



Court of Common Council

Date: THURSDAY, 10 OCTOBER 2024

Time: 1.00 pm

Venue: GUILDHALL

16. **QUESTIONS**
Question Summary

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Ian Thomas CBE
Town Clerk and Chief Executive

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COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL – 10th October 2024

QUESTIONS SUMMARY

1. Benjamin Murphy to ask a question of the Chairman of the Community and Children’s Services Committee concerning homelessness and rough sleeping:-

“I know all Members of this Honourable Court wholeheartedly support the Government’s ambition to end rough sleeping by 2027, but as those on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub Committee know, it requires a significant multi-agency approach and investment to delivering these ambitions, particularly when it comes to long-term pathways to rebuild someone’s life and support them on the journeys to a healthier and more prosperous future.

I know that often though rough sleepers and those who find themselves being made homeless in this City often present with complex needs and dependencies, making access to support services a real challenge. We know that the demand for social housing far exceeds the supply available, which means that we have to rely on the private rental sector for resettlement. We know that this presents an affordability challenge, as private rents exceed local housing allowances which immediately puts the majority of those we are trying to help into debt and is therefore not a sustainable pathway.

I am proud of the City’s investment at the Snow Hill assessment centre, the commissioning of a range of psychological, dependency and medical services to meet the range of needs, but it feels like we have a long way to go.

With both homeless and rough sleeping becoming more prevalent across the UK and here in the City, I ask the Chair of Children and Community Services whether she believes the City will meet the Government’s target or what action is required for us to do so?”

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2. Munsur Ali to ask a question of the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee concerning Member personal safety:-

“When elected Members carry out their duties, they can fall prey to anyone who wishes to target them. This can be anything from harassment, stalking, intimidation, making false complaints (which has happened collectively to every Member of my Ward) - even the threat of physical assault.

No one prepares you for any of this before you stand for election as, generally, no one expects this to happen. But it can. I have been going through this for almost a year now.

The stress for one’s safety, your family’s safety, is not worth any job. However, in most organisations, employees or persons carrying out their job fall under some form of protection or security.

I can defend myself. But not everyone may be able to. At the same time, this is exactly what the attackers want: retaliation, so they can point the finger at you. Recently I had to hire a security staff for a public event. It’s that serious.

What was even more worrying was the limited support available to Members, apart from signposting to the police, who can only really deal with a matter after it has been committed. I

feel like I have been essentially told to ignore it or somehow made to feel embarrassed to even raise the matter.

Would the Chairman agree that not enough is done to support or protect Members? What measures can we expect, especially given that the City elections are around the corner and there may be opportunists looking to target us?"

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Mark Wheatley's question from September 2024, concerning the resourcing of Destination City and Culture workstreams, has been referred to the non-public session of the next meeting of the Culture Heritage and Libraries Committee (4 November 2024). Any Members of the Court of Common Council may attend or access the minutes thereafter.

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3. Deputy Shравan Joshi to ask a question of the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee concerning the commercial real estate sector:-

"Whilst our Corporation's work has traditionally focused on UK financial & professional services representation, the fact is that we've overlooked perhaps one of our strongest mandate, the Square Mile itself. Already an exemplar within global commercial real estate, the City's convening power of skills, expertise and innovation is primarily driven by the depth of understanding we have of place-making for the economy to thrive. We are seen as a de-risked investment and this is something we should be promoting for the wider UK cities- they are not our competitors, but are very much part of the ecosystem that need to grow, if we are to remain a competitive economy. With multiple synergies to the way we promote FPS across the UK.

The Government's narrative focusing on growth and infrastructure, begs the question why the Corporation is not already taking a lead role in representing the commercial real estate sector more comprehensively. Considering that the vast majority of commercial real estate investment into the Square Mile comes from international funds, it feels like a natural extension to your own and the Lord Mayor's programmes, as the Sovereign Wealth Funds, Pension Funds and Investment houses on your usual visits, are already bought into City commercial real estate investment.

Would you, Chairman, direct Officers to produce a paper for our Policy & Resources committee to consider if this industry sector should indeed be included within the FPS grouping that we currently focus on?"

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4. Jason Groves to ask a question of the Chairman of Planning and Transportation Committee concerning dockless bikes in the City:-

"Over the summer, there have been numerous times when major public footpaths in Tower Ward, most notably on Great Tower Street – the main pedestrian thoroughfare between the Tower of the London and the City, have not just been impeded but at times totally blocked by an impenetrable phalanx of dockless Lime Bikes and Forrest Bikes. This has resulted in the obviously unacceptable situation of large numbers of people having to walk in the street just to get round them. I have raised this issue in this honourable Court previously, but the situation continues to get worse. Can the Chair of Planning and Transportation please give an update on plans both to increase allocated space for dockless bikes but also on his negotiations with other London councils and the bike companies themselves, so we can reassure our fed up constituents that this menace is going to be dealt with effectively."

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5. Philip Woodhouse to ask a question of the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee concerning the Sports Engagement Strategy:-

“Can I please ask the Chairman of Policy & Resources for an outline of the ambitions of our Sports Engagement Strategy and how recent events held at Guildhall, specifically those concerning a boxing event, align with that strategy?”

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6. Eamonn Mullally to ask a question of the Chairman of the Planning and Transportation Committee concerning questions at committee meetings:-

“The Chair has recently sent an email to members of his committee saying that he will limit the time for them to ask questions when considering the few planning applications that come to the committee for decision and will also limit the number of questions a member may ask normally to one in each section of the meeting. The Chair has added that he may end the question sections before the new restricted periods have expired and accept calls to move to a vote during the debate. Does the Chair not appreciate how damaging these restrictions will be to the Corporation’s reputation as a planning authority, which is already challenged by habitually saying “yes” to developers?”

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