

COUNCIL 14TH SEPTEMBER 2017

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS

M 01	Question from:	Councillor Dine Romero
Does the Leader of the Council agree with the decision of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to intervene in the Foxhill outline planning application?		
	Answer from:	Councillor Tim Warren
<p>Clearl, it is very important that Curo gets the plans for Foxhill right for the benefit of the city, the local community and all residents. I therefore welcome any additional scrutiny of plans which are as significant and important as these; though obviously the decision on whether there are grounds for the application to be called in is a matter for the Secretary of State.</p>		
M 02	Question from:	Councillor Andy Furse
Could the Cabinet member clarify the financial relationship between Curo and the Council with regard to the Foxhill regeneration scheme?		
	Answer from:	Councillor Charles Gerrish
<p>The Council has 3 areas of work in which it has a direct financial relationship with Curo at Foxhill:</p> <p>1) Curo entered into a Planning performance Agreement with the LPA for the recent Outline Application. This was in accordance with the current LPA policy on PPAs and the value of the agreement was calculated to cover the costs of bringing the complex application to determination. It is likely future PPAs will be put in place for any forthcoming reserved matters applications for Foxhill or neighbouring Mulberry Park. The value of the PPA is commercially sensitive information</p> <p>2) Housing Zone Capacity Funding: Curo is in contract with the Council until March 2018 for the provision of an Independent Residents Advisor. The value of this contract £93,960 and the funding came from a successful Housing Zone Capacity Fund bid submitted by the Council. This funding has secured 2 years of support to residents at Foxhill by resident engagement specialists, TPAS. Provision of this service will continue after the current contract expires, this time funded directly by Curo through a successful Estate Regeneration bid to DCLG earlier this year. A Panel of Council and Curo officers, residents and Ward members oversees the Project</p> <p>3) Communities Fund: The Council was successful in securing £65,000 from the Communities Fund earlier this year, £59,439 of which is being used by Curo on 'Working Well Foxhill' – an initiative to help local people to boost their skills, employability and wellbeing. A wellbeing coordinator has been recruited to train and manage a team of volunteers who will help to set up and support community activities. This funding is being used to tackle social exclusion and as such is not directly linked to regeneration proposals.</p> <p>The Council will not benefit financially from the regeneration proposals. The terms of the</p>		

transfer agreement between the Council and Curo (previously Somer Community Housing Trust) establishes the rules under which Curo can dispose of the assets transferred from the Council and provide clear parameters for disposals and repayment to the Council. Disposals that allow for the regeneration of an area providing affordable housing and meeting wider socio-economic and community benefits are excluded from any requirement to reimburse the Council (clause 2.7.3 of the Deed of Covenant for the transfer of housing stock between Somer and the Council, March 1999).

At present, there are no other confirmed funding sources being directed at Curo for the proposed regeneration of Foxhill although officers are mindful of the Leader's commitment to explore all opportunities to deliver a higher proportion of affordable homes through the development.

M 03	Question from:	Councillor Will Sandry
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In considering the provisions of Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, what are the risks and opportunities for:

- a) The Council
- b) Partner organisations
- c) People in B&NES at risk of homelessness
- d) People currently homeless in B&NES
- e) Rough sleepers in B&NES?

Answer from:	Councillor Paul Myers
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The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which will come into force on 1st April 2018, introduces a range of new responsibilities on the Council. The broad aim of the legislation is to ensure that housing authorities take a preventative approach to homelessness.

This is to be achieved by requiring Councils to intervene earlier in the homelessness process and to provide tailored support to everyone approaching the Council, regardless of priority need status or local connection to the district. Much of the detail will be contained in statutory guidance which according to the Government will be published in spring 2018.

As this Council has worked hard to develop a preventative approach to homelessness, the risks and opportunities are reduced when compared to other Councils. However, it is clear that the new system will have a significant impact on resources and will require an uplift in front line staffing. There is also a risk that the number of clients placed in temporary accommodation will increase by having a duty to assist more people, for example those clients with no local connection to the district.

The opportunity prevented by the legislation is that by all Councils taking a clear preventative approach to homelessness, clients wherever they are, should be able to receive high quality and timely advice that may prevent them losing accommodation in the first place, or securing alternative accommodation, should that not be practicable.