

## **Councillor Call for Action – Planning Enforcement**

In accordance with Standing Order D13 (Overview and Scrutiny), Councillor George Darling has given written notice that he wishes an item to be considered at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board respect of Planning Enforcement as set out below:

I am concerned that the capacity of Planning Enforcement is not sufficient to deal with the demands on the service.

This is in relation to several developments across Torbay where residents are raising concerns, but Planning Enforcement are unable to respond; resources being directed to 'higher priority cases'. Two examples from St Marychurch Ward:

1. Dawn, Brim Hill - Residents have been raising concerns to Planning Enforcement for over a year that the development is being built larger than the technical drawings allow and several other points. Response times to these enquiries have been poor, yet reassurances were given by Enforcement that the measurements confirmed the development was adhering to the technical drawings.

On probing into this further however, it was revealed that Planning Enforcement had not taken measurements of the site; those were provided by the developer themselves. These had not been verified by Enforcement but were used to dismiss residents' concerns.

2. Langley Manor, Teignmouth Road - In this case, residents were concerned that following a refusal of planning permission for holiday lets, static caravans were being placed at this site for a rental or letting purpose. Evidence suggesting this (plumbing to the caravans being laid, waste collections from the caravans, people being viewed daily outside in dressing gowns) was passed onto Planning Enforcement.

Enforcement have agreed to continue investigations into this but were unable to provide a timeframe on when this would be. Asked whether this would be months or potentially years, again not timeframe could be provided. A reduction in Enforcement officers and 'all available resources' being directed to 'higher priority cases' were cited as the reason for this.

These are both reflections of a lack of capacity.

The number of full-time Planning Enforcement Officers has recently dropped from 3 to 2. I am led to believe that this is a permanent change; without this being addressed urgently, I worry that that lack of Enforcement investigation and action will worsen, with public confidence in the service being further damaged.

I know that there are further cases across Torbay in similar situations, the Neighbourhood Forum planning to discuss these at a future meeting.

I would appreciate if Overview and Scrutiny could include this in their programme this year. The longer this is not addressed, the longer the backlog of cases will become, the longer the return to a well-functioning, timely service will take.

This matter is included on the agenda for the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 13 March 2024 for the Board to determine whether to request officers to prepare a full report on the matter for submission to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Councillor George Darling will be requested to explain his rationale for the item at the meeting.