

## **Adjourned Annual Meeting of the Council, Thursday, 14 May 2026**

### **Members' Questions Under Standing Order A12**

A Member may only submit three questions for consideration at each Council Meeting. Each Member will present their first question in turn, when all the first questions have been dealt with the second and third questions may be asked in turn. The time for Member's questions will be limited to a total of 30 minutes.

#### **First Round**

#### **Urgent Question (1) from Councillor Pentney to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

Last month's fire at the derelict Sherwood Hotel highlighted the severe risks posed by unused and unsecured sites. With reports of anti-social behaviour rising at the former Upton Bowling Club, will the Cabinet Member commit to securing this location immediately to prevent further damage?

#### **Answer to Urgent Question (1) provided by Councillor Chris Lewis**

The building has been resecured following reports of anti-social behaviour. As would be expected, officers continue to engage with the tenant of the building where responsibility rests to ensure the building is secure and regularly checked for signs of forced entry.

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#### **Urgent Question (2) from Councillor Long to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services (Councillor Bye)**

1. How have the Council, Stagecoach and the Schools and Brixham College worked together to avoid the cessation of transport to schools/Brixham College; and
2. Why has no impact assessment been done prior to the services ending?

#### **Answer to Urgent Question (2) provided by Councillor Bye**

The Local Authority's School Transport Service was formally notified on 21 April 2026 that Brixham College intends to withdraw its subsidised school bus service with effect from the end of the 2025/26 academic year. This decision was taken by the school independently, and the Local Authority was not consulted in advance.

#### **1) How have the Council, Stagecoach and the schools/Brixham College worked together to avoid the cessation of transport?**

As soon as we became aware of the decision, officers made prompt contact with Brixham College to understand the likely impact on pupils and transport arrangements, and to seek agreement on a coordinated approach. The school provided data relating to current pupils and the prospective Year 7 cohort, enabling a

proportionate, light-touch assessment of individual circumstances. The outcomes of that work were shared with the school.

The Local Authority has offered to work collaboratively with the school and operators, including Stagecoach, to:

- communicate clearly with parents and carers about the proposed changes;
- provide clarity on available support and the Local Authority's statutory eligibility criteria for home-to-school transport; and
- identify and mitigate foreseeable risks, including safeguarding, network capacity and road safety.

In parallel, officers have been engaging with relevant transport operators to understand the likely impact on existing public bus services and the wider network, including any capacity implications from increased demand and what mitigations may be possible to support safe and reliable travel for all passengers.

## **2) Why has no impact assessment been done prior to the services ending?**

Because the subsidised service is operated and funded by the school, the Local Authority was not involved in the decision to withdraw it and was not notified until after the decision had been made. As a result, the Local Authority was not able to complete an impact assessment prior to the school's decision.

Since notification, officers have reviewed alternative options to support safe arrangements from September 2026 onwards and to understand any wider implications for the public transport network and tried to ensure communications are provided. We have also made clear to the school the importance of timely, clear and consistent communication with parents and carers so families can plan appropriately. Where parents/carers have queries about the school's decision-making, they should be directed to the school or the trust.

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### **Question from Councillor Cowell to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

A recent online report quoted the Director of Regeneration while addressing the Torquay Place Leadership Board state that 10 new projects across Torbay will create 1200 permanent jobs and generate £41m in wages.

Of course this is to be welcomed, but can the Cabinet Member please identify by each project how many jobs will be created and the estimated wages?

### **Answer provided by Councillor Chris Lewis**

The data stated is from a draft report the Council has commissioned from Economic Consultants to evaluate the Socio-Economic Impact of projects in the Regeneration Programme and other key projects being delivering either directly by the Council or in partnership with others.

Additional data from the draft report is as follows:

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Scheme	Estimated Jobs created	Estimated wages
Torquay Union Square	138	£7.5m
Torquay Lower Union Lane	59	£1.7m
Torquay The Strand	247	£6.7m
Torquay Pavilion	139	£5m
Crossways Paignton	76	£2.7m
Paignton Gateway	112	£3m
Paignton Victoria Square	149	£23m
Paignton – Tech Park	155	£8m
Brixham - Oxen Cove	84	£1.8m
Brixham – Brixham Central	31	£0.9m
Baywide – Hotels to Homes	43	£1.2m
Total	1232	£61.5m

It should be noted that the figures shown above are preliminary and have increased from the headlines given by the Director of Regeneration, as more detail has been added to the modelling since they were reported at the Place Board. A final version of the report will issued in due course when Outline Business Case for the Strand is completed.

