

QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 24 MARCH 2021

(1) PUBLIC QUESTIONS

a) Question from Anne Thoday to Councillor T King, Cabinet Member for Clean Growth & Regeneration

Your climate manifesto pledge published in May 2019 includes a commitment to: “work with borough and district councils, utilities and property developers to champion eco-homes fit for the future and to help communities and businesses become less dependent on energy”. What exactly has the council done to promote A-rated eco-homes in Derbyshire and districts, and why are the numbers of the most energy-efficient A-rated homes in Derbyshire less than the national average?

Question from Lisa Hopkinson to Councillor T King, Cabinet Member for Clean Growth & Regeneration

In view of Derbyshire County Council’s climate manifesto pledge to champion eco-homes, has the Council considered making sure that any council land sold for housing is on the basis that the most energy efficient eco-homes are built on that land, as Nottingham City Council has done? Or better still, has it considered retaining ownership of that land and entering into a joint venture to build eco-social homes on it instead?

b) Question from Mary Reape to Councillor T King, Cabinet Member for Clean Growth & Regeneration

How much council land has been sold for housing since your Climate Manifesto in May 2019 and how many of the buildings built on that land, or planned for that land, are A-rated for efficiency?

Response to a), b) & c):

May I thank Anne Thoday, Lisa Hopkinson and Mary Reape for their questions which have a common theme.

Please let us be clear Derbyshire County Council is not a unitary authority, unlike Nottingham, and therefore does not have freedom of action that such status brings.

Unlike a unitary authority, the Council is not a housing or housing planning authority, those functions lie with the boroughs and districts. Hence the Council is not able to enforce a policy with regards to targeting the sale of land for eco housing development and has no way of quantifying how many eco houses may

or may not have been developed on land sold by the Council. Also the Council weights both social and economic benefit when considering land for disposal.

The Council is not in a position to monitor energy rating of third party developments.

This is the reason for the statement quoted from our Climate Manifesto around partnership working with borough and district councils and encouraging them to develop eco housing in line with paragraph 154 of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework. As members will know we have created our own Joint Venture PSP (Derbyshire) Ltd to facilitate in part the development, asset management, rationalisation and economic regeneration on a project by project basis of council land. This will be very much led by our three strategic pillars; Vision Derbyshire, Enterprising Council and Thriving communities, all of which encompass our Climate Change pledges.

In particular we regard the Vision Derbyshire partnership programme as being a very powerful and important initiative, essential to delivering our internal carbon reduction and climate change ambitions in a number of key areas, including the building of low carbon eco homes. DCC is working with boroughs and districts as well as utilities and developers, and indeed it needs to do so, in order to achieve its low carbon goals.

It is also worth noting and acknowledging that Derbyshire County Council is working very hard with boroughs and districts to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes, a significant challenge in many areas. Boroughs and districts, supported by DCC, have already secured over £6million pounds of funding to improve the most energy inefficient homes, an equally important task for us as a County Council.

The Living and Working Sustainably theme, integral to Vision Derbyshire addresses climate change specifically. This is in its early stages but with strong support from boroughs and districts. There is focus on:

- a) Emissions (three potential projects on housing; electric vehicle chargepoint infrastructure and community engagement) and
- b) Addressing climate change through the planning system.

There is considerable work taking place not only with boroughs and districts, but also Derby City and Peak National Park to take a county-wide approach to reducing emissions from housing, transport, energy.

The Local Authority Energy Partnership (hosted by DCC) is also taking a lead in co-ordinating this and has helped districts and boroughs access £4.47m in Phase 2 of the Local Authority Delivery Scheme. This is in addition to the

£1.8m secured by districts and boroughs in Phase 1 of the scheme. Grants will be used to retrofit some of the least energy efficient homes in the County.

Supplementary (AT): The response states that DCC is working closely with Boroughs and Districts and encouraging them to develop eco-housing in line with paragraph 154 of the NPPF. Please can the council provide examples of exactly how they have encouraged councils to develop eco-housing, the outcomes of this joint working and whether they think this action is sufficient in view of Derbyshire's poor record on eco-housing development?

