council to relocate the library to Killamarsh Active Leisure Centre and on the 26 October last year we opened that. It is right there in the heart of the community.

It will take time to understand the full positive impact of the move however I am really pleased with the performance of the library over these 5 short months and look forward to continued success. It is a nice open fresh modern space and the area lends itself to a more relaxed sociable experience. The new location is a real benefit to the local community where customers can enjoy multiple services in one place and this approach to relocation and co-location is one that we will look to capitalise as we work with our district and borough colleagues on a refreshed Library Strategy.

The available data and comparison with the equivalent time period last year is as follows:

Number of library visits

	November	December	January	February	Total
2021-22	332	376	315	217	1,240
2022-23	405	314	382	419	1,520

Number of issues and renewals

	November	December	January	February	Total
2021-22	674	730	798	647	2,849
2022-23	692	601	740	825	2,858

Computer reservations

	November	December	January	February	Total
2021-22	24	18	22	21	85
2022-23	26	40	29	17	112

Active users

	November	December	January	February	Averaged Total
2021-22	366	360	366	372	366
2022-23	352	366	387	396	375

Number of public computers

2021-22 – 4

2022-23 – 2

Unfortunately, we are unable to provide data regarding number of books on site for loan as our Library Management System cannot provide retrospective snapshots, so information about the state of the shelves in the past is not possible.

It is not anticipated that there will be any increased costs associated with the transfer of the library. Given that the library has only been in its new location for 5 months, the full year effect of costs is not yet available. Thank you.”

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?”

Response:

“Thank you, Ms Bullar, for your question. We have stood in this Chamber on a number of occasions talking about this very issue of pension funds and the question of divestment etc.

On this particular topic we know that global energy transition to a low carbon economy requires the capital and expertise of the major oil and gas producers to support the development of clean energy solutions, the delivery of new renewable assets, energy assets and the delivery and installation of energy storage solutions. The whole market is tipping towards being greener and it is taking hydrocarbon producers with them. The policy landscape there has changed very significantly in recent years I think it is fair to say.

Producers of fossil fuel products are already major developers of renewable energy solutions with the growing share of the capital expenditure being directed to low carbon solutions. Investment in the producers of fossil fuels gives the Pension Fund a seat at the table enabling the fund to influence producers in collaboration with other investors to relocate their capital and adapt their business models to support the transition to a low carbon economy and that is why it is important that we are also at that table.

The Pension Fund has recently become a member of the institutional Investor Group for Climate Change to build on its collaborative engagement activities. This group of investors representing around €60 trillion of assets is committed to supporting and enabling the investment community to drive significant progress by 2030 towards a net zero and resilient future. As a responsible long-term investor the Derbyshire Pension Fund is well placed to provide support to companies right across the economy during the energy transition influencing corporate behaviour through engagement to achieve real world reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Thank you.”

Supplementary question:

“The future of our people and our planet is at risk. The United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change just issued a final warning on climate. They said “Our world needs climate action on all fronts, everything, everywhere at once.” The new report found that if governments stay within

current policies for climate action we will miss that window to secure a liveable planet.

Could Derbyshire County Council be part of the solution here? Could this Authority lead the way for Local Government Pension Schemes by making a most sound and ethical decision which advocates investments leaving behind green investments, leaving behind fossil fuels and the risk of stranded assets?"

Response:

"Thank you Ms Bullar for your supplementary. I believe we are part of that solution and by remaining at the seat of that table in the conversation with hydrocarbon producers that we are invested in I think helps drive us towards a greener, brighter future. That is the only way I believe we can do that. I don't believe that the hydrocarbon companies will end up being stranded assets simply because it makes a lot of sense for these organisations, they are smart organisations in the sense that they have very clever talented people working in there who understand that the world is changing around them and that they need to move with that change. We will help drive that from the seat at the Board. Thank you."

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

"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?"

Response:

"Thank you, Mr Stone for your question. The Council is aware that the concept of 15-minute cities and the UK100 has been a target of a misinformation campaign with claims made that Councils signing up to UK100 have signed up to implement 15-minute cities. The UK100 does not mandate its members to introduce this and it is not a condition of UK100 membership.

The Council does not have any formal plans or policy around the 15- minute city/town neighbourhood concept. However, in developing sustainable planning policy the Council aims to deliver places where people can work, play and live in close proximity. This will help to decarbonise transport, for more active travel and reduce air pollution in neighbourhoods across the county.

