

## **22 Questions to the Leader and Lead Members**

### **Councillor Jon Tankard asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:**

I'm pleased to see that we now got a written statement from the council confirming the position of that application and the subsequent planning appeal. Clearly, we've been misrepresented. I would ask the Leader, could we look to get some form of rescinding of the statement that was made about us or potentially an apology?

In response, the Leader of the Council confirmed that there were no legal powers to challenge the planning permission on the site as permissions had been granted under permitted development rights, but that had a refusal on the grounds of space and standards this would have been done.

### **Councillor Vicky Edwards asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:**

Regarding the data centre inquiry, the position of Three Rivers District Council that the site is suitable for housing is being argued as a material consideration by the developer in favour of releasing the site from the green belt. What will Three Rivers District Council do to protect other sites which have previously been proposed for housing but have been withdrawn?

In response, the Leader of the Council answered that this was covered in detail in his written answer and that the council recognised the contributions of the green belt and safeguard the countryside from encroachment, and that consulting on a planning proposal did not mean it would automatically be granted planning permission and that the site mentioned was not part of the local plan.

### **Councillor Oliver Cooper asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:**

I have asked several times for the evidence base for the building of over 10,000 homes to be withdrawn.

In response, the Leader of the Council answered that the local plan was emerging, and that figure would be reviewed.

### **Councillor Oliver Cooper asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:**

A high street site has always been retail premises of class A1, and there has not been a change of use permission granted. Is the council determined to make up excuses for these changes?

In response, the Leader of the Council answered that he took issue with the tone of that answer which questioned the integrity of officers.

**Councillor Oliver Cooper asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:**

The Connecting Three Rivers fund is not well publicised. What is the point of this fund if nobody knows about it, and will it be publicised?

In response, the Leader of the Council answered the information in his response was correct as written.

**Councillor Oliver Cooper asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:**

Does the failure to respond to the government's VAT consultation mean the council does not care about decisions that may be imposed by a Labour government?

In response, the Leader of the Council answered that he stood by the written answer.

**Councillor Reena Ranger asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:**

The answer states that decisions are taken collectively so when a decision is collective who is accountable if it's not the lead member? I have questions from February this year when I have written to Lead Members asking for answers but not received them.

In response, the Leader of the Council said he was happy to discuss the matter and that he wanted to be made aware of instances on responses not being provided so he could be clear if this was the Lead Member or if the matter had been referred to an officer.

**Councillor Sara Bedford asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:**

I can only assume the Leader of the Council has changed his mind on the recommendation that he proposed at the Local Plan meeting in July to inset Bedmond to the green belt. Many planning professionals believe inseting Bedmond into the green belt means putting fields on the immediate other side of that boundary at greater risk of development than would be if the village was left inset. Why did he not know that at the meeting? And why is he not answering it now?

In response, the Leader of the Council said he had nothing further to add.

**Councillor Sara Bedford asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:**

Does Councillor Giles-Medhurst not realise that he is demonstrating contempt for the village of Bedmond?

In response, the Leader of the Council said that was not and did not take insulting questions.

**Councillor Sara Bedford asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:**

This information has been available for some time and the differences are clear. I assume that Councillor Giles-Medhurst does not know the answer.

In response, the Leader of the Council referred to his answer to the previous question.

**Councillor Sara Bedford asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:**

The quote here, 'I have not been routinely copied into emails to opposition councillors' is wrong. I have an email from the Monitoring Officer which states, 'having spoken with the Associate Director concerned they have routinely copied in the Leader and the Leader Member'. Will he now answer the question correctly?

The Leader of the Council replied that he had not been routinely copied into emails of opposition members, that he had no copies of any emails sent by any officer regarding an opposition member. He explained that he had been copied into emails to members covering the whole parish which include two opposition members and as per the question that has been answered.

**Councillor Sara Bedford asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:**

Is Councillor Giles-Medhurst accusing the Monitoring Officer of sending an incorrect email? Or the Associate Director giving an incorrect response? If so, he is impugning the integrity of the officers concerned.

In response, the Leader of the Council said that the answer given was clear and factually correct.

**Councillor Sara Bedford asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:**

Members of opposition parties should have full confidentiality in their communications unless there are extenuating circumstances. I would like confirmation from the Leader that confidentiality will be respected at all times.

The Leader of the Council replied that the answer was as per the paper, and that he had nothing further to add.

**Councillor Chris Mitchell asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:**

This is in regard to Croxley Green, The Green and Stones Orchard and how its owned and run. I am glad to be having a discussion on it. Can you please ask the officers to have a meeting as soon as possible?

The Leader of the Council replied that he had spoken directly to senior officers in relation to this and asked for an open discussion. He explained he would need an initial briefing from himself and then they will have the meeting after 2<sup>nd</sup> December.

**Councillor Mike Sims asked the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Jonathon Solomons:**

This question is in relation to the aquadrome. When will the boards be repaired and be up?

The Lead Member for Resources replied that a written response would be provided.

Written response provided following the meeting:

The first Aquadrome storyboards which will explain the works taking place and planned at the site are being finalised for production and are expected to be ready for installation in the coming weeks. One set will be installed at either end of the woodland path.

**Councillor Chris Mitchell asked the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Jonathon Solomons:**

This is in relation to the Red Cross Hall site in Croxley Green. Once an agreement is reached in principle with the parish council, which committee will we come back to and what process will we use to ratify the way forward?

The Lead Member for Resources replied that a written response would be provided.

Written response provided following the meeting:

It is intended that any agreement on the future of the former Red Cross Building will be presented to a meeting of the full Council in the first instance. It will be necessary for some aspects of this matter to be considered as exempt business not for public disclosure, although it is intended to ensure as much of this matter can be considered in an open and publicly accessible meeting as is possible.

It is further intended that appropriate delegated authority will be sought for the relevant committees and officers, in consultation with lead members, to consider and approve any final details.

**Councillor Narinder Sian asked the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Jonathon Solomons:**

Has any benchmarking been done between the availability of community halls in Croxley to community halls in neighbouring parishes?

The Lead Member for Resources replied that a written response would be provided.

Written response provided following the meeting:

No, this has not been considered necessary. As the Member will be aware, a list of premises in Croxley offering space for community groups has been shared with him.

**Councillor Cheryl Stungo asked the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Jonathon Solomons:**

Would it be possible to know what key initiatives are underway?

The Lead Member for Resources explained that this question seemed to relate to another item of business.

**Councillor Joan King asked the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Jonathon Solomons:**

Can the meeting be extended to our group and can the meeting be arranged as soon as possible please?

The Lead Member for Resources replied that he would see what could be done.

Written response provided following the meeting:

Yes, a meeting can be arranged between the Labour Group, the Lead Member and appropriate Officers. This will be established shortly.

**Councillor Reena Ranger asked the Lead Member for Infrastructure and Economic Development, Councillor Louise Price:**

Regarding the results of the survey being described as a 'wish list' from local business and high street traders, could you publish this 'wish list' two years on after no action has commenced?

The Lead Member for Infrastructure and Economic Development replied asking if this question could be provided in writing so that a written response can be provided.

Written response provided following the meeting:

The press release for this survey was published on the council's website and links to watch back the conference at which these results were shared. A full response has been sent directly to the questioner.

<https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/news/business-survey-gives-insight-into-hopes-and-concerns-of-local-high-street-traders>

As the time limit for the meeting had been reached, no further supplementary questions were asked.