Response:

In respect of the issue of joint working with the other district and borough councils in Derbyshire, there are a number of areas where the County Council is seeking to take a proactive approach through the planning process with its local authority partners to mitigate the impacts on climate change and to reduce carbon emissions in line with local authority carbon budgets as below. A key point that needs to be acknowledged is that the The County Council does not determine planning applications for new housing development, including eco-friendly housing. This is the responsibility of the district and borough councils in the County. However, through the three key areas set out below, the County Council is taking a proactive approach through its joint working with its local authority partners to develop planning policies and to ensure there is a consistent approach across Derbyshire to ensure that all new development, particularly new housing development, is designed to be carbon neutral in line with Government timescales.

Vision Derbyshire: As part of the process of taking forward Vision Derbyshire, the local authority partners in the County have agreed to develop a climate change and planning work theme, which is being led by the Leader of Derbyshire Dales District Council, the Chief Executive of Amber Valley Borough Council and the Planning Services Manager at Derbyshire County Council. A working Group of local authority partners is being established to develop tangible outcomes to address the impacts of climate change through the planning process, one of which could be the development of a jointly agreed planning policy approach for climate change (Supplementary Planning Guidance) that would help shape planning policy on a consistent basis across the County for mitigating the impacts of climate change through new development in the next round of Local Plan Reviews by the local authority partners.

A Strategic Planning Framework for Derby and Derbyshire: Derbyshire County Council is working jointly with its local authority partners to develop a Strategic Planning Framework for Derby and Derbyshire, which would set out a consensus of key objectives and priorities of all the partners for how Derbyshire will grow sustainably up to 2050, particularly the promotion of good

green growth. Central to the development of those jointly agreed objectives and priorities would be the need to address and mitigate the impacts of climate change and for the County to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. It is anticipated that climate change would be at the heart of the Framework and a key theme running through each of its main topic areas, which would include housing development and the need to ensure that new housing development in the County in the future is carbon neutral in line with Government required timescales.

Strategic Consultations: Derbyshire County Council is a statutory consultee on Local Plans prepared the City, district and borough councils in Derbyshire; on Neighbourhood Plans developed by community groups in the County; and on major strategic scale developments in the County. A key consideration by the County Council in its responses to each of these types of consultation is that individual developments and policies for new development should seek to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Derbyshire County Council has developed a model policy on the promotion of renewable energy development in Neighbourhood Plans that is being taken up increasingly by community groups preparing their Neighbourhood Plans.

Supplementary (LH): Although DCC is not a unitary council it presumably is able to set conditions on the land it sells in the same way that Nottingham City Council has done? This just involved one paragraph in the contract defining what can and can't be done with the land as a condition of sale. Please could you say why this isn't possible for DCC and if it is possible whether you would consider doing it to give meaningful support to your climate manifesto?

Response:

The Council is under an obligation within S.123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to achieve best consideration when disposing of assets. Additional non-monetary benefits such as carbon neutral developments and affordable housing commitments are weighted and due diligence undertaken as to how the proposed developers align to the Council's strategic aims. The Council looks to work with like-minded delivery partners where possible. The non-monetary benefits stated cannot be taken into account when determining best consideration.

There is an additional mechanism (General Disposal Consent Order) where a disposal promotes or improves economic, social or environmental well-being in an area that could be used for a sale which does not meet best consideration but this has not been tested by the Council as the offers received have not been applicable. The GDCO can only be used where the difference between best consideration and the purchase price is less than £2m.

Supplementary (MR): Who has the Council sold land to since their Climate Manifesto and on what basis has this been seen as value for money and contributing to the fulfilment of their Climate Manifesto?

Response:

The council does not disclose sale information as bidder confidentiality is required to retain the integrity of the council and therefore not adversely impact future market interest in council assets. The council is obliged to obtain best consideration for its assets and this best value mechanism is determined by statute. To fulfil that obligation the council exposes assets that are due for disposal to the open market where any interested party may bid.

c) Question from Peter Smith to Councillor T King, Cabinet Member for Clean Growth & Regeneration

Building on its work in helping to secure the Freeport for the East Midlands, going forward how does the Council envisage ensuring Derbyshire is able to benefit fully from the economic growth this innovative development will deliver to the entire region?

Response:

Colleagues will be aware that the East Midlands Freeport bid has a vision to be the 'UK's green gateway for growth' and I believe this is the platform that will provide not only the best economic advantage to the region, but to Derbyshire specifically.

