

Cabinet Meeting 4 March 2025 - Public Questions and Responses

<p>Paul Elstone</p>	<p>Question 1- Agenda Item 7 Establishment Report – Organisation Charts. The Local Government Transparency Code 2015 updated 29th January 2025 Paragraph 44 required that this Council must publish an organisation chart for the top 3 levels that showed:</p> <p>Contact details. Salary Ceiling (the maximum for the grade). Salary in £5000 brackets. This amongst other things.</p> <p>Can it be confirmed that this organisation chart is currently available and if so, where is it published for the public to see?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for People, Development and Deputy Leader Appendix 1 of the Pay Policy on this agenda detailed the salaries of the top 3 managerial levels of the Council. This information is also available to the public on the Mid Devon website (found on our Transparency Code page). Please see the below link to the structure chart on the Mid Devon District Council website as expected by the Transparency Code. The title is: <i>Organisation chart for the top 3 hierarchical levels.</i></p> <p>https://www.middevon.gov.uk/your-council/access-to-information/transparency-code/</p> <p>Question 2 - Agenda Item 8 - Residents Survey. It is noted that there is nearly a 50% reduction in persons responding to the survey down to just 433 residents this year. Assuming that the 42 Councillors completed this survey that's 10% of the total.</p> <p>That given the population is 82,800 rightly it is stated that the low number of responses received is not a representative sample.</p> <p>Has this Council any intention of trying to find out why such a low response?</p>
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Response from the Leader

It is disappointing to see a reduced response level to our annual resident survey. We are already exploring various options that may encourage greater participation levels for 2025. But, as I mentioned in my introduction to this report, it is very encouraging to see how nearly all of the metrics that we have asked for responses on have seen significant increases in resident satisfaction levels.

Question 3

Given the very low response how can any credibility be placed in the percentage shifts? This as the process can be so easily corrupted.

Response from the Leader

As you heard from one of my Cabinet Members, during the discussion on this item, quote from a nationally recognised sampling technique which showed that the number of responses still would result in a statistically reliable outcome.

Question 4 - Agenda Item 11 Quarter 3 Monitoring Report

Page 192 Appendix 7 HRA 1063 showed that over £214,000 has been spent on St Georges Court. The public were previously told the work required to make the properties fit for over 60's occupation would cost around £100,000.

What precisely does the increased expenditure relate to?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk

The main costs incurred relate to matters such as highways and sewerage works (c£50k), landscaping and additional fencing (c£25k), repairs (c£20k), vandalism (c£4) and adaptations for the over 60's accessibility (c£86k).

Question 5.

It is stated that there was no allocated budget at the beginning of the year, but cost has been covered by funding received from 3 Rivers.

It was the understanding that the 3 Rivers books were closed prior to the commencement of the financial year. Therefore, precisely what account has the funding come from?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk

As part of the closedown of 3Rivers in 2023/24, £200k was recovered from funds held by the company for the completion of this project. Those funds have been held to meet the costs incurred.

Question 6

Is this not yet another Council loss incurred on the 3 Rivers account this including a further loss of nearly a quarter of a million pounds on the Haddon Heights site?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk

No, these costs were included as part of the closedown of the company.

Question 7

It is noted that 7 of the ZED PODS projects are showing overspend and one by over £700,000 Can it be fully explained exactly why the overspend and against each project?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk

The main overspends arise from progressing the projects quicker than originally planned. The budget profile for these projects are based upon the original timeframes, so will largely be planned in future years. These are shown as overspends when compared to the forecast budget for 2024/25 only.

Question 8

As stated previously there is no easy way to see what the HRA Project original cost estimate was. Similarly, there is no easy way to see what the current_project cost estimate is. This including in the Monitoring Report.

Will this be remedied and for reasons of openness and transparency that we are promised?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk

The Capital Programme is updated to reflect the latest forecast cost, so historic budgets are superseded. The monitoring report shows the current cost estimate.

Question 9 – Supplementary - Question asked after Council Leader said he was proud of what this Administration had achieved in respect of closing down the 3 Rivers business.

The opportunity was given in May 2020 to shut 3 Rivers down, including by at least two Members of this Cabinet. So therefore, why was it not done then?

Response from the Leader

The Leader responded that there were two Members who are present in this Cabinet. They did not close 3 Rivers in May 2020 because it was a different administration and they went with the advice they received at that time.