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### **Question from Councillor Carter to the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities (Councillor Tranter)**

Can the Cabinet Member advise when Paignton will have showering facilities that the homeless can use, to save people having to travel to Torquay?

### **Answer provided by Councillor Tranter**

I want to start by saying that this is an issue I have personally been working hard to address since taking on my role as Portfolio Holder for Adult and Community Services, because access to basic facilities such as showers and washing provision is an important part of treating people with dignity and supporting those experiencing homelessness.

The challenge has not been a lack of willingness, but finding a practical and sustainable way to deliver this in Paignton. In recent years, the reduction in third-sector provision and the loss of suitable voluntary sector premises in the town has significantly limited the options available.

Despite those challenges, this remains a priority and is specifically included as an action within our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy delivery plan, overseen through the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Forum, which brings together partners from across the statutory and voluntary sectors.

A standalone facility is difficult to deliver safely and sustainably, so our focus has been on finding a model that can be linked to existing support services, where there is appropriate oversight and the opportunity to offer wider support alongside shower and washing facilities. I am pleased to say that work is actively progressing with an organisation connected to local night shelter provision to explore exactly this type of opportunity in Paignton. While I appreciate, we will want this in place as quickly as possible, it is important that we get the right solution rather than a short-term fix that cannot be sustained.

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**Question from Councillor Fox to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

One of the entrances to Nightingale Park in Torquay is closed off due to the wooden structure that serves as a footpath is broken. Female residents advise that this makes them feel vulnerable when walking through Nightingale Park. Can the Cabinet Member please advise when this entrance will be open again?

**Answer provided by Councillor Billings**

One of the many park entrances was temporarily closed following a safety inspection carried out in early March. The inspection identified that sections of the timber bridge deck had deteriorated and were no longer safe for public use.

Repair works have been scheduled, and it is anticipated that this entrance will reopen towards the end of May, subject to completion of the works and final safety checks. However the park remains accessible from its other entrances.

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**Question from Councillor Penny to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Finance (Councillor Tyerman)**

Judging by casework I have received, there may be delays in the department that deal with business rates. Please can the Cabinet Member provide the following information: the total number of delayed cases, the number of cases that are 28 days old or more, the mode, median, and mean average time taken to deal with business rates cases.

**Answer provided by Councillor Tyerman**

In terms of work incoming to the Council, the Council receives around 4,500 per year. There are currently 195 business rates items outstanding, which is normal for this time of year.

The time taken to process these work items ranges from less than a day, for simple matters such as pay method changes, to as much as 11 months for matters involving the monitoring of new builds awaiting completion.

The mean processing time is 26 working days with a median of 12 working days. The mode is a day or less.

The greatest impact on customers currently being experienced is the delays of the Valuation Office Agency to update the Rating List (which is a national issue). The Council is unable to amend liability until these changes have been processed.

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**Question from Councillor Law to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

The Council often refers to "the final mile" where Swisco prioritise their work – please can this area be defined by the Cabinet Member?

**Answer provided by Councillor Billings**

The Final Mile refers to a targeted approach adopted by the Council whereby SWISCo focuses enhanced maintenance on the most visible routes across Torbay where vehicular and pedestrian traffic is high. This recognises the importance of a first and last impression of the place, improving the appearance of the Bay while maintaining delivery across all residential areas. The benefits of this approach are:

- To improve first impressions of Torbay for visitors and investors.
- To support the visitor economy and pride in place.
- To address historic under-investment on key routes.
- To target limited resources where they have greatest impact.

The approach underpins elements of Operation Brighter Bay.

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**Question from Councillor Virdee to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

The previous Lib Dem/Independent administration budgeted for a Town Centre manager. Please can the Cabinet Member confirm why the Conservative administration has not brought this position forward?

**Answer provided by Councillor Chris Lewis**

The post has been advertised but, on this occasion, it was not possible to make an appointment. The Council is therefore progressing to readvertise the role, with recruitment activity imminently recommencing.

In the meantime, the Council has continued to actively support town centre vitality and activity across Torbay. Over the last twelve months this has included direct support for a range of town centre initiatives and events, with a particular focus on the Christmas period, helping to drive footfall, support local businesses and reinforce the role of our town centres as places for social and economic activity across Torbay.

### **Question from Councillor Atiya-Alla to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

A number of council car parks have had partial works to prepare them for electric car chargers. Can the Cabinet Member confirm when the work will be completed?