By way of background, the Freeport includes 3 sites, one of which is in Derbyshire just south of Toyota at Burnaston called East Midlands Intermodal Park (EMIP), another at Ratcliffe on Soar power station and the third, around East Midlands Airport which will provide the main customs facility for the Freeport. Overall, the three sites provide 523ha of largely underdeveloped land within 15km of the East Mids Airport and will accelerate development and an investment pipeline of over £600 million.

The customs zone at EMIP will integrate Toyota's major manufacturing centre, and is expected to contribute £910 million in GVA annually and 19,900 jobs - of which £600 million and 10,600 jobs are actually on-site and the remainder in the wider locality.

The Freeport is located at the heart of the UK's strategic economic corridors and it will secure strong air, rail freight and road connectivity and will create the perfect conditions for a new global hub for international trade and investment right on our doorstep – a front door to the wider Derbyshire economy.

All of this means local businesses and local people can really benefit from the Freeport opportunity, Derbyshire can take its place at the forefront of growth and investment and that wider region can really start to address some of the key challenges linked to levelling up the economy.

Through the Freeport platform, we will:

- Help secure the long term future of some of our key industries (Toyota, Bombardier, JLR, Rolls Royce) and strengthen local supply chains.
- Increase our attractiveness as a region – and county - in which to invest
- Support and expand existing supply chains – particularly around our advanced manufacturing and logistics sectors – which will help secure their longer term competitiveness
- Generate new sector strengths – particularly around low carbon, building on Derbyshire’s emerging reputation and ambitions to be a centre of excellence for future fuels such as hydrogen
- Deliver transport modal shifts and help reduce emissions e.g. through a new rail head at the EMIP site and pushing more products onto rail freight.
- Secure further travel and transport improvements in the south of the county not only to mitigate the impact of the development, but to continue our efforts to decarbonise mobility.
- Boost employment and skills opportunities across the wider travel-to-work and travel to learn areas that include urban centres such as Derby as well as towns like Swadlincote and Ilkeston.
- Maximise the impact of our world-leading, public and private research facilities, universities and FEs and ensure that knowledge-sharing and innovation between businesses is supported and that our local labour force is upskilled in areas of new technology to drive the region’s success.

d) Question from Jack Woolley to Councillor A Dale, Cabinet Member for Young People

I welcome the recent investment in Heath Primary School. Can the Cabinet Member for Young People please explain what other investments have been made to improve our schools in Derbyshire or build new ones?

Response:

Thank you, Mr Woolley for your question. I am delighted to note that Derbyshire County Council did in fact invest £490,000 into the Heath Primary School project to provide additional classrooms alongside the Department for Education in that project.

In addition to this the County Council has invested very significantly over the past four years. In fact there have been 938 schemes that we have

supported totalling over £120m of investment. Given the volume of schemes I am sure you will appreciate that I am not able to go through all of them but to give a few examples there is a replacement school at Alfreton Park Special School with a value of £11.9m. Three new classrooms at St John's Primary School in Belper worth £1.2m. A £4m expansion project at Glossopdale School. Expansion at Stanton Park Primary School worth £1.6m. Additional classrooms at St Oswald's Primary School in Ashbourne worth £775,000. £625,000 worth of roofing works at Killamarsh Infant School. Two additional classrooms at Linton worth £535,000. £375,000 for an additional classroom at Bolsover Infants and, finally, a £600,000 project to replace two classrooms at Chinley which my colleague, the late great Councillor Alison Fox campaigned passionately for. The list goes on and on and on. I am also delighted we have been able to support so many hundreds of smaller projects across our many schools within Derbyshire with over £10m of funding from our Joint Match Funding Initiative and our Insurance Maintenance Pool allocations. That is for things like playgrounds and windows and kitchen replacements, smaller projects like safeguarding improvements, things like security fencing.

In addition in 2019 two new primary schools were opened at Hilton and Chellaston, whilst in 2020 we opened a new primary school at Highfields Farm near Findern. All three schools were in response to the increased amount for school places created by the additional housing in their respective areas and it is absolutely great news for those areas within South Derbyshire.

Finally, we have received the very excellent news that the DfE has approved funding for new pre-schools with a primary school at The Avenue in North East Derbyshire on the way and a secondary school at Infinity Park in South Derbyshire, as well as major rebuild projects at Somerlea Park Junior School in Amber Valley and Wilsthorpe School in Erewash.

