

Questions from members of the public

Question 1 – Andrew McLuskey

“Why, given that the Building Regulations department have passed the cladding at West Plaza as being in conformity with national rules, is the insurance company unwilling to cover the flat dwellers in the development?”

Question 2 – Andrew McLuskey

“Why did the Environmental Health department give permission for an Industrial Kitchen (sic) to operate on the top floor of the block with all the attendant fire risks that involves?”

Question 3 – Andrew McLuskey

“Does the Council think it has fully learned the lessons of the Grenfell Tower tragedy in 2017?”

Question 4 – Graeme Lock

“When will the identity of the investigator be announced, and will full details of his/her background and experience with similar such politically sensitive independent investigations as well as his/her independence from Spelthorne Borough Council (including from its current and former staff and Councillors) be included in the announcement?”

Question 5 – John de Pear

“Why did the Chief Executive (Daniel Mouawad) not recuse himself from any involvement in the establishment and/or administration of the investigation into the provenance of and contract for the Waterfront Development Project, given

- a) the clear inappropriateness of such involvement because of his central role in this “officer led” project and
- b) declared intent of the investigation originally announced on 28 April to “explore the possibility of misconduct and/or fraud?”

Question 6 – John de Pear

“Was any attempt made to persuade the Chief Executive to recuse himself?”

Question 7 – Margaret Geraci

“What role did the Chief Executive (Daniel Mouawad) and/or the Leader of the Council at the time (Cllr Ian Harvey) have in drafting the scope of the investigation into the Waterfront Development Project (essentially draft terms of reference) as set out with the draft Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee of 5 July 2021 and announced on 20 August 2021, and what role do either have currently in briefing the investigator?”

Question 8 – Peter Bower

"Terms of Reference for an independent investigation into the "officer led" Waterfront Development Project announced in April had a declared intent to "explore the possibility of misconduct and/or fraud". Key elements of these Terms of Reference are either absent altogether from those announced in August or have been rephrased to narrow significantly the context in which the issues can be investigated.

According to the draft Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee of 5 July 2021 the Chief Executive was authorised by the Committee to finalise the Terms of Reference and appoint the investigator, to modify the Terms of Reference "as considered appropriate", and appoint a replacement investigator if needed. The Minutes also say the Review Group of Councillors overseeing the investigation will "receive updates from officers on the progress of the inquiry and next steps to be taken".

1. Given the above preamble and his central role in the "officer led" Project, on what basis does the Policy and Resources Committee consider it appropriate for the Chief Executive (or any other officer) to have any role in determining the Terms of Reference for the investigation, or the appointment of the investigator, or indeed any role in the conduct of the investigation itself (other than to give evidence to it)?
2. Will the more specific Terms of Reference of 28 April 2021 be incorporated into the new Terms of Reference for the investigation?"

Question 9 – Mr R Neville

"The land in Feltham Road, Ashford known as Ashford Clumps has been used for allotments for over 100 years. Some current tenants have been gardening there for decades. There are three charities utilising plots at Ashford Clumps to support those with specific needs. Out of the blue allotment holders received a letter from Spelthorne Council dated 15th September 2021 giving 12 months notice to quit due to the lease expiring in March 2020 and not being renewed. The letter was abrupt and legalistic, with no apparent consideration for its impact on people. Allotments have been a sanctuary for many people across the borough during the pandemic, and provide many benefits, both for health & wellbeing and the environment.

a) What discussions and meetings took place to consider the impact of this situation and the notice to quit letter, on both the residents who rent plots at Ashford Clumps and the loss of the allotment land on Spelthorne's ability to provide allotments? The loss of this site will be an 8% reduction (62 plots) in allotment plots in Spelthorne, leaving the borough short of plots to meet demand.

b) Why was the expiry of the lease, eviction and loss of allotments not discussed at The Environment and Sustainability Committee, a meeting of which was held on 14th September 2021, the day before the notice to quit letters were dated?"

Question 10 – Jill Clements

"Did Spelthorne council consider any options and try and negotiate a new lease for the Ashford Clumps Allotments land to support its residents not just current plot holders but for people in the future. Or did Spelthorne Council, as it seems just accept the termination of the lease at face value, send the plot holders letters and move on."

Question 11 – Sarah Mason

“1. The custodians of the land on which Ashford Clumps Allotments are situated are Ashford Relief in Need Charities (ARIN) & The Charities Commissioners. Spelthorne has been leasing this land from them. The lease ended in 2020 and is not being renewed.

When were Spelthorne Council first notified that the lease was not going to be renewed and why if the lease ended in March 2020 was the notice to quit not sent until September 2021?

2. The Clumps Allotments have been used for growing fruit and vegetables by the community for many years. Council records show it being leased by them since at least 1982, however local people know it has been used by the people of Spelthorne for far longer. This land having been appropriated by Spelthorne Council by means of a lease for at least 39 years is classed as Statutory Allotment Land. This brings certain responsibilities for a Council. These are published by the Government in a document titled 'Allotment disposal Guidance: Safeguards and Alternatives.' Are Spelthorne Council aware of these responsibilities and have they carried them out in relation to the disposal of The Clumps Allotments in September 2022?”