The Council is commencing work on a new Local Transport Plan. The East Midlands Devolution Deal passes the duty of preparing a plan to the new Combined County Authority and therefore the assumption at present is that the new LTP will be a D2N2 area wide Plan. The LTP is at its earliest stage of plan

preparation and other than being aware that decarbonisation will be a key theme for the Plan there has not been any appraisal of future strategy options at this stage. Therefore, we envisage that there will be no change for Chesterfield and Derbyshire drivers over the next two years. Thank you.”

Supplementary question:

“When my father was on Staveley Council, Staveley Town Council implemented the closure of a main road in Staveley and it caused a lot of trade problems. What has happened around the country will cause more damage to the trade of Derbyshire people, Chesterfield people. I would like you to bear in mind what you have said today and also I would like to point out I asked a question about the UK100 pledge, I had not mentioned the 15-minute city. Would you really take this on board?”

Response:

“Thank you, Mr Stone. I have been quite clear in what I have said at this moment in time. Whilst I can’t promise anything as a responsible Highways Authority we will investigate all opportunities available to us to reduce air pollution, promote active travel in Derbyshire, and as regards your concerns there are no plans whatsoever to bring the 15-minute cities into Derbyshire County Council, Derbyshire County itself. Thank you.”

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

"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?"

Response:

“Thank you very much indeed, Ms Stevens, for your question. As you know we have a fiduciary responsibility to you as a Derbyshire Pension Scheme holder.

That is right at the top of our list of priorities. I think I have mentioned already around the issue of stranded assets how it is unlikely that many of these assets will become that, some of the companies like Shell etc investing vast quantities of money and are becoming world leaders in green technologies as well so I think that just indicates the direction of travel.

Our Pension Fund's climate strategy sets out its approach to managing climate related risks and opportunities and it is supported by the annual publication of a task force for climate related financial disclosure's report which covers the fund's progress against that particular strategy. The fund aims to achieve a portfolio of assets with net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and it expects its investment managers to include an assessment of environmental factors including risks associated with climate change into their investment processes.

The Pension Fund's Climate Strategy includes two initial decarbonisation targets both of which to be achieved by 2025. That is to reduce the carbon intensity of the fund's listed equity portfolio by at least 30% relative to the weighted 2020 benchmark and investing at least 30% of the fund's portfolio in low carbon and sustainable investments. The first target has already been achieved and the second target is expected to be achieved during 2023-24. These targets will be reviewed towards the end of this year and at least every three years thereafter and are expected to increase in line with a goal of achieving a portfolio of assets with net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The weight of oil and gas stocks in the fund's investment portfolio has been reduced by approximately 65% over the last ten years from just over 7% in January 2013 to around 2.5% in January 2023. Over that same period the fund has increased the level of investment into low carbon and sustainable investments whilst maintaining reduced exposure to the oil and gas companies which are expected to play a major role in the energy transition.

The Pension Fund has committed around £275m of capital into renewable energy funds over the last ten years, almost double the current value of the fund's oil and gas investments. The assets in these renewable energy funds include investments in onshore and offshore wind; solar; hydro and battery storage and the fund expects to continue increasing its allocations to low carbon and sustainable investments subject to the usual performance, diversification and risk management considerations and will continue to engage collaboratively with fellow investors to influence corporate behaviour during the global energy transition. I hope that helps."

Supplementary question:

"While our pensions bet on risky fossil fuels our futures are insecure. Our pensions must invest in things that secure our future, as you have said, renewable energy, homes, infrastructure, but pension funds going for short-term

returns from fossil fuels are not treating all pensioners equally with bias towards older pension fund holders. I wondered how you felt about this inter-generational injustice, if you understand where I am coming from, so that longer term our young employees it is getting more risky?

Response:

“Thank you very much indeed. As an investment scheme pensions by their very nature are very long-term schemes. I think it is quite extraordinary from the outline I have just given to you of the actions taken in line with the pension strategy for greening those investments how extraordinarily quickly actually that transition has occurred ahead of target and over time I think they will be bang on target to ensure they are entirely divested by 2050.”

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

“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?”

Response:

“Thank you, Mrs Jones, for the question. Before I get into the response to the question itself I am afraid I would have to challenge the term “exploit” and “get into bed” in the original question as unacceptable.

Develop Renew is a limited liability partnership set up between PSP and Derbyshire County Council with a legally constituted partnership agreement, a joint board, a transparency governance, a decision making process in place. We are still completing an options’ appraisal for the site which is what Develop Renew are here to do. Until the options’ appraisal is complete no decisions have been made as to the future use of the site. If we were to dispose of the site we are obliged to get the best opportunity for it, to act within our powers in

accordance with our constitution and abide by our financial regulations. Thank you.”