I hope you will agree that this represents a very impressive record of investment from the County Council and highlights how important this Conservative administration believes it is to have the best possible education settings to give our children the best start in life. Thank you, Chair.

e) Question from Julian Siddle to Councillor S Spencer, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport & Infrastructure

Can the Cabinet Member for Highways explain what progress has been made in improving our roads since he came into post in 2017?

I also welcome the recent news that £46m is to be spent this coming year on improving our roads, can the Cabinet Member also provide further details on how this important funding will be spent?

Response:

Thank you, Julian, for the question. I am delighted to be able to give some detail of the record breaking investment that this Authority intends to make over the next three years. I also want to just give a few highlights of the challenges we have faced and the way in which we have dealt with them over the past four years.

Everybody I am sure is aware that what I say today is in the context of the very challenging circumstances we have had to face with Covid-19 and three major flooding events that have taken place here in Derbyshire. That has very much shaped our thinking about how we are going to move forward and address those issues.

I want to pay tribute to my frontline Reactive Teams who have managed astonishingly to more than double the output on pothole repairs, 212% as the Leader has already stated, an increase in the way in which we have dealt with reactive maintenance and potholes. That will continue over the coming months with the changes we have put in place with regard to moving extra staff into the hub to tackle the ongoing challenges and, yet again, further strengthening our frontline resources on the Reactive Maintenance Teams.

Of course this has been a challenge given the fact we have a responsibility to our staff to make sure they are safe and working in a Covid-19 environment. Having to separate them in different vehicles has made life very difficult and as a consequence some of the capital investment programmes there has been some slippage, which we are not unique in across the country, but of course to deal with that we need a plan and this administration has a plan to tackle the ongoing challenges of highway maintenance and keeping our roads as the public would wish to see them.

This year I have announced over £46m worth of investment and another £40m for the following two years after that. Over £120m will be invested in Derbyshire's highways over the coming three years.

Just a quick flavour of where that money is going to be spent initially. We have allocated £16.1m to carriageway rebuilding; restructuring; resurfacing. We have allocated £3.1m to footways and, very importantly, £6.6m has been allocated to flooding and drainage. Bridges and structures will receive £3.18m; signs, lines and signals will get another £3.2m and street lighting with the ongoing digital programme will receive £2.4m. Our Rights of Way Team, cycle routes and greenways will receive £2.6m and DfT Challenge and Active Travel Fund there is another £3.6m.

I am very proud of what the department has achieved but I never underestimate the challenges we have moving forward. Derbyshire has had

an incredibly challenging time not only with Covid-19 but with the flooding events that have taken place. Some of this investment will be used to tackle those issues as we go into the next three years and I hope that will address some of the concerns that the public have had.

Thank you, Chairman, for my opportunity to answer the question.

f) Question from Roger Redfern to Councillor B Lewis, Leader of the Council

Will the Leader of the Council please summarise what he thinks are the key achievements of the administration he has led for the last four years?

Response:

Thank you very much indeed, Chairman. Yes, this is where to start. It is a very long list of achievements that we have managed to grow over the four years since we came into office back in 2017. As I have already said we have touched on a few of those in my introduction, my Leader's announcements earlier on, and there will be many more achievements covered today as a consequence of the various questions being asked of course by public and councillors alike.

Let's start right at the very beginning and how we started with the modernisation of the Council. I have said in this forum before on more than one occasion that over the four years we have been here we have virtually left no stone unturned when it comes to this Council. As Councillor Spencer has or will allude to, highways is currently in-train in terms of how we modernise, how the Council works over the coming four years in fact and how the delays of Covid have impacted on all that, but we started out back in 2017 very early doors with the Enterprising Council approach which scrutinised every area of the Council's business and was all about getting best value and ensuring we had the best quality and the highest performing services that we could deliver for our residents.

Just a few instances of that. We have reformed the Council's procurement and saved millions every year by more efficient and streamlined purchasing. Councillor Angelique Foster has covered that on more than one occasion in recent months in terms of how she has gone about that critical reform in the Council.

Of course back also quite early on we made £300,000 a year of savings by streamlining our senior management roles within the organisation and delivering a more modern management structure, one in which the leadership of the Leader and the Cabinet have been put forward as a key engine for driving change within the organisation.

Recently we started construction on a new £15m 40-bed care home in Ilkeston reaffirming our commitment that no care home will close without replacement provision reflecting modern care needs in the county.

Our residents across Derbyshire have seen the lowest Council Tax rises for many years as well in recent years saving a Band B property an average of £57 a year and for a Band D property that saving translates into £75.41 a year.

