

Full Council 29 October Public Questions and Answers

Name of person submitting	Questions
Barry Warren	<p>My contribution to this section of the meeting is concerned with the work of the Council and the way some of it affects members of the public and the potential standing of the Council.</p> <p>On the 6 of February 2024, I asked questions at Cabinet which had been submitted in advance.</p> <p>One question asked was if the Cabinet Member was satisfied that a complete independent structural survey has been carried out and report prepared before the purchase of St. George's Court. Councillor Clist replied - "yes."</p> <p>I also asked if he had a complete survey report prepared, with costings, which detailed all the necessary alterations and adaptations required to make the properties suitable for HRA use? He replied – <i>"The Operations Manager for Building Services has surveyed the property and provided a conservative estimate of costings to undertake the required adaptations."</i> This did not answer the question.</p> <p>He further responded to another question – <i>"It's not our intention to make these documents publicly available."</i></p> <p>Subsequent Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and intervention by the Information Commission Office (ICO) have revealed no independent structural survey was commissioned and an officer responded that when Councillor Clist answered "yes" he was referring to the legal document provided. That legal document was dated the 21 of March 2024 – 6 weeks after Councillor Clist had said "yes". That document also recommended a structural survey be carried out.</p> <p>At Cabinet on the 8 of July 2025 I listed seven payments which had been paid to Zed Pods in May 2025 and asked – <i>"What is the detail of each of these payments please?"</i> The written answer from Councillor Lock was <i>"It is not possible to disclose the detail of individual amounts as itemised within specific invoices as these are commercially sensitive,"</i></p> <p>I also asked who had 'signed off the payments and got the answer from Councillor Lock – <i>"The Council constitution sets out the financial approval limits for approval of orders and payments by different officers."</i></p>

	<p>Subsequent FOI requests had resulted in the release of all the relevant invoices and named the officer who issued the orders and authorised the payments – the Head of Housing and Health.</p> <p>These are just a couple of examples of where Cabinet Members or Chairs have put their names to responses which have been found to be incorrect or at least trying to avoid the issue. Are elected Members aware of this as in some cases there are clear breaches of the Nolan Principles or a potential to place the Members in jeopardy of legal action?</p> <p>Mr Warren advised the Chair that the question was to Members to consider and would not need a response.</p>
Paul Elstone	<p>Question 1: At the Full Council Meeting of the 24 September 2025, I asked about the sales marketing being stopped at Haddon Heights in July of this year. Within a very few days of asking that question a couple of Fox & Sons sale boards appeared randomly on site. On examining the Fox & Sons website it shows no details for these properties being marketed. Additionally, nothing is posted on Rightmove or Zoopla etc.</p> <p>What is really happening, why are these properties not being visibly and aggressively marketed and given the major financial losses being incurred by this Council?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Housing, Asset and Property Services: The Council are in the process of changing sales marketing agents. In consultation with the new sales marketing agents, the advice received was to remove the properties from the market for a period to allow the market to refresh. During the interim period, the properties have been refreshed in terms of refreshed ready for the relaunch. Marketing will recommence in due course.</p> <p>Question 2: When I advised both Ashford Council and this Council that the energy certificates published for their individual ZED PODS developments failed to comply with statutory requirements I received two very different responses.</p> <p>Ashford Council thanked me and addressed the concerns by having their certificates reissued to be compliant.</p> <p>This Council instead once again showed disdain to the messenger and have not remedied the non-compliant energy certificates. Even worse seriously misrepresenting to Council Members the true facts involving the Ashford Council certificates changes. Misrepresenting facts has become a common theme regarding this Councils housing developments.</p>

Would both the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Scrutiny Committee Chair like to reconsider their written and public responses to my Energy Certificate questions?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Housing, Asset and Property Services: No.

The Council is not party to the communications between the questioner and another local authority, therefore we cannot comment further on those. We nonetheless reiterate it is evident that the EPC scores for the Zed Pod properties in Ashford remain unchanged following apparent reassessment.

As per the previous response to the same question at Scrutiny on 29 September, we have no evidence to suggest any concerns with the EPC certificates provided for our schemes. Nonetheless, if the questioner has particular concerns about an Elmhurst accredited EPC assessor/scheme member then Elmhurst have a specific complaints resolution process which can be assessed at [Complaints Resolution - Elmhurst Energy](#).

There is no misrepresentation by officers on this matter as is erroneously alleged.

Question 3:

I have provided Council Members with an email plus attachments, this in full support of the following question.

At the Scrutiny Committee Meeting of the 29 September 2025 an MDDC Officer told the Committee that 6 out of the 8 Beech Road properties were complete - a statement that was totally untrue.

When saying the delay is due to unmapped utility supply, the officer was attempting to project that the blame for the delay in completing the Beech Road properties sits with the utility provider. A statement it is believed which misrepresents the truth and was intended to once again deflect from ZED PODS and MDDC Officer failings – which some may call professional negligence.

Given the catalogue of untruths and misleading information which has been presented to Council Members, and the public, what will it take to have this administration conduct a full and independent investigation into its modular build social housing program?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Housing, Asset and Property Services:

The officer correctly stated that 6 of the 8 modules have been installed and were complete. They did not state they were attached to the remaining modules or that works require to complete the external finishing of the development as a whole were complete.

With two remaining modules to be installed in what is a terraced development it is straightforward for the questioner to understand that some works will be required to complete this scheme. Consequently, there has been no misrepresentation as to progress with completing this scheme and the statement from the officer is being interpreted in a way that may suit a specific viewpoint.

Regarding utility delays at this development, the Council can provide documentary evidence as to the nature of the issue, efforts and legal processes required to resolve the mis-mapped utility and numerous rescheduled appointments by utility company representatives on-site all of which directly contributed to delays.

Consequently, there is no 'catalogue of untruths and misleading information' as is again being erroneously alleged.

Question 4:

Any misrepresentation of the facts brings this Council into disrepute. Does telling proven untruths and knowingly misrepresenting important facts to Council Members and the public constitute gross misconduct?

Chair of the Council:

The principles of public life include both honesty and integrity. These should apply to all aspects of public debate.

Question 5:

In the last 4 years how many Council Officers have been dismissed for gross misconduct?

Chair of the Council:

19.