### **Answer provided by Councillor Billings**

There are delays to the contract currently which explains why some sites are on hold. Discussions with the contractor, and their suppliers, are ongoing and we believe that issues are now resolved and progress on these sites should be clearer soon. This contract is led by Devon County Council, working with Torbay Council and District Council partners across Devon.

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### **Question from Councillor Harvey to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services (Councillor Bye)**

In Torbay's recent Ofsted report, inspectors praised a Torbay Council initiative "enabling some young people to move ... into properties with long leases and **the option to buy in the future** - an option rarely seen in local authorities. Similar projects that integrate local businesses into corporate solutions are already in the planning stage."

Please could the Cabinet Member provide details of this "option to buy in the future" scheme and the "similar projects that integrate local businesses into corporate solutions"?

### **Answer provided by Councillor Bye**

Torbay Council has completed a Housing Strategy Needs Analysis, which includes consideration of the current and projected housing needs of care-experienced young people. Through joint work between Housing, Children's Services and Adult Services, we have already supported a number of care-experienced young people to move into self-contained flats, securing stable tenancies and improving their longer-term housing outcomes.

In relation to the "option to buy in the future", this reflects our ongoing approach to broadening the range of pathways into settled accommodation for care-experienced young people, including exploring arrangements that could provide longer-term security and, where appropriate, a route to ownership. Any such arrangements would be subject to affordability, eligibility criteria and the necessary legal and governance approvals.

With regard to similar projects involving local businesses, we are in early discussions with partners to increase the supply of suitable "move on" accommodation and strengthen support offer(s) in a way that aligns with partners' operating models—for example, through the YMCA SHAP programme which is underway with a number of units ready to provide alternative accommodation for those care experienced who are ready and able to move into the units.

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**Question from Councillor Mandy Darling to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

It has been great to see the work undertaken recently at Beacon Cove, including graffiti removal, gate repairs, and new alcohol-free zone signage. However, as evenings grow lighter and footfall increases, residents are reporting a rise in anti-social behaviour including late-night fires, littering, and broken glass.

Will the Cabinet Member please confirm if the Council will commit to reviewing what further preventative measures can be taken — such as improved lighting, more frequent cleaning visits, and enhanced enforcement patrols — to ensure the cove remains safe and welcoming for residents and visitors as we move into the summer months?

**Answer provided by Councillor Billings**

While recognising that there are concerns over anti-social behaviour the Council recognise that Beacon Cove is a popular location for some groups to gather CCTV evidence suggests that there are infrequent incidences of anti-social behaviour.

The Neighbourhood Enforcement team patrols to the area have been increased and we have engaged through SWISCo with Devon and Cornwall Police. Whilst the Police have acknowledged current resource constraints, they have advised that they will seek to increase patrols, particularly at weekends and in the summer holidays. The Community Safety team have advised that they will also take formal action where individuals can be identified, including the use of appropriate enforcement powers. With the Cabinet Member for Adult & Community Services I am happy to review and explore any additional response requirements but would also add that this would need to be proportionate to any issues being experienced and we would encourage residents to report anti-social behaviours to the anti-social behaviour team so as to help inform required action.

More widely during the bathing season (15 May to 30 September), Torbay's main beaches, including Beacon Cove, are subject to daily inspections by the Beach Services team. As part of seasonal preparations, this regime is now being brought forward, with the team operating seven days a week.

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**Question from Councillor Steve Darling to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

Please can the Cabinet Member confirm if the Local Authority will publish a risk assessment for users of all its bathing water beaches across Torbay

## **Answer provided by Councillor Billings**

The Council takes its responsibilities in relation to public safety at bathing water beaches very seriously.

In line with all Council services as part of the Health and Safety Management System appropriate site based and operational risk assessments are undertaken for all beaches in line with relevant legislation and guidance.

These operational risk assessments are not published but all information and mitigation measures identified in them relevant to beach users incl. bathing water safety is made available through a range of accessible measures, including on-site signage, public information boards and national bathing water profiles published by the Environment Agency. These provide clear guidance on water quality, potential hazards and safe use of the beach environment.

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## **Second Round**

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### **Question from Councillor Long to the Cabinet Member for Tourism, Culture & Events (Councillor Jackie Thomas)**

Can the Cabinet Member confirm how Torbay Council marked LGBTQ+ History Month?

### **Answer provided by Councillor Jackie Thomas**

Questions are sometimes raised about why the council does not formally mark certain awareness months or commemorative events, such as LGBT+ History Month in February, Black History Month, South Asian Heritage Month, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Month or other significant cultural and community observances.

