

ITEM 14(iii)

Question to the Chairman of the Planning & Transportation Committee from Alderman Anstee – Court of Common Council, 8 December 2016

“The City is experiencing a very substantial redevelopment programme resulting in a large number of construction sites. Whilst this is a very welcome indication of developer investment and occupier commitment to the City and thereby its ability to meet growing demand for floor space it can lead to construction noise and disturbance which is detrimental to other City occupiers and residents in particular. Would it be possible for the City to require Developers to secure a levy or provide an undertaking that they will fund on-site specialist staff, to liaise with the pollution control team and provide an immediate contact for the local community, able to prevent and stop instances of unacceptable behaviour occurring?”

My Lord Mayor, my thanks to the Alderman for giving me notice of his question. The redevelopment of the City of course attracts complaints about noise, and in the last financial year there were 469 concerning construction or demolition activity. This is despite considerable discussion to allow 1151 variations to agreed hours of work, as well as the examination of some 1726 licensing, planning and construction works applications to try and minimise potential noise disturbance. A 24 hour / 364 days service is provided to investigate complaints and the target response time is one hour, but we are usually able to respond to complaints within 30 minutes.

The City produces a Code of Practice for Construction and Deconstruction which is currently being reviewed for its 8th edition. This sets out clearly the expectations and standards for developers and their contractors to minimise the impact of noisy works on business and residential neighbours. Overall, this works well, and the City Corporation’s Pollution Control Team endeavours to secure a balance between enabling developments to occur and preventing disturbance to other properties in the vicinity.

However, the way sites are operated can vary with changes in management, time and financial pressures, and this can lead to complaints about inappropriate working practices. Whilst sites are monitored closely, we very much support the principle that those creating noise pay, especially where there are resource limitations due to budget cuts, so the Alderman’s proposal is both timely and welcome.

Public infrastructure projects in the City, such as Thames Tideway Tunnel and Bank Station, have previously funded posts in the Pollution Control team to enable their schemes to focus on better outcomes, with fewer delays. The Alderman’s proposal could be helpful to developers, as well businesses and residents which could be disturbed by noise from construction sites. At a time when there are financial pressures, independent, fully accountable staff could provide useful support to the Pollution Control team.

An investigation will be undertaken to determine how this could be best delivered in relation to the scale of project, either through the planning process through the imposition of conditions linked to a code of practice or undertakings set out in a S106 agreement or linked to the Considerate Contractors Scheme.

I am confident that we can find a way forward which is effective for sites, as well as protecting the City's environment and minimising disturbance to residents and businesses for the duration of demolition and construction until practical completion.

My Lord Mayor.