

# **STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**10 July 2019**

## **Council Questions**

### **1. Question to the Leader of the Council received from Councillor Coleman:**

“What representation has the SMDC made to Staffordshire County Council about the state of the roads in Leek?”

#### **Response:**

A verbal response will be provided at the meeting.

### **2. Question to the Leader of the Council received from Councillor Atkins:**

“Has the SMDC prevented County Council Highways’ officers from replacing the tree planted in the Derby Street planter opposite Bath Street in Leek with a lower level shrub to uncover the directional road traffic sign which is obscured when the tree is in leaf?”

#### **Response:**

A verbal response will be provided at the meeting.

### **3. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Property received from Councillor Wilkinson:**

“Depending on what area you represent why does this council adopt different policies when determining planning applications especially when using the shortfall in houses in the “tilted balance”.”

#### **Response:**

It is a fundamental planning principle that each case must be judged on its own individual merits. The Council has different planning policies which it applies in towns, large villages, small villages and the open countryside. These are set out in the Core Strategy. However, as we do not have a 5 year supply of housing land those policies are not up to date and applications are considered in the light of the “tilted balance”. This applies everywhere in the District. The location of the site makes no difference. The policies are applied in the same way. It is the specifics of the site itself (regardless of location) which determines whether planning permission is granted and whether development of that particular site would result in substantial and demonstrable harm which would outweigh the benefits. If no harm is identified an application will be approved wherever it is in the District. Equally if substantial and demonstrable harm is found it will be refused.

#### **4. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Customer Services received from Councillor Brady:**

“According to a report by consumer magazine Which? from January, which looks at broadband speeds across the UK, Staffordshire Moorlands is in the bottom 20% of local authorities with a median download speed of 13 mbps. Staffordshire Moorlands are also bottom of district councils in Staffordshire behind Stoke-on-Trent with 20.6 mbps, and Stafford with 16mbps, for example.

What actions has the District Council taken in order to improve the broadband speeds in the district and could we have an update on the rollout of fibre optic broadband in rural areas?”

#### **Response:**

The District Council works with Staffordshire County Council who are the lead authority in terms of rolling out fibre and superfast broadband covering the county. They are currently in the latter stages of a £32m investment ((£8.06 million from Staffordshire County Council, £9.62 million from the Government’s Broadband Delivery UK – BDUK and £14.77 million from BT) which will bring superfast broadband to 96% of all premises by end of 2019. An interactive map detailing work exactly which areas have work in progress or planned is available online.

<https://www.superfaststaffordshire.co.uk/where-and-when/where-and-when/#.XSR7rOtKiSx>

Ofcom produce a useful broadband checker, which identifies not only broadband availability and speed, but also mobile coverage (and 4G access by provider) for every property <https://checker.ofcom.org.uk/broadband-coverage>

Beyond 2019, the District Council will work with the County Council to address on-going slow speeds and access any new funds available which might be available to deliver improvements.

#### **5. Question to the Leader of the Council received from Councillor Plant:**

Why at the AGM when councillors made comments regarding Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees, you highlighted the fact that you were only doing what had happened some 20 years ago with the same situation. Some of the new councillors were not even thinking of becoming a District Councillor then and should not be treated in this way, probably most of the new councillors are wondering what on earth is the Leader talking about, and they would be right. Can we be assured that all councillors be treated with respect and let us move on for the good of SMDC, if this carries on what is the point of becoming a councillor if they are not allowed to do and have a voice what they were elected for. Also when the committees are decided they should be shared equally between all parties, for example, The Moorlands Partnership Board, I think the answer is in the title, ``Partnership``, If I wasn’t the representative from Cheadle Town Council, Cheadle would not have been involved

with this Committee, surely this is totally wrong. All towns should be equally representative on all committees to get an overall account of the towns views.

**Response:**

The election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each committee is a decision of Full Council. The Moorlands Partnership Board, although administered by the Council, is an outside body and not a committee of the authority. The Council's representatives to this particular body were agreed by way of a ballot of members at the Annual Meeting of the Council.