

TO: All members of the Council

Our reference CS
Your reference N/A
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2 March 2023

Dear Councillor

Council - Tuesday 21 February 2023

Attached are the written responses to questions raised at the above meeting, as referred to in the minutes.

Yours sincerely

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West Suffolk
Council

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Council: 21 February 2023 - written responses to questions

Item 5: Leader's Statement: Question from Councillor Diane Hind to Councillor John Griffiths:

The following question was answered at the meeting; however, further information has been provided, as set out below.

Referring to emergency planning, Councillor Diane Hind asked whether the Leader was aware of apparent proposals by the US Government to return NATO nuclear weapons to RAF Lakenheath, and if so whether he had received any recent guidance from Government ministers or the Ministry of Defence as to the actions this Council should take in the event of incidences involving NATO weapons.

Response from Councillor John Griffiths, Leader of the Council:

No information is ever supplied to local authorities regarding the deployment or location of nuclear weapons by either the UK or US military, for reasons of national security.

Day-to-day, the way in which the US military interacts with us, and all other agencies, is covered by legislation and agreed procedures. There are regular liaison events and drills for emergency planning purposes.

In relation to nuclear materials, no new guidance or instructions have been provided recently to public sector agencies. Which means that the standing existing information is provided in the Ministry of Defence document - Local Authority & Emergency Services Information (LAESI) on Defence Nuclear Material Transport Contingency Arrangements Edition 12 (October 2021). Which is a public document available online at: [Local authority and emergency services information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk). Scenarios involving nuclear materials are among those tested through regular emergency planning exercises between military and civilian agencies.

Item 5: Leader's Statement: Question from Councillor Brian Harvey to Councillor John Griffiths:

Reference was made to the penultimate paragraph on page 15 of the attachment to Paper number: COU/WS/23/001, Leader's Statement, 'West Suffolk – the

story so far', which referred to 370 empty homes being brought back into use since 2019 with 181 of those being achieved last year. Councillor Harvey asked the Leader whether there was an ongoing programme in place for addressing this issue and how many empty homes were expected to be brought back into use within the coming months/years.

Response from Councillor Sara Mildmay-White, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Strategic Health:

Those trends are expected to continue. Unlike neighbouring authorities West Suffolk does not have a bespoke Empty Homes Officer or dedicated resource to focus on the challenge or an associated budget/scheme in place. We optimise our existing resources within the Private Sector Housing and Environmental Health team to engage home owners but are limited in what actions we can take. The increase in premium that has now been approved will incentivise owners at an early stage to make their properties available and help to mitigate against the significant pressures on the housing system.

We are exploring with Suffolk authorities how we can share best practice and experience, and are engaged with them on a project, led by the Suffolk Housing Board, aimed at understanding how we can unlock innovative Suffolk wide models to increase the number of genuinely affordable properties available to meet the demand of those in housing need. In doing so we aim to explore opportunities for returning long term Empty Homes back into use and/or enhanced schemes to access the Private Rented Sector.

Item 8: Budget and Council Tax setting 2023 to 2024 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023 to 2027: Question from Councillor John Burns to Councillor Sarah Broughton:

Councillor Burns referred to page 99 of the agenda report pack, which was Attachment D Appendix 2b, '2023 to 2024 Capital Programme – Leisure Asset Management Plan Breakdown'. He firstly asked whether reference to Motts Field, Haverhill Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) should be removed and the play area refurbished as it was presently stated the other way round. He then requested whether an indication could be given on the document regarding what leisure/sport/play area improvements had been funded by Section 106 contributions.

Response from Councillor Joanna Rayner, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Community Hubs, and Councillor Sarah Broughton, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Property:

Motts Field forms part of East Town Park in Haverhill. In 2017 the Council refurbished the play area nearest the car park in East Town Park. At the time of that refurbishment and expansion of the play area, in the main body of the park, it was proposed that the smaller play area on Motts Field would be removed

when it reached the end of its operational life. The two play areas are approximately 300 metres apart.

Motts Field is primarily used as a sports field the existing MUGA on site is in need of attention. The money is earmarked for a refurbishment on Motts Field and we are happy to undertake a consultation nearer the time to determine just what peoples preferences are.

The finance team is considering the formatting of the capital programme, in terms of funding, for individual project lines for inclusion in the 2024 to 2025 budget process.

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