Back in 2017-18 we ensured that the county's largest town, Chesterfield, remained part of Derbyshire despite the Labour Controlled Group there wanting to - its madcap plan to take Chesterfield off into a different entity, namely the Sheffield City Region. By keeping them in Derbyshire we have also ensured that millions of pounds of business rates remained in Derbyshire that we could reinvest back into Derbyshire services and Derbyshire economic regeneration in the county as well, so it benefits Derbyshire residents. That is an achievement we should be proud of as a local authority.

There were some crazy ideas quite early on for introducing roadside on-street parking charges in Matlock Bath where it would have been extremely difficult when dealing with motorcycles and how people are supposed to police that I do not know. We halted that and of course that had an immediate impact on businesses within the town.

Councillor Spencer has touched on the fact we have filled in quarter of a million potholes in Derbyshire, a record we are extremely proud of. Even more proud is we were able to get on through those reforms relating to highways to deliver a £120m capital programme over the course of the next three years. That cannot be done without reformation.

I must touch on of course in August 2019 Whaley Bridge, the Toddbrook Dam incident. We swung into action there to provide residents and businesses with support and grants to help the local community recover both from the immediacy of those impacts but also in a much wider sense to help the community recover fully.

We repeated the grant scheme as well for flood affected areas over the floods we had in 2019-20 and of course earlier this year. That grant scheme, as I have said before, became the model upon which Government provided help to communities in Yorkshire and other parts of the country in November 2019.

We have invested £15m in Covid recovery for Derbyshire and the Recovery Strategy has become a model for other local authorities throughout the country to follow. We have never let the grass grow under our feet and we are passionate and ambitious in delivering for Derbyshire. In fact we are as

passionate and as ambitious as we were when we took office in 2017 to continue to do that for our residents.

A couple of other minor things that are worth a mention. We eliminated single use plastics. We will hear a bit more about that I am sure later on as well. That, I think Chairman, summarises some of the key - it is not all of them by any stretch of the imagination as I say and we will hear more throughout today - but I am massively proud of the achievement that we have made as a Conservative administration running Derbyshire County Council this last four years and as I say all being well, and should the residents of Derbyshire decide so, we will be delivering an ambitious programme for the next four years as well. Thank you, Chairman.

g) Question from David Muller to Councillor J Wharmby, Cabinet Member for Adult Care

I'm aware that over the last four years the Council has put significant resources into ensuring its existing antiquated, and previously neglected, care homes are safe for all residents, staff and visitors, what assurances can the Cabinet Member give that any forthcoming investment in this vital area of service provision for the people of Derbyshire is future-proofed in order that care home facilities always reflect modern care needs and the high professional standards offered by the County Council's Adult Care staff?

Response:

Thank you, Chairman, and thank you, Mr Muller, for your question.

Well we have invested significant resources into essential maintenance in our homes for older people which was neglected by the past administration. We have refurbished care homes across the county ensuring staff, residents and visitors are safe. It is a key commitment that we will do that they are safe in the buildings. Also I am sure you appreciate future proofing facilities in some of our current services is a major challenge and particularly where due to the nature of their age and design, the physical makeup of the building, ensure that they are able to deliver on desired space to facilitate the use of wheelchairs and hoists to support people with their care needs.

We continue to work to develop plans for the future of our care facilities using our Accommodation and Support Strategy as the underpinning basis for understanding demand and modern care requirements.

We have invested in a new care facility such as the recently opened Ada Belfield in Belper, which is a fantastic new facility, and a new care home in

Benneley for which the groundworks are underway so that we are able to provide a more assured position around future proofing.

We have also continued our programme of refurbishment recently committing to the refurbishment of Briar Close House in Borrowash, Rowthorne in Swanwick and New Bassett House in Shirebrook.

In making longer term decisions about the care homes operated directly by the Council we are committed to ensuring that we are able to retain and maintain sufficient resources that are able to meet current and future demands as well as to deliver on the environment that supports our residents to have the facilities that we would want for them and for ourselves in the future and also that our staff can maintain the high quality and professional care standards they provide. Thank you, Chairman.

h) Question from Natalie Hoy to Councillor C Hart, Cabinet Member for Health and Communities

Road safety is vitally important, particularly for our children and school crossing patrols clearly play a key role in protecting them. Can the relevant Cabinet Member confirm whether the Council is committed to keeping them?