Supplementary question:

“I understand that certainly with a £60m black hole because of the loan to Thurrock Council to fill in and the reduction of Central Government funding the Council must obviously try to get as much money as possible into its coffers but sometimes selling off assets to the highest bidder instead of for the benefit and improved quality of life of Council Tax payers in Derbyshire may not be the best option. I have been an investigative journalist all my life and I have spent over 50 years reporting on local government affairs, the good, the bad and sometimes the ugly. One thing I have learnt is that good governance actually requires transparency and open democracy in line with the DCC mission statement, the Nolan principles and the Gunning principles.

I would like to find out whether you propose to talk to local residents in the area of the Cavendish Road site about what they would like to see in development of this land?”

Response:

“Well, Mrs Jones, you were talking about many things which were not relevant to this particular question in your preamble that you have just made, many of which I refute also.

Let me also state to you as well that the asset management process that this Authority is going through is in the main as a consequence of the way in which this organisation has reshaped the way it will work in the future. As a consequence of Covid we had to change many of our working practices, review the way in which we deliver our services and look very closely at our expectation on our staff, aware of how they should work moving forward. Those discussions are ongoing and they continue to be developed but it would be inappropriate for this Authority to retain assets that are no longer required at the expense of the taxpayer.

We as an Authority need to take a rational, measured approach to dealing with how we manage our assets and that is exactly what I believe is happening in this particular instance. We will follow the laid down guidelines, as I have already said, with regard to our financial regulations and our code of transparency and we will continue with the project that we have set out on.

Cavendish Road is one asset of over 4,500 that this Authority is responsible for and it is my job to make sure that the taxpayers of Derbyshire benefit from that as a whole not a small section of the community here in Matlock and I intend doing so. As far as discussing with local residents the future of this proposal

when the proposal is made, as yet it has not been decided upon, there is a laid down process within planning law of consultation, discussion and decision making process which will be followed in detail, I am sure, by the Local Planning Authority if and when that situation arises.

So, Mrs Jones, I would suggest to you that we have answered over the last few months several questions from many residents within the area and I have more questions to answer, which I am sure you will listen to in detail which will cover off many of the issues you and your residents are concerned about. Thank you.”

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

“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?”

Response:

“Thank you, Mr May, for the question. We agree that the site has the potential to be used in a variety of uses, many of which are valid and these will be deemed more or less preferable dependent on a number of factors. There have been many suggestions for the uses of this land but the land can only be used for one use, which is yet to be decided.

With regard to the specific question how will it affect it I do not believe it will. Thank you.”

Supplementary question:

“We are setting up a Community Land Trust. We think it can be used for three different purposes. It can be used for allotments. It can be maintained as a car park for local residents who can get their cars off the streets around Cavendish Road, and it can provide much needed community housing, so there are three possibilities there. I think it would be quite useful for the Matlock Community Land Trust to be able to talk to the Council about our ideas and to see how we could find areas of agreement.”

Response:

“Let me explain to you this is a strategic approach in managing our assets across the county as a whole. It is not purely focused around one particular issue here in Matlock. I would suggest to you I am sure your community has a view of how

that piece of land can be used in the future but it is my job, as I have already said, to get best value for the taxpayers of Derbyshire.

We will give due consideration to any proposal put forward but that decision has yet to be made. We will also give due consideration to many other proposals that may be put forward by other people. It isn't an issue purely for the residents of Matlock to decide, it is an issue for the taxpayers of Derbyshire and I as the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Budget have the responsibility to do this in an open and transparent fashion which is exactly what I will do. Thank you."

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

"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?"

Response:

"Thank you very much indeed Ms Hopkinson for your question.

I think just to cover off the technical side of this and at the risk of repeating myself, because obviously we have had three quite related questions, fossil fuels are expected to remain an important part of the energy mix for many years to come and the producers of fossil fuel products are expected to play a growing role in the transition to a low carbon economy as provided as a renewable energy source. I have already talked about Shell and their investments but it can't escape our attention or notice that there is obviously a war in Ukraine at the moment and the situation with regard to energy, gas in particular, Russia and so on is (at the risk of using the wrong term) fuelling that issue quite

considerably, as is the current cost of living crisis in part driven by increased cost in energy as well.

I agree we have seen record profits but then we have seen record energy prices as well. I think it is entirely inevitable that we still have to at least be looking at a potential energy mix for a good few years between now and 2050, which is a point I may come back to a little bit later on, so divestment is a one-off action which has no impact on real world emissions.

