

QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS

Question Number	Question asked by Councillor:	Subject
CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSE, REGENERATION AND PLANNING Councillor Alison Butler		
CQ041-18	Andy Stranack	Housing Commission
CQ045-18	Richard Chatterjee	Local lettings plan
CABINET MEMBER FOR CLEAN GREEN CROYDON Councillor Stuart Collins		
CQ035-18	Luke Clancy	Eyesore Garden Project

From Councillor Andy Stranack

Councillor Alison Butler

Question No. CQ041-18

You said in your 2014 manifesto 'In partnership with key stakeholders, we will launch a housing commission to report back within six months on the scale of the homelessness crisis we will inherit and to provide possible solutions'. Did you do that?

Reply

When we were elected by the people of Croydon in 2014, we were faced with a scale of housing crisis so significant that we had to take action across many aspects of housing delivery.

Major issues within housing were the lack of affordable homes, conditions within the private rented sector and increasing homelessness, particularly following eviction from the private rented sector. All of these issues were exacerbated by the government's welfare agenda and failure to invest in affordable housing or to allow councils to build affordable homes. There was a considerable amount of evidence available setting out the scale of the challenge, from the council's own data and from our partners in the voluntary sector, not least CRISIS and Shelter.

This council has delivered on a range of solutions, among them:

- Selective Landlords' Licensing Scheme – driving up standards in the private rented sector
- Brick by Brick – on-site right across the borough building and delivering affordable homes
- Gateway Service – assisting those worst-hit by government austerity measures and preventing homeless for nearly 2,000 families across the borough as well as helping over 5,400 households with financial and housing support

- Croydon Affordable Homes – ensuring a supply of affordable homes for those most in need
- Procurement of decent temporary accommodation – to avoid excessive reliance on Bed & Breakfast
- Healthy Homes project to tackle fuel poverty
- Delivering the decent homes standard and beyond in our council stock
- Installation of sprinklers in our taller blocks to make homes safer
- The Croydon Local Plan, adopted by council last week, despite opposition from your party, to ensure we are on track to meet the housing needs of the borough
 - Article 4 on permitted development – protecting employment land and ensuring new homes have proper planning permission, decent room sizes and provide affordable housing
- Universal Credit – the council has assisted hundreds of residents affected by Universal Credit and successfully lobbied for those in temporary accommodation and in crisis to be taken out of the scheme for housing costs
- Invested £45m in Real Lettings in partnership with St Mungo's, providing good-quality, long-term housing with support
- Full support and assistance to the CRISIS Skyline Centre
- Partners in the CRZero 2020 campaign to end street homelessness
- Returning nearly 400 empty properties into use.

Despite all this good work we appreciate there is a lot done and a lot more to do. Too many of our residents still do not have a secure home to call their own or cannot see a future where they are able to own their own home.

I do note your own Minister Sajid Javid is now suggesting solutions and has said he will introduce new rules designed to stop "Nimby [Not In My Back Yard] councils that don't really want to build the homes their local community needs" and that "It will be quite surprising how easy we want to make it for people who want to build upwards, we have a housing crisis in this country. We need a housing revolution". I presume that you are in full support of these policies?

I also note that Gary Porter, the Conservative Chair of the Local Government Association, has publically said – "Mad idea, never been tested before (unless you count the 50s,60s and 70s) why not let councils build so many houses they don't have to ration them just for the poorest in our society. Then Key Workers can have affordable housing where ever they live, until they can afford to buy!" If Mr Javid would only listen to Mr Porter, we as a Council could go even further with tackling this crisis.

From Councillor Richard Chatterjee

Councillor Alison Butler

Question No. CQ045-18

You said in your 2014 manifesto 'When developing new homes to buy or rent, we will work with local residents to develop local lettings plans so their community needs are taken into account'. Which areas of the borough now have local lettings plans, please?

Reply

The Council has set up its own company Brick by Brick to ensure Croydon residents have access to high quality, affordable housing. It aims to deliver around 1,000 new homes on a range of smaller sites across the borough by 2019.

Brick by Brick have had its first batch of homes granted planning consent and construction of new homes has begun.

The first homes will be available later this year and there will be a local sales and lettings policy on all homes, giving local people priority.

From Councillor Luke Clancy

Councillor Stuart Collins

Question No. CQ035-18

You said in your 2014 manifesto 'Labour is aware of the concerns raised by residents about littered, overgrown and untidy gardens and so will launch an 'Eyesore Garden Project' involving local people in days of action, resulting in enforcement notices wherever necessary'. Did you do this? How many gardens have been improved? How many enforcement notices have been served?

Reply

Front Gardens

We have issued 365 Community Protection Notice (CPN) warnings and the vast majority of these have been in relation to waste in front gardens and other pockets of private land. 349 issues were resolved following the issuing of the warning. Of the remaining 16, 12 were resolved when a formal notice was issued and 4 have been referred for a fixed penalty notice or prosecuted.

Street Champions

The Street Champions scheme has had 206 events since the start of the scheme and 345 Champions have signed up. Their focus is much wider than front gardens and has involved dealing with alleyways, service roads and other pockets of land that are an eyesore to the community. Local residents, resident associations, faith groups, businesses, uniformed youth groups have all worked in partnership with the council, Veolia and other partners to help with events to clear up historic flytipping to improve their community, organise litter picking events, create community gardens and planters and undertake a range of other activities to turn neglected and unsightly areas in to ones the community are proud of.