

REIGATE AND BANSTEAD BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL: 1st October 2015

Questions by Members

Question by	To be answered by	Subject
Cllr. N. Harrison	Leader of the Council (Councillor V. Broad)	Syrian Refugees
Cllr J. Paul	Executive Member for Property and Regeneration (Councillor Mrs N.J. Bramhall)	Leisure Centre and Community Facilities, Preston Ward
Cllr. J.C.S. Essex	Executive Member for Property and Regeneration (Councillor Mrs N.J. Bramhall)	Redhill Developments

Council Meeting: 1 October 2015

Cllr. N. Harrison will ask the **Leader of the Council, Councillor V. Broad** the following question:

Syrian Refugees

A number of residents of my ward have approached me to applaud the initiative taken by the Council Leader to take in families affected by the humanitarian crisis in Syria, to house them and provide support to them in rebuilding their lives and in finding work.

Could the Council Leader tell us:

- i) How many families will be taken in?
- ii) How will the scheme be paid for? What is the expected cost and how much is it anticipated will be funded by central government?
- iii) Will the scheme impact the priority for residents who are already on the council's housing list?
- iv) If residents want to help, how can they get involved?

Observations

I would like to thank Cllr Harrison and his residents for their support for my response to the Syrian refugee crisis. We have all been moved by their plight.

I wrote to the Prime Minister to support his pledge to resettle refugees from camps bordering Syria, to ensure that we help those in greatest need of humanitarian aid. I offered the Council's assistance for a number of affected families, perhaps around 10 or so, to house them and provide support to them in rebuilding their lives and finding work.

We are working with our neighbouring Councils, Surrey County Council and the Local Government Association to co-ordinate our response and we are awaiting further details from the Government on the arrangements for settling and funding Syrian refugees.

What we do know is that the Government plans to expand the existing Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, introduced last year. It is likely that cost of local authority support for refugees will be met from the UK's international aid budget for the first 12 months. This is expected to cover the cost of accommodation, integration support, health and education for the first year from arrival in the UK. Any shortfall in the funding provided to us will be met from Council reserves.

The current Government Scheme extends five years of Humanitarian Protection to Syrian refugees, which in practice means that they have five years' leave to remain in the UK with full access to the labour market, public funds and benefits. The Local Government Association is calling on the Government to provide a firm commitment to Councils to fund the full five years.

We are keen to ensure that the support we do provide to Syrian refugees does not affect those residents already on our housing waiting list, and that there will be no impact on their housing applications or on the priority we give them.

We have already received offers of help from residents, for which I am grateful. We are co-ordinating these through officers and the Community and Special Projects Group will be involved. Although many people have offered up spare bedrooms, the Government has indicated that at this stage they do not think there will be a need to host Syrian refugees in people's homes. Anyone interested in fostering a child is being asked to contact Surrey County Council.

We are advising residents that there is a Government website setting out what they can do to help Syrian refugees, which includes information about contacting the Red Cross and the work of voluntary organisations to support refugees. Once we have more information from the Government and the Local Government Association about how refugees are to be supported we will be able to advise further on how residents can help.

Council Meeting: 1 October 2015

Cllr. J. Paul will ask the **Executive Member for Property and Regeneration, Councillor Mrs N.J. Bramhall** the following question:

Leisure Centre and Community facilities in the Preston Ward - progress

Can the Executive Member for Property & Regeneration please update the Council as to the progress of the development of Leisure Centre and Community Facilities in the Preston Ward?

Observations

I am delighted to announce that the new Tadworth Leisure & Community Centre will be opening to the public for the first time this coming Monday, 5th October. The opening of the new centre, along with the completion of the new Phoenix Youth Centre and the improvements to Preston Park represents an approximately £12 million capital investment, funded by capital receipts from the sale of land for housing, as well as by developer contributions and contributions from Sport England and Surrey County Council. The new centre's opening is the latest milestone in the transformation of the local area, including new homes, improved open spaces, and better parking provision for residents.

I am looking forward to attending the Mayoral opening of the new centre on 17th October, as part of the Preston community day.

Council Meeting: 1 October 2015

Cllr. J.C.S. Essex will ask the **Executive Member for Property and Regeneration, Councillor Mrs N. Bramhall** the following question:

Redhill Development progress

Please can you provide an update to the Council on the development of the Redhill Station Development, Liquid and Envy, Sainsbury's and Marketfield Way sites in Redhill.

Observations

Sainsburys and Travelodge – RG Group have been appointed following the issues with the original contractor Longcross. RG Group formally start on site on the 5th October. Completion is due by the end of the first quarter 2017. The Council has agreed a deed of variation with Travelodge increasing the rent and are now unconditional. The Council will continue to monitor the project through to completion.

Marketfield Way – A report is coming to the October Executive confirming viability has been achieved in accordance with the key stage sign off agreed. Significant interest has been received in both the commercial and residential elements of the scheme. The next stage is to proceed to Planning and continue dialogue with the prospective tenants.

Liquid & Envy – The developer, Mar City Homes, met with Officers earlier in the summer and were looking at their contractual arrangements with Stonewater Homes (previously Raglan) which was causing them difficulties in gaining bank finance for the development. Officers are chasing the developer for an update on progress with this.

Redhill Station – The applicants (Solum Regeneration) have been looking at improving the financial viability of their proposed redevelopment of Redhill Station. In August they sought additional funding input from the Train Operating Company and following this are now likely to seek a non-material amendment of the scheme to assist with its viability. A meeting with Officers is being set up to understand the detail of this.