Constructive investor engagement with major oil and gas companies will continue to form a major part of investor collaborative engagement activities with the aim of influencing corporate behaviour to achieve real world reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Investor engagement has encouraged investee companies to improve the quality of their climate related disclosures and to commit to targets for reducing emissions.

The major oil and gas companies in the UK, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Spain and Norway have now all committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Ongoing engagement is encouraging companies to clearly explain their climate aligned strategy with transparent plans for how their assets and business strategies will adapt to achieve net zero emissions and with a credible transition timetable.

The Pension Fund has significantly increased its level of investment in low carbon and sustainable investments in recent years and will continue to assess similar opportunities balancing potential risks and returns and the geographical mix of assets in the context of a diversified investment portfolio. Thank you.”

Supplementary question:

“It is good that the Pension Fund has increased its investments in renewables but you still have hundreds of millions invested in oil companies. Aviva, the UK insurance company, has now divested almost all of its £2.5bn exposure to fossil fuel companies on the basis of their weak ambitions to reduce their climate impact. I refer to the report by Oil Change International earlier rather than the greenwash from the companies themselves. The chief responsible investment officer for Aviva said:

“The Pension Fund’s age old business model of dutifully investing their members’ money in a manner that maximises return and minimises risk is becoming unstuck in a world grappling with the chaos and uncertainty created by the climate crisis.”

Councillor Lewis referred to these companies as “clever companies”. The history is littered with examples of “clever companies” that either made obsolete products or made bad mistakes. Just think of Kodak and Blockbuster, Lehman

Brothers or Enron. Why does the Derbyshire Pension Fund think it is fine to continue to invest in oil companies when some of the biggest investors are saying “Enough is enough?”

Response:

“Thank you very much indeed. It is a good point I suppose but I would make this counterpoint: I think it is important as well because it relates to this and it is that headlong push for new investment classes that relate to green technology, particularly where pension schemes like now and in the future will be investing, it is important to note the UK at the moment produces around 2% of the global CO₂ emissions.

I have stood in this Chamber before and highlighted that to meet our own national ambitions (and they are now legislated for and written into future policy) would require a tripling of the global mining activity in a short period of time to meet our demands for things like lithium, for cobalt, silver and other rarer minerals. We have other global economies who are mirroring the UK’s ambition and as we shall see unless battery technologies - and I hope they do take a quantum leap - which will create a surge in mining over the next 30 years that will equate or exceed the extraction of metals and rare earth minerals that humankind has done since the Copper Age and that is a few millennia ago.

The consequent impacts on biodiversity in the natural world are as yet not properly quantifiable. The environmental toll of lithium, brine lakes, methods that require 20,000 kilos of extraction to get a kilo of rare earth metals, on site refinement of things like lithium that creates oil and water toxicity that we can even barely comprehend at this moment in time and I can’t even begin to quantify the sheer quantity of CO₂ that extraction will burn because the heavy machinery isn’t yet running on batteries or hydrogen and they won’t do for at least a decade, at least not widely anyway, so we have swapped out hydrocarbons, the metals and minerals in the rush to be green and it is our planet ultimately that will pay that higher cost.

Whilst I am sure that we will make this land a greener and more pleasant one I am not sure that offshoring those impacts is the best way forward. I don’t think it will be noted as humanity’s finest hour so I am quite keen actually that we do keep a track of all these sorts of metrics as much as you might be keen to keep track on pension schemes. They are not inconsequential they are considerably massive issues and whilst you may think you can sleep easier thinking you have done your bit around pension schemes I will lose sleep thinking about this pushing us over an environmental precipice. It is “clever companies” out there who are doing this right now. We all want to be cleaner. We all want to make sure that our investments are as green as possible but there is a price to pay on the other side of that as well. Thank you.”

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?”

Response:

Thank you, Mrs Higham, for the question. The private car park belongs to the Council. It was solely for the use of officers based at Chatsworth Hall. Since we have reviewed our working practices, adopted a more flexible and agile working pattern and consolidated our workforce into County Hall the parking is no longer required for that purpose.

The remit of Develop Renew includes the requirement to consider social value so this will be taken into account in completing its appraisal. We have the responsibility to ensure social value for all Derbyshire residents out of any decision that we make. Thank you.”

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?"

Response:

“Thank you, Mr Ingham. You are spending as much time in this Council Chamber as I am these days. Firstly, I would like to outline that my response will focus on the executive functions within my Cabinet portfolio and not reference measures related to employment policy as implied within the question submitted.

