

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Questions to Portfolio Holders

Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel Monday 23 November 2020

1. Question received from Councillor Swindlehurst:

“At Leek Town Council General Purposes Committee, Councillors discussed the issue of homelessness and temporary accommodation. The question was raised about the plans that began in 2018 to renovate No 3, The Villas, (having been empty for many years), for the provision of temporary accommodation for vulnerable people. Despite some work having been undertaken, the accommodation remains unused for this proposed purpose and has begun to deteriorate once again. This is a crucial time in relation to the spread of Covid-19, with research to suggest rough sleepers and sofa-surfers to be potentially vulnerable, and by sharing multiple accommodations be a risk related to spread. My question is, has this project been shelved, and if so, where and why was this agreed?”

Response from Councillor Bowen – Portfolio Holder for Communities:

Some works had started, however, there were unforeseen difficulties with the utilities and supply. When the pandemic hit in March, the limited resources of the Housing Team had to be redirected to placing rough sleepers; most of whom are single. The property was to be for families and happily, we haven't seen the predicted increase in domestic violence etc. so the current temporary accommodation provision has been sufficient. It made sense to mothball this project until such time as it became needed and resource could be directed.

I have to say that workload, especially given the Tiers and subsequent lockdown has stretched the Team to capacity and beyond and is a testament to their commitment and dedication that we have managed to exceed Government expectations in our work with rough sleepers.