Response:

Thank you, Mr Chairman, and thank you, Natalie, for your question.

The Council recognises the value of the School Crossing Patrol Service. It is encouraging safe and active travel to school and by encouraging the children to walk or cycle to school it also helps improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing and helps to establish really good habits for life.

In April 2019 in order to protect the School Crossing Patrol Service the Council transferred this service from ETE, which is a department in the Council, over to Public Health to secure the future of the service and also to start and integrate the service with broader health improvement initiatives. We want to get more young people active more often, so despite the pressures on local authority funding DCC has continued to maintain its School Crossing Patrol Service and I can assure you will continue to do so. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

i) Question from James Archer to Councillor S Spencer, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Infrastructure

In Sawley we have seen some action to repair potholes, fill cracks and replace pavements over the autumn and winter. However, it appears that some of these repairs are already failing. Is the cabinet member aware of

these apparent quality drop offs, and, given the reported squeeze on funding for road repairs, what are they doing to ensure that those road repairs that are carried out are up to standard, robust and long lasting so that they deliver value for money?

Response:

Thank you, Mr Archer, for the question. I am more than happy to answer this question.

More defects do appear through the autumn and winter, particularly with extreme wet and cold weather. To keep the network safe we do need to react to these in a timely manner and sometimes this means doing the work in the worst possible weather conditions. Unfortunately this can lead to premature failure, which appears to be the case in this particular instance. Whenever possible we will carry out a permanent and long lasting repair and have systems in place to ensure that this isn't the case in the future. Thank you, Chairman.

Supplementary: Given the councillors answer does he believe that repairs carried out in poor weather conditions represent value for money?

Response:

The County Council as Highway Authority has a duty to ensure that its roads are safe to use, when issues arise with the condition of the network it is important that we respond in a timely way to safeguard the highway user. We still have to respond in times of inclement weather and on occasion some of these urgent repairs can subsequently fail, when this does happen we endeavour to undertake more long lasting planned permanent repairs. This is an area of work we are targeting with the significant capital investment programme in highways (£47m) during the next 12 months as approved by cabinet on March 11th.

j) Question from Michael Yates to Councillor S Spencer, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Infrastructure

For years HGV lorries visiting the Craggs Industrial Estate on Morven Street, Creswell have been causing daily chaos for residents in the area. As the industrial estate expanded over the years, the number and size of the Lorries have gotten bigger, and the chaos has got worse.

To access the industrial estate some HGV's are driving over pavements, knocking over bollards that stop vehicles from driving on a public footpath, causing gridlock, damaging parked vehicles and driving off. Long HGV's that

mistakenly approach via Welbeck Street are physically unable to negotiate the sharp right-hand hairpin turn to access the Industrial Park.

The residents on Morven Street and Welbeck Street have had enough and want something done. 96% of residents who responded to a survey want the council to do something about HGV's accessing the Industrial Park. 88% want a new link road to the Industrial Park.

I am asking the Council's highways department to review HGV road signage in the Creswell area directing vehicles to the Craggs Industrial estate, and look into building a new access road into the industrial estate from the A616.

Response:

Thank you, Chairman, and thank you for the question.

I think it would be fair to say that the issues raised in this particular question are reasonable and valid. I also recognise that over the years the said industrial estate has developed in a piecemeal way. It has not been done in a strategic fashion and it has developed. Consequently lorries have got larger, wider and heavier and that has made access to the site even more difficult.

The County Council have invested in signage and directional information in the past. I am going to ask officers to check that signage and make sure it is suitable for the purpose it serves at this moment in time.

With regard to the link road, I recognise that the link road is the perfect solution but of course that is cost restrictive. The link road proposal would have to go through valuable industrial land, which is privately owned, and the price will be restrictive in delivering that programme.

I recognise the issues that have been raised today and highway safety is a priority for this administration. I will ask officers to look at the signage, the layout and the direction of that signage in due course. Thank you, Chairman.

k) Question from Anne Clarke to Councillor A Dale, Cabinet Member for Young People

The pandemic and school closures have highlighted the problem that there is very little youth provision in rural areas such as High Peak. In the light of a recent increase in antisocial behaviour I would like to ask about the council's plans for youth services in New Mills and Hayfield and specifically if the Youth Centre in New Mills can be used by voluntary groups?