Across the calendar there are many awareness campaigns, heritage months and cultural events. It is not practical, either financially or organisationally, to formally mark all of them. Selecting some without a clear framework could lead to perceptions of inconsistency or preferential treatment.

That does not mean the Council does not value diversity, inclusion, or the contribution of different communities. Councils have clear legal responsibilities under equality legislation to ensure services are accessible, fair, and non-discriminatory for everyone, regardless of background, identity, religion, or protected characteristic. The council has a planned calendar of awareness days, weeks and months. This has been agreed corporately and aligns with the priorities set out in the Community and Corporate Plan. This approach aims to provide a consistent and fair framework for recognition across the year to guide both internal and external communications. This allows us to focus on priority areas while maintaining fairness and transparency. LGBT+ History Month is now included in this calendar for the next 12 months. Alongside this, we continue to support LGBT+ communities and other protected groups throughout the year. Our employment practices promote fairness and we

welcome applications from diverse backgrounds. We also look forward to supporting local Pride celebrations in the summer.

In practice, the council's focus is on delivering fair services for all residents year-round. Community groups, partners, and local organisations remain entirely free to celebrate and promote these occasions, often with positive engagement from elected members in a personal or community capacity.

This approach is about consistency aligned to our Community and Corporate Plan. We remain committed to equality, diversity and inclusion and we will continue to strengthen our approach and work in partnership with our communities.

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**Question from Councillor Atiya-Alla to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

The Railway Bill currently going through Parliament will give Local Authorities a greater influence over Railway Plans. In light of this will the Cabinet Member confirm whether Torbay Council will be bringing forward a rail prospectus as an appendix to the Local Transport Plan.

**Answer provided by Councillor Billings**

The Railways Bill does not currently empower individual local authorities to shape rail plans directly. Instead, it strengthens influence at devolved Strategic Authority level. The Local Transport Plan has been recently adopted by the Devon & Torbay Combined County Authority and there are no plans to update this at the moment. There are several local rail plans already in place setting out asks for Torbay, from the content of the Local Transport Plan referencing improved journeys to Exeter, better accessibility at stations and a new station at Edginswell, to the Peninsula Rail proposals and Network Rail regional plans that we have previously provided input to.

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**Question from Councillor Mandy Darling to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

The Melville area is home to a dedicated community who take real pride in their area. However, its proximity to the town centre and dense population mean it faces persistent litter and fly-tipping challenges. There has been a recent positive step with a dog bin successfully reinstated after being previously removed, however there is more to be done to support the community here.

Given the particular pressures this area faces, can the Cabinet Member please confirm if the Council will explore increasing the frequency of street cleansing in the Melville area?

**Answer provided by Councillor Billings**

The Melville area is home to a committed and proactive community who clearly take pride in their neighbourhood, and this is both recognised and valued. Its proximity to

the town centre, combined with a dense population and a high proportion of flatted accommodation, does however mean that the area experiences persistent littering and fly-tipping pressures that are not typical on most residential streets.

There has been a recent positive step with the successful reinstatement of a dog bin, following previous removal, and this reflects ongoing efforts to respond to local concerns. SWISCo is continuing to work with the community to identify further practical improvements.

Melville Street already sits within the enhanced street-cleansing programme and receives more frequent cleansing visits than the majority of residential roads across Torbay, many of which operate on significantly lower routine schedules. Despite this, the area can deteriorate quickly between visits due to factors such as incorrect waste presentation, split bags from communal collections and behaviour-related issues rather than a lack of cleansing activity. Operational teams are therefore often required to carry out additional reactive clear-ups, sometimes multiple times per week in addition to the enhanced street cleansing programme.

SWISCo keep the Melville area under active review, and will continue to assess service arrangements alongside wider measures. While the option of increasing cleansing frequency can be explored, achieving sustainable and lasting improvement will depend not only on service levels but also on:

- Appropriate and sufficient waste containment
- Correct use of communal waste facilities
- Improved resident and landlord compliance

Further progress will therefore focus on a balanced approach, combining operational activity with engagement, waste-management solutions and compliance, to best support the community in the longer term.

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### **Question from Councillor Steve Darling to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

Can the Cabinet Member confirm how much section 106 monies were received from developers on the Willows estate Torquay, and how much of these monies received for the Willows remain.

### **Answer provided by Councillor Chris Lewis**

The Willows development was delivered through multiple planning applications, which generated several Section 106 contributions. No funds remain unspent. Councillor Darling, and any other interested party, may view applications and projects through the CIL and Planning Obligations page on the Council's website by clicking view details of section 106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy. For application P/2009/1180. A total of £466,231.19 was received and no funds remain.

