

Council 18 September 2023

Questions submitted by Members.

1. Question from Councillor Hallam to the Leader

I would like the Leader to clarify a comment made at the last full council by Cllr Sarfas. He said that the Conservative administration had left the Council in a right mess. Would the Leader like to find out from him what he meant, and if there is no truth in his statement, would the Leader please ask him to retract what he said, and apologise to the previous Conservative administration.

As portfolio holder for Finance and Assets for the last 7 years, I am confused as to what he is talking about.

At the Budget in March 2023, we had delivered further savings of £950k/annum over and above the £3.1m annual savings previously included following the Budget Challenge 2025 programme. We froze Council tax for 2023/24 to support our communities in the current hard times caused by the cost-of-living increases, due to the pandemic Ukrainian war and increased inflation caused, in part, by the unions being unrealistic with their pay demands. Furthermore, we set aside £3.9m to manage future service risks and £2.8m to meet priorities within the Corporate Plan.

Council tax for a Band D house had only increased by £9.94 in 12 years, which is less than 83p/year.

Reserves during the MTFS peaked at over £15m, dropping back to £13.6m in 2026/7, 4 times more than in 2007 when the last Lib Dem administration handed over power to the Conservatives.

The Capital Programme totaled £27.9m over the MTFS period, £9.8m being new projects including an extra £5m towards a new waste depot, £540k for capital grants to support environmental enhancement, £9.5m to refurbish our 2 leisure centers, and a housing fund grant of £1.7m with Platform Housing to provide affordable housing.

At the time of the budget, the 151 Officer stated that the proposed budget should not give members any significant concerns over the Council's financial position. With that I would again ask what has happened since March 2023 if as Cllr Sarfas says, and I quote, "the Council was left in a right mess by the Conservative administration".

I look forward to your detailed reply.

2. Question from Councillor Page to the Leader

I understand this Council for some time, has been working with the NHS ICB for Leicestershire, Leicester, and Rutland (LLR) to secure the best possible healthcare

services for the Lutterworth locality following the closure of the Fielding Palmer Hospital, partly in response to the covid19 pandemic.

I note from the Coalition Leader's recent media statement that a similar process is now underway for the Market Harborough locality based around the St Luke's site.

I understand that officers from this council have been regularly invited to attend stakeholder meetings as part of the consultation process, but that few if any reports from those meetings have been circulated to all members nor scrutinized by this Council.

Data from Census 2021 shows that significant population growth of over 14% has occurred across the district since 2011, which is double the national average, along with even higher growth of an aging population (was the 2nd highest in England as a percentage change).

I am concerned about whether this Council has had all the relevant information from the NHS Integrated Care Board, Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland (ICB LLR) to secure the best possible healthcare provision for their residents of Lutterworth .

I am concerned about what provisions have been or are going to be put in place to reduce the carbon footprint as stipulated by NHS England.

I am concerned about whether these emerging plans will have appropriate mitigation measures in place to deal with the lack of public transport, which will be required in order for residents to access some services.

I am concerned about what assurances have been provided to the NHS (ICB LLR) in order to secure the necessary additional resources to provide additional services at source.

My question to the Coalition Leader is; I and many residents in my ward share these concerns, how does he intend to satisfy himself and Defacto this Council, that the proposed future healthcare provision for the area of Lutterworth is sufficient and take's account of the concerns that I have expressed?

3. Question from Councillor King to the Leader

On Wednesday 30th August 2023, the Tax Payers' Alliance wrote to all council leaders asking them to sign a pledge ruling out implementing a four-day working week in their Town Hall. By signing this pledge, council leaders will be able to show their commitment to delivering value for money for local taxpayers.

My question to Cllr Knowles, is if you haven't done so already, will you now make this commitment and sign this pledge on behalf of Harborough District Council and local taxpayers?

4. Question from Councillor Whelband to the Portfolio Holder for Environmental and Climate Change

Since the May 2023 election, no Harborough District Council representative has attended Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Police and Crime Panel meetings or training sessions.

The Panel is an important statutory body that scrutinises the performance of the Police and Crime Commissioner and agrees Leicestershire Police's annual budget. It is also the place where policing issues in our District can be raised directly with the PCC.

Considering the above, does the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety think it is acceptable that the residents and taxpayers of the Harborough District had no voice at these important meetings where policing, crime and community safety issues impacting our District are considered?

5. Question from Councillor Bannister to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change

Can Cllr Woodiwiss (Cabinet Member for Environmental and Climate Change) please confirm the number of recycling bins available for shoppers and residents to use across the District together with their locations?