

Response to Questions and Actions Arising from Meetings of the Full Council

Question 1 (Supplementary Question to written question): I'm delighted that the structural integrity of our car parks is being taken seriously and that further reports and surveys will be undertaken following the advice from the Institute of Structural Engineers. My follow on question relates to the impact of vibrations on the town hall car park structure from both the current district heat network boiler and from any expansion in phase 2. I know there are dampeners on the boiler which reduce vibrations and I know from the people living in Geraint Thomas House that they're unhappy about the perception of vibrations. Have these vibrations been monitored or considered when assessing the Town Hall car park and if not, could they be considered during the inspections that take place?

Response: We have spoken with the engineers who were involved in designing the DHN Phase 1 and are engaged with the technical feasibility study for the phase 2 DHN expansion. Further to their response. We have not been made aware of any complaints regarding noise or vibration to the landlord of Geraint Thomas House, to the DHN Operations and Maintenance Contractor or to the Council. For reference, the planning approval for the District Heat Network will have included consideration of any noise impacts and the agreement to install mitigating measures where noise levels were potentially beyond acceptable thresholds. The noise emanating from the Energy Centre was not considered to be excessive and as stated, there is no record of complaints from Geraint Thomas House or from any property in the vicinity. As a general observation, there is a humming noise which can be heard when in close proximity to the Energy Centre however this is a low level humming noise which would not have any impact on the structural integrity of Geraint Thomas House or any of the surrounding buildings. If Councillor Jaggard would like to visit the Energy Centre, Officers would be happy to arrange a site visit. This should provide confirmation and reassurance that the noise emanating is within acceptable thresholds.

Question 2: Following on from residents' complaints from Forge Wood, when are the shops going to be built? When is the community centre going to be released to the community management group, so they can start sub-letting and generate some income? Also, as developers have consistently missed their trigger points and are dragging their heels, how are we going to get some traction on this matter?

Response: As I believe you are aware, the Forge Wood Community Centre has been built and has already been used for this year's elections. The delay to it becoming operational relates to the ownership of the centre, the management of the centre and residents' concerns about the impact on their service charge. The developers decided not to hand over this building (and other assets) to the Council to manage as this would have involved a commuted sum. Unfortunately, they have the legal right to do this, but it does cause complications. I'm told a way forward has been found and that the centre is opening this summer, but as you will be aware, this is not something the Council manages directly. The shops are part of Phase 1B. This has recently cleared the various planning requirements and I understand that the scheme has been successfully tendered by the developers. I'm told enabling works commence early September and this phase is a two-year build programme. I'm also told that the developers are developing communications to share with residents about Phase 1B.

Question 3: In relation to Three Bridges station forecourt improvements, please can you give us an idea of the timeline of the start of this project but also what exactly is going to be in place to manage the disruption. There are currently cones in the middle of the forecourt which stops people turning, there is a large volume of traffic building up and there is already a lot of disruption. I would like to know what we have in place as a Council.

Response: The Project Steering Group is currently progressing detailed design process including a number of detailed requirements from Network Rail and GTR. This includes commencement of the Station Change Management Procedure. Once detailed designs and the Station Change Management Procedure have been approved, we will procure a construction contractor for the scheme. That will require the successful contractor to deliver a comprehensive construction management plan, detailing how the scheme will be built and what measures will be implemented to keep disruption to all users of the station at an absolute minimum. This will include close liaison with the railway operators. In terms of timescales, subject to the completion of Network Rail's Station Change Management Procedure and to a successful procurement process, we anticipate that we will be on site autumn 2024 to commence the construction works.