Performance remains a key focus of the Council and is kept under constant review. A slight increase in cumulative sickness absence performance in Quarter 2 to Quarter 3 reflects there is significant increase in infections as a percentage of overall sickness which is not uncommon during the winter months as seasonal infections rise.

Whilst the Council has seen a steady increase in sickness absence over the last twelve months it appears to be following a national trend. The Office of National Statistics' official data shows that sickness absence rates rose to their highest in more than ten years with the Corona virus pandemic impacting on sickness absence data in many many ways. The Council's Wellbeing Strategy has been refreshed and relaunched and the focus on this strategy will continue to support improved performance when considering the wellbeing of the Council workforce.

I will say, Mr Ingham, following the changes we have made to the way in which we present performance data in line with our financial management data, which I consider a major step forward in transparency and openness that took place some two years ago following the inspection that was carried out here at the Council, it has highlighted many areas in which we need to focus. Sickness levels is one of those areas and I can give you assurances today that is exactly what is taking place as we speak. Thank you."

Supplementary question:

"I am sorry if it was considered that it was not an executive question. I thought that bit had been clarified and determined and that is why the question had been able to be submitted, so in terms of my supplementary I would say I consider this to be an executive role supplementary question linked to the original question but sorry if it is a bit of misunderstanding on my part.

In relation to the supplementary question and having regard as well to the performance monitoring situation you have just made reference to no doubt you will be aware by now, as I am, that the new sickness metric data reported to Cabinet and full Council within performance monitoring reports hasn't been correct. Sickness targets for 2023-24 in interrelated service plans, which is considered by the Executive, are to be confirmed and I understand now whilst that is the case if those metrics have not been correct. I am not even sure if 2021-22 and 2022-23 metric stated within service plans are now correct or not and within previous plans. One of the departmental service plans doesn't even include sickness metrics and targets. Covid is described as "uncontrollable" and "concerningly unmanageable". This position has been agreed by Cabinet as part of the executive function.

In light of these matters can I ask that when any further update reports are submitted for Cabinet to consider as an executive function and approve, for

example Quarter 4, what can be done to ensure the increased transparency of information within documentation, which the executive then go on to approve, includes reference to mistakes?”

Response:

“Thank you. Mr Ingham, I am not aware that there are any mistakes that you refer to in that documentation. Let me also state to you there has been a new method of calculation since you were in post as an officer carrying out that role and how that data is collected.

Let me give you a quick snapshot of the data that has been collected. My understanding is if you look at the data say for 2019 the average sickness days as a percentage were 4.74%. If you look at the data for the last quarter, I think that last quarter was 5.5, the quarter before was 5.4 and the quarter before that was 5.3. If you look at that data you will see a 0.74% increase over a three year period following a pandemic. I do not consider that to be a major issue. Having said that I am very focused on making sure that we look at the management data and the data that refers to sickness in a very positive and proactive way.

I will give you just a few examples of the measures that have been put in place to focus very much on those issues moving forward. Our HR Team across the organisation and our management team across the organisation will be doing as I am going to tell you very shortly.

- We want to develop and promote a strong attendance culture.
- Prevention and early intervention as a cost effective way of reducing long-term sickness.
- Focus on reducing and managing long-term sickness and absence.
- Measure, analyse and understand the impact of long-term sickness for the future.
- Executive directors and departmental management teams reviewing their performance around sickness absence against targets have regular one-to-one discussions and future objective settings for that purpose.
- Ensure that the case conference approach is in place for all directorates across the building upon the support provided by the Occupational Health Unit and advice by our support teams.
- Ensure completion of mandatory training for all managers.
- Continue to collate our wellbeing offer in line while being pillars ready to update the wellbeing processes across Our Derbyshire.
- Issue the guidelines for managers on managing sickness absence along with progressing and menopausal policy.
- Provide access to timely data for managers to ensure that they understand the long-term sickness absences within their team and take timely action to overcome it.
- Managers to hold one-to-one with their teams through a PDR process and

include wellbeing conversations throughout the Union.

- Re-publicise the long-term Covid support available through joined up care, collaboration with our partners and agencies who work alongside us.
- Promote the health improvement advisers to alert colleagues to what support is being offered.

I think you will agree, Mr Ingham, that is a comprehensive approach to addressing the issue you have raised today and that I am also concerned about. I am sure the Council is taking the issues you have raised very seriously and will continue to do so in the future. Thank you.”