

COUNCIL MEETING – 18 December 2024

CABINET QUESTION TIME

1. Question from Councillor J Jeapes to the Deputy Leader of the Council

This Liberal led Council has declared an 'Environmental Emergency' and a 'Housing Crisis'. In 2019 It inherited extremely healthy financial reserves from the Conservatives and building sites to enable home building.

Whilst the Liberals have vigorously pursued not cutting grass or maintaining designated open space, it does not seem to have applied the same focus in prioritising activity to address the 'Housing Crisis'.

This council has several, I believe 200 brown field sites that have the potential to provide affordable housing. Very specifically, since 2019, it has owned, a brownfield site worth 5million (at the time) adjacent to Riverside.

Given the housing crisis why are we still waiting, nearly 6years later, for this development to take place? Why has all the potential for housing, not been maximised?

Land Values have now fallen and building costs have soared. All this has contributed to the dire financial position the council now faces.

In addition, we now see reserves, 1.3 million spent on a new green field site without planning permission, while the Riverside site remains undeveloped.

Our residents are now footing the bill for this tardy approach with increased costs and the very real prospect of high council tax increases.

In the nearly six years that has passed what has been done to develop the Riverside site?

When will much needed homes be built?

2. Question from Councillor R Whitehead to the Leader of the Council

The new Labour Government has announced plans to force District Councils to merge and form new Unitary Authorities.

Will the Leader of the City Council give us his view of these proposals and whether he is in favour of these plans to reduce local control, particularly of planning matters, and whether Essex Local Authority Leaders will be meeting to consider a joint approach to opposing four Unitary Councils in Essex?

3. Question from Councillor S Scott to the Cabinet Member for a Greener Chelmsford

I note that the guidance around the new regulations for the NPPF has allowed Chelmsford City Council to continue with the submission of proposals and the process to select development sites for the future.

This is now to be dealt with by the Policy Board on the 16th January 2025, at which final decisions will be made and these will include the very controversial proposals for a massive development at Hammonds Farm.

Given the huge public interest and concern about this development, with thousands of residents opposed to it, does this allow sufficient transparency and scrutiny by the public and councillors and will this go to Full Council for further discussion before submission?
