

HIGH PEAK BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

27 SEPTEMBER 2023

QUESTIONS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR

1. Question from Councillor Sizeland:

Does the council have a plan to address the continuing issues with gas/plumbing maintenance and repairs by Liberty Norse?

Response from the Cllr Mckeown Leader of the Council:

Liberty's performance has varied throughout the contract term, resulting in periods of significant tenant complaints, dissatisfaction, and increased workload for the Compliance Team when Liberty have failed to deliver.

The poor performance experienced over the previous autumn/winter period was reported to the CEO of Liberty in early March, which focused national managerial attention on the performance of Liberty's local service delivery.

Following this formal complaint, a service review was undertaken, and an improvement plan was prepared and implemented. This has seen significant investment in the number of local engineers, increasing from 2 to 4. Liberty has also improved the training and management of their administrative staff at their Knowsley office responsible for the service delivery of the HPBC account.

They have also appointed a dedicated Commercial HVAC Team Leader to improve performance across the general fund portfolio. In addition, the weekly meeting between Alliance Norse and Liberty has also been reinstated to ensure that service issues are communicated between all parties, allowing opportunity for timely resolution and improved communications to tenants, avoiding the need for escalation. These actions and interventions have significantly improved Liberty's performance and reduced the number of complaints received.

However, it is noted that this has been over the spring/summer period when heating issues are not at their peak.

It is also vital to acknowledge that whilst Liberty's performance has been mixed when delivering the reactive element of the contract, Liberty has maintained 100% gas compliance of all HPBC housing units throughout the 9-year contract term. The AN Compliance Team will continue to manage the Liberty contract until 31st March 2024, when the contract ends.

Alliance Norse and Norse Group procurement are currently working on the new HVAC and Gas Servicing tender that will be published in early October. The new contract will include additional terms and conditions holding the service provider to account, aimed at improving the overall performance and execution of the HVAC and gas maintenance contract.

2. Question from Councillor Elliott-Starkey:

Please can the committee advise why there has been a decrease in the standard of community pride over the last few months; parks such as Howard park in Dinting have been

neglected regarding grass cutting. In addition, the street cleaning and weeding has been substandard, and I would like to urge this be looked into as a matter of urgency.

Response from the Cllr Greenhalgh Deputy Leader of the Council:

The development of our Council's first ever Parks Strategy demonstrates our commitment to actively encourage community engagement and involvement in the protection, maintenance, development and positive environmental impacts of our parks. Both politically and at officer level, we are continuing to build upon and strengthen the relationship we have with our local communities who are keen to work in partnership to ensure that our parks and open spaces are well looked after. Howard Park, as a formal park, has a specific site management plan which sets out the priorities for the park over a 10 year period.

We have supported the longstanding Friends of Howard Park over many years. Cllr Rob Baker as Assistant Executive Member, officers and I have been involved in the group's refresh and reinvigoration in recent months. We will continue to work co-operatively with the Friends on improvements to the park, as well as with discussions around funding opportunities to enhance the play facilities and other park infrastructure.

In terms of grass cutting, Alliance Environmental Services (AES) have provided a service response to explain that the parks and open spaces have been very wet over the past few months which has provided challenges for grass cutting, including Howard Park. It has caused delays with the regular mowing regimes and this can be perceived by some as a decrease in the maintenance standards of our parks. We have also been informed of performance issues with mowing equipment, these have been referred back to the manufacturers and suppliers for discussion over winter. The Council has a commitment that AES will ensure that all the equipment is in a suitable condition and fit for purpose in readiness for the new season in April.

Likewise with street cleaning, AES have reported ongoing issues for the past 12 months in terms of obtaining parts for the fleet of pavement sweepers that operate across the whole of the High Peak. The procurement process for replacing this equipment has started and new sweepers will be in place by the end of March 2024. In the meantime, if Ward Councillors have areas of concern, if these could be reported to the Service Commissioning Team or The Executive and we will endeavour to direct resources to these locations.