For application P/2010/1388, £210,291.37 was received and no funds remain.

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### **Question from Councillor Pentney to the Chair of Planning Committee (Councillor Brook)**

In respect of the recent planning permission for the Indigo Hotel, can the Chairman of Planning please advise why officers were not instructed for this matter to be decided at a committee meeting?

### **Answer provided by Councillor Brook**

The application was determined under delegated powers, in accordance with the Council's adopted scheme of delegation. This approach was agreed as appropriate for the nature of the application and is a lawful and routine part of the planning process. I can assure you that the Council fully considered the representations and consultations made and reached a conclusion based on local and national policies. Use of delegated powers does not reduce the level of assessment undertaken and you will be aware that this decision only removes the condition on a temporary basis to allow further information on impact to be gathered.

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### **Third Round**

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### **Question from Councillor Long to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth and Deputy Leader (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

Residents of Grasmere Close in Torquay have a stipulation in their deeds that they have to seek permission from the Council if they wish to have a fence over a certain height in their front gardens. A Sanctuary Housing property now has a fence over the stipulated height and permission has apparently been sought retrospectively - apparently Sanctuary are experiencing problems in securing a response to their request. Please can the Cabinet Member confirm when will the council respond to this request and will other residents' views be taken into account?

### **Answer provided by Councillor Chris Lewis**

The Council has reviewed this case and is unable to identify any request from Sanctuary Housing in respect of this issue to either the planning or assets teams. We cannot find any historic planning applications for boundary treatments where planning permission has been refused and the Planning history is available to the public to search online: [Simple Search](#). The Assets Team have not received any contact seeking retrospective consent to erect a fence over a stipulated height at this location.

Typically requests of this nature when received are considered on their merits, with due regard to the restriction in place and any potential impact in granting permission to lift.

Restrictions such as this that cover a housing scheme are usually included to protect the open amenity and aspect across the development. So an application to lift this restriction would need to be accompanied with justification.

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**Question from Councillor Steve Darling to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Finance (Councillor Tyerman)**

The Government have recently introduced changes around the payment of council tax. Please can the Cabinet Member confirm how the Local Authority is using this change to the system to greater support those in financial hardship in Torbay?

**Answer provided by Councillor Tyerman**

The government has not yet introduced any changes to Council Tax collection, but has provided its response to its recent Consultation stating that the government intends to bring forward legislation that will amend some of the processes for collection and enforcement of Council Tax. Whilst it will be necessary to await the legislation to understand the full impacts, it is possible to comment on some of the changes.

The introduction of twelve-monthly instalments as the standard approach for Council Tax (as opposed to the default currently being ten-monthly instalments) will spread the financial burden across the maximum period for payment at the outset of the financial year, which may assist those who are suffering financial hardship.

This will further support measures the council already has in place, including Working Age Council Tax Reduction and the recently introduced Crisis Resilience Fund that is intended to target those in financial hardship with further help with their Council Tax. This scheme will also enable more signposting to organisations within Torbay that provide independent financial advice to help individuals and families who are experiencing financial hardship.

It will be necessary to await the full details of the legislative changes to understand whether they enable greater support for those suffering financial hardship, and if so, how.

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**Question from Councillor Mandy Darling to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

The recent fire at the Sherwood Hotel on Belgrave Road has highlighted the very real dangers posed by empty and derelict buildings in Torbay. Residents are rightly asking what is being done to prevent such incidents, and it is clear that a proactive rather than reactive approach is needed.

I understand that since the fire a multi-agency meeting with police and fire service partners is to be planned. Please can you the Cabinet Member provide an update on the scope and timeline of that review, and commit to keeping councillors informed of its progress?

### **Answer provided by Councillor Billings**

The building has been resecured following reports of anti-social behaviour. A multi-agency approach is currently underway to address concerns relating to specific properties and associated ownership. The Council is working jointly with a range of partners, including the Police, to assess the risks associated with specific properties and to agree proportionate and targeted action where required.

The data gathering and assessment phase will conclude by the end of May following which there will be recommendations on where partners will move to targeted, coordinated action.

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**Please note the following question was withdrawn by Councillor Long to enable him to ask Urgent Question (2) within his three question limit.**

### **Councillor Long to Cabinet Member for Housing and Finance**

The Council received a grant from the Brownfield Release Fund from the Government to get the land in Edginswell to the rear of Wickes ready for employment land. Please can the Cabinet Member advise if this grant is at risk if the area becomes a car park for the hospital?