Whilst the recent situation has shone a spotlight on the issues it is by no means a new problem. There have been numerous requests from residents and also petitions, to implore the council to reopen the building in New Mills, to allow more activities for young people to be offered. Covid19 has impacted especially heavily on the young and we owe it to them to improve and extend youth services to help them on what will be a long term recovery from the pandemic. Please would you outline your plans for supporting young people in the High Peak and in particular New Mills.

Response:

Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Ms Clarke, for your question. I am proud that our schools in Derbyshire have remained open throughout the pandemic for those children and young people who are the most vulnerable and that our Social Care and Early Help Teams have also been working very closely with the local police and other agencies to identify and support young people who may be regarded as vulnerable or at risk.

Despite this close work with agencies across the county, including local schools, New Mills has not been highlighted to us as an area of specific concern regarding vulnerability or levels of antisocial behaviour for example. Levels of young people who are in need remain very low in the New Mills area.

Where we have had isolated incidents that have occurred these have been responded to in a targeted way through direct work with those involved looking at their individual support needs by relevant professionals.

If Ms Clarke is aware of more specific examples I am very happy to receive those and look into them and pass them to the relevant officers.

In more general terms you may be aware that it has been a real focus of this administration to encourage the development of community provision through our Youth Activity Grant Scheme. Youth Groups in the New Mills, Chapel and Glossop area of the High Peak have received just over £77,000 during the period of the scheme. I am delighted that the next Conservative administration is pledging a further £375,000 towards Youth Activity grants to support the excellent groups across the county and I really hope that we will continue to receive applications from the New Mills area.

I know that our Transition Team within the Early Help Service work very hard across the localities with schools and voluntary groups and parent led groups in particular to try and drive up the levels of community provision. Clearly due to Covid that has been impacted. Less of our community groups are meeting and that does unfortunately mean that there has been less activity for some of our younger people but we are very keen to get going as soon as we are possibly able to reinstating some of those programmes and some of

that support to community groups, particularly around things like healthy relationships, drug awareness and child exploitation just to really drive home the risks that are posed to vulnerable children and young people around the county. As the Covid restrictions ease we will be working much more closely with community groups and the wider partners in the voluntary sector to really improve provision as much as we can.

In relation to the specific building itself my understanding is that quite a few community groups have over the years come forward to express interest in taking on that building, although none have actually committed to the level of responsibility required. I know that the New Mills Youth and Community Project has recently done so but I would be very happy to explore that further if Ms Clarke would like to provide more information. It is clearly in my best interests that we use these buildings as much as we can and if there are willing community groups that want to make that work then I am more than happy to try and do what I can to make that work from our perspective. Thank you, Chair.

Supplementary question: You said in your reply specifically about the New Mills Youth Centre building that, 'Quite a few community groups had come forward expressing an interest but non committed to the level of responsibility required.' Please would you outline what was meant by this and confirm if the the building now available for lease, or are you stating in this 'level of responsibility' quote that you are looking for a group not to just lease but take over, run and manage the building?

Response:

There have previously been discussions with community organisations about the potential for community asset transfer, however these did not come to fruition as the organisations did not feel able to take on the use of the building at that time.

Currently the council is carrying out a feasibility assessment which is looking at re-purposing the youth centre building for an alternative council use. Once the outcome is confirmed, a decision will be taken about the future of the building.

(m) Question from Jeannie Robinson to Councillor J Wharmby, Cabinet Member for Adult Care

Please could the Council explain its decision to reduce long-term care places in County operated care homes? This is having the effect of forcing people with long-term needs into private provision. How is this justified?

Response:

Thank you, Chairman, and thank you, Ms Robinson for your question.

While the Council has ceased long-term admissions into seven of the care homes which are identified as requiring significant electrical rewiring work as part of the ongoing risk mitigation arrangements to ensure the safety of residents and staff, the Council also continue to operate a further 16 care homes in which there are 124 current vacancies at the moment. As such I cannot agree that the necessary decision to cease long-term admission to a small number of the care homes has prevented people who need long-term residential care from receiving the support they need. The whole care home market across Derbyshire, of which our directly provided service is only a small percentage, is more than sufficient supply available to meet current demand.

Privately operated care homes are required to deliver their services to the same standard as those that we operate directly and all care home services are regulated independently by the Care Quality Commission to ensure that they provide a suitable standard of care. Thank you.