

Councillors Written Questions and the Responses

Full Council – 21 October 2020

(Questions in *italics and Answers in RED*)

Questions to Councillor P. Smith (Cabinet Member for Planning & Economic Development) from Councillor Crow

Question 1

Since the council became the operator for the Crawley Market, what has been the income generation for, or the subsidy from, for Crawley Borough Council for each year of its operation to date?

The following table shows the income received by Crawley Borough Council from the market since 2014. This provides a welcome contribution to the council's revenue budget.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 to date
Crawley Market Totals	17,899.84	21,022.87	26,147.47	14,135.17	17,240.00	17,980.00	6,360.00

Question 2

Are there any plans for the council to cease being the Crawley Market operator and for the market to have its own operator like it did previously?

The Council values the town centre markets that currently operate from The Broadway and Haslett Avenue West on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, recognising the diverse offer they bring to the town centre. There are currently no plans to change the existing operational arrangements for the market however we would consider options that would improve the viability and vitality of the market offer. Any proposals to change the existing arrangements would be explored in consultation with the market traders.

Question 3

Is there any update as to when the Crawley Market will move into Queensway to operate, as planned for when the now completed Queensway improvement scheme was designed?

In 2015, the council commissioned a report into the future of Crawley's market. The study concluded that there is widespread support for a quality markets offer in Crawley and that Queensway would be the preferred future location for a market. The £2.2m public realm regeneration scheme in Queensway, completed in November 2019 as part of the Crawley Growth Programme, delivered the space and infrastructure required to support a future market however, due to funding constraints

exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, there are no proposals to bring this forward at this time. The newly regenerated public realm has allowed this main thoroughfare to provide a safe space for all users, maximising the need to meet current social distancing requirements.

Questions to Councillor Lamb (Leader of the Council) from Councillor Burrett

Question 1

Please detail the total number of Council staff employed on 1 April for each of the following years, both in terms of the total number of FTEs employed, and the total head count:

	<i>Headcount</i>	<i>FTE</i>
2010	812	674
2011	761	637
2012	694	587
2013	673	583
2014	651	568
2015	622	547
2016	601	536
2017	584	524
2018	584	527
2019	600	547

Question 2

Please detail the total number of (a) staff disciplinary cases, and (b) staff grievance cases dealt with by the Council during each of the following financial years:

The Council only holds data from 2017 onwards.

2017/2018	
<i>Case type</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Disciplinary</i>	2
<i>Grievances</i>	7

2018/2019	
<i>Case type</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Disciplinary</i>	2
<i>Grievances</i>	7

2019/2020	
<i>Case type</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Disciplinary</i>	1
<i>Grievances</i>	3

Question 3

If the answers to Questions 1 and 2 above reveal an increase in the ratio of staff disciplinary and grievance cases to the overall total number of staff, have any reasons been identified for such a trend, and are there any common causes recognised and issues identified, which need to be addressed in order to improve the Council's relationship with its staff?

As disciplinary and grievance data has only been captured over recent years, a trend cannot be proven or disproven statistically. However, these figures only relate to cases considered at a formal hearing. As the council seeks to resolve employee performance and capability matters informally, where possible, the number of cases which progress to the formal stages is significantly minimised.

Over recent years we have seen the employee relations cases increase both in number and complexity, which can take a significant amount of time for managers when balancing the work of the day job and the requirement to manage teams of staff. Consequently, there has been an increase in the work of the HR team to support and guide them through each step of a process, with the team recently growing in size to help resolve this increase in demand.

No single cause for this increase in demand has been identified at this time, but with the council undergoing significant and ongoing transformation over recent years to both reduce back-office costs and increase performance, it is natural to expect that the level of employee relations issues would increase in the short-term until changes have had the opportunity to bed-down.