

REIGATE AND BANSTEAD BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL: 14th April 2016

Questions by Members

Question by:	To be answered by:	Subject:
Cllr C.T.H. Whinney	Executive Member for Property and Regeneration, (Councillor Mrs N.J. Bramhall)	Former Liquid and Envy site, Redhill
Cllr J. Paul	Executive Member for Economy and Jobs, (Councillor E. Humphreys)	Small Business successes
Cllr J.C.S. Essex	Executive Member for Housing and Welfare, (Councillor Mrs R. Renton)	Affordable Housing
Cllr M.A. Brunt	Executive Member for Licensing and Enforcement, (Councillor J. Durrant)	Disabled Parking Enforcement

Council Meeting: 14 April 2016

Councillor C.T.H. Whinney will ask the **Executive Member for Property and Regeneration, Councillor Mrs N.J. Bramhall** the following question:

Former Liquid and Envy site, Redhill

The Executive Member for Regeneration has worked hard on the whole project to regenerate Redhill but the site of the former Liquid and Envy in Redhill has been rather more difficult to achieve with changes of ownership, different planning applications and now it appears abandoned.

Could the Executive Member please advise on the action being undertaken by the Council for this site? Can the site be purchased as others in Redhill by the Council? Is compulsory purchase an option?

Observations

I am grateful for the Councillor's acknowledgement of the excellent progress being made with the regeneration of Redhill, and agree that regeneration of the former Liquid and Envy site has proved very difficult. The Council has attempted to assist MarCity Homes, since site progress stalled last year, to explore options for getting the site back on track. Unfortunately MarCity chose not to progress the site and we now understand that they have sold the site to Rainier Developments Limited. We are trying to establish a dialogue with the new site owner to understand their intentions and timescales.

I am sure you will agree that it is a landmark site for the town. The transformation of Redhill is underway – with the new Sainsburys, hotel and gym development, our proposals for the Marketfield Way site and the anticipated development on the station site. With strong developer interest in Redhill, we would expect the new owner of the Liquid and Envy site to see the economic benefits of developing the site now. If this is not the case, my Officers will continue to explore all options to ensure a positive future for the site.

Council Meeting: 14 April 2016

Councillor J. Paul will ask the **Executive Member for Economy and Jobs, Councillor E. Humphreys** the following question:

Small business successes

Could the Executive Member for Economy and Jobs please update the Council on any recent successes regarding small businesses that received grants from the council?

Observations

We have supported a number of local businesses recently with business support grants, each of these grants have made a real difference to the business allowing them to start up or grow, some have also gone towards creating local jobs:

eFOLDi Redhill resident Sumi Wang recently enjoyed success in winning the British Inventors' Project at Gadget Show Live at the NEC for her folding electronic scooter idea. She used the opportunity to launch her 'Kickstarter' campaign to raise £90,000 for production of the first 150 scooters. She has raised over £30,000 in a little over one week of the six week campaign.

Sumi won the Borough Council led Entrepreneurs Academy in 2015, and she also had a business support grant to help pay for her stand at the Gadget Show Live.

We have been working with Sumi to introduce her to an International company interested in working with her to bring eFOLDi to the market.

The support of the Council was recognised through social media communications.

Feedback from other Small Business Grant recipients includes:

Bright and Beautiful Homes, an eco friendly domestic homecare business based in Banstead the grant helped with start-up costs to create a number of jobs for local men and women.

Helen says: "Starting my own Bright & Beautiful business with the support of Reigate and Banstead Council has been a huge turning point in my life. Like many women, when we started a family I was still very ambitious but wanted to find a path that allowed me to enjoy my work and home life equally.

CF Architects are a Reigate based RIBA Chartered Architects practice working on an exciting and wide variety of residential, education and cultural projects.

"The business grant received from Reigate & Banstead Borough Council was greatly appreciated" states Christian Frogget. "This £1,000 grant contributed towards the purchase of a PC for our latest employee and Reigate resident, Sophie Griffiths."

Council Meeting: 14 April 2016

Councillor J.C.S. Essex will ask the **Executive Member for Housing and Welfare, Councillor Mrs R. Renton** the following question:

Affordable Housing Rent

As the Government now defines 'affordable rent' as 80% of the market rate, and private rents continue to rise locally even so-called "affordable housing" is not affordable for many residents. Given that the Council has significant amount of unspent New Homes Bonus money and money received under Right to Buy, what are the Council's plans for providing truly affordable homes, including on publically owned land in Redhill?

Observations

Thank you for your question.

"Affordable rented" homes provide benefits for tenants in terms of cheaper than market rents and greater security than the private sector. The rents for the "affordable rent" housing in this borough are lower than the Local Housing Allowance, such that out of 306 nominations to Registered Providers in the last financial year, only 4 have been refused because of affordability issues.

Notwithstanding this, the Council continues to work hard to address the affordable housing challenges specific to this borough.

As a member of the Budget Scrutiny Review Panel, which discussed this very issue in November, you will be aware that officers are also exploring how to address the issue of ensuring the provision of permanent affordable accommodation for local people. I can confirm that this area of work is being treated as a priority, and the outcomes will be incorporated into future Service and Financial Planning proposals.

In addition, we will continue to seek affordable housing as part of new developments in the borough, whether those are on privately or publically owned land. As a member of the Planning Committee you will be familiar with national policy and our own adopted policy and approach in this regard.

In some cases, it may be possible for us to use the money we receive through the New Homes Bonus to deliver affordable housing as part of the schemes which we bring forward. However, it is important that – in each case – we carefully consider whether this is viable and commercially feasible, including for the Registered Providers who may operate the units. We must also be mindful of the other priorities which New Homes Bonus may be needed to support. Careful decisions will need to be taken.

It is also worth noting that the Government is currently considering changing the definition of affordable housing, to include a wider range of products, including starter homes. We will continue to make the point to Government – and work with local MPs to argue on our behalf - that affordable housing requirements should be assessed and determined at a local level, rather than centralised.

Together all these measures will seek to ensure that we are in the best possible position to meet the housing needs of all our residents.

Council Meeting: 14 April 2016

Councillor M.A. Brunt will ask the **Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Licensing & Enforcement, Councillor J. Durrant** the following question:

Disabled Parking Enforcement

Follow the recent controversy on social media and in the Surrey Mirror about unacceptable parking in disabled bays in Reigate and my recent observations in Memorial Park in Redhill, can the portfolio holder confirm what actions the Council's Enforcement Team are taking to ensure that disabled bays controlled by the Council are being checked and those without blue badges are being issued with Fixed Penalty Notices.

Observations

We undertake a wide range of parking enforcement activities across the borough, including limited waiting bays, yellow lines and disabled parking bays.

Disabled parking bays are provided to ensure safe and convenient parking for those residents and visitors who would find it harder to park in other locations. It is, therefore, essential that these bays are only used for that purpose.

Our parking enforcement officers patrol across the borough, prioritising key locations such as town centres. Where any offence is committed, such as parking in a disabled bay without displaying a valid blue badge, the enforcement officer will issue a penalty charge notice.

A higher rate penalty of £70 is charged for parking in a disabled bay without a valid permit.