# COUNCIL 7th SEPTEMBER 2006

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT DISCUSSION

QUESTION 1

QUESTION (COUNCILLOR SELBY):

With reference to my question about LSVT at the previous Extraordinary Council meeting on Thursday 20th July 2006; Do you stand by your comment made during that meeting when you stated that there is 'NO DIFFERENCE' between an Assured tenancy agreement and a Secured tenancy agreement and that it is only a legal term?

RESPONSE (COUNCILLOR MRS CARTWRIGHT):

No Councillor Selby, I was wrong to oversimplify it. The attached table extracted from the offer to tenants demonstrates that existing tenants who would become assured tenants as the result of a transfer would have their existing rights, (with the exception of the right to manage) not only maintained but indeed enhanced. In addition, South Lincolnshire Homes has developed a policy of working with Tenant Management Organisations, which is something we have not done previously.
So perhaps you will forgive me, bearing in mind that SLH has agreed to extend tenants rights to match and improve on those of the Council.

| Rights | with the Council | with SLH |
|---|---|---|
| The right to buy Your home with a Discount | Yes | Yes (called the preserved right to buy) |
| The right of Succession | Yes | Yes and includes an extra right |
| The right to live in Your home without The threat of being evicted Without good cause | Yes | Yes |
| The right to transfer And exchange | Yes | Yes |
| The right to sub-let or Take in lodgers | Yes | Yes |
| The right to repair | Yes | Yes |
| The right to carry out Improvements | Yes | Yes |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The right to be Consulted | Yes | Yes |
| The right to information | Yes | Yes |
| The right to manage | Yes | No |
| The right for your T.A. not To be changed (except for Rent and service charges) Without your consent | No | Yes |
| A legally binding rent increase Guarantee | No | Yes |

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION (COUNCILLOR SELBY)

For me, the important issue with the stock transfer is not so much how the tenants vote but whether the tenants have been given all the facts in an honest and open manner. The way they vote is their prerogative. As a secure tenancy agreement is guaranteed by statute, therefore when it comes to a court of law, an assured tenancy agreement is possibly not worth the paper it is printed on and I would like to highlight this in relation to potential evictions due to, say, rent arrears. Therefore, in the interests of honesty and openness, would Councillor Mrs Cartwright like to highlight these differences in the media for the benefit of the tenants or would you like me to offer a helping hand and do it for you and can you explain what you mean when you say that South Lincolnshire Homes has developed a policy, when this organisation does not exist yet?

RESPONSE (COUNCILLOR MRS CARTWRIGHT):

I assume that your original question had the interests of our tenants at heart and therefore I was speaking from the heart when I said there was no difference, as tenants clearly gain more than they lose, if you look at the table. All the information you want is in this table that I have given you or in the offer document. If you have difficulty understanding that, the officers would be delighted to explain it to you and it is in the offer document, therefore already in the public domain.

<u>QUESTION 2</u>

QUESTION (COUNCILLOR SELBY):

If you are unaware I would like to highlight to you that the waste recycling site at Alexander Road, Grantham will not accept Asbestos waste from residents and therefore I suggest to you that this is a possible contributing factor for some of this potentially dangerous waste being fly-tipped in our district.
Although I accept that the Alexander Road depot is run by the County Council, What if anything are you going to do about this problem?

RESPONSE (COUNCILLOR AUGER):

We will collect asbestos, to offer this service for small amounts of asbestos the cost is disproportionately high, however if there are large amounts then we would refer them to Mid UK who operate an asbestos collection service, yet again the cost is relatively high, the vast amount of asbestos that is being fly tipped is not in small quantities , I suspect that this is trade waste which we do not collect, I have to say that we do not get a great deal of asbestos fly tipped, although unfortunately the one area which seems to be suffering more than most is the Colsterworth area.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION (COUNCILLOR SELBY)

Contrary to what you say in your reply, Alexandra Road will not accept small amounts of asbestos. So if the district or the county council will not safely dispose of this waste, then it is obvious what will happen and fly tipping will occur. It appears that my ward is becoming a dumping ground for this waste. Will you kindly look into this further for us, please?

RESPONSE (COUNCILLOR AUGER):

Alexandra Road will collect small amounts of asbestos in a red bag at a cost of £50 per bag. Providing the asbestos is in that purchased bag, it will be collected, but only in small amounts. Hence, the statement I made here that it is a relatively high cost. Trade waste is a different sort altogether and they will apply to MidUk who run an asbestos collection service.

<u>QUESTION 3</u>

QUESTION (COUNCILLOR MOORE):

It was noted in the minutes of the council of 22 June that that there were a number of vacancies in the Financial services area. Can the portfolio holder please advise on progress in staffing this priority A area.

RESPONSE (COUNCILLOR BRYANT):

There were eight vacancies at various levels across the financial services area. Seven positions were suitably recruited and five accepted the job offer. The intention is to re-advertise in September to fill the remaining vacancies. Please note that it is a phased, staggered start of these replacement staff due to their various periods of notice.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION (COUNCILLOR MOORE)

Councillor Bryant, I am sure you will agree with me that it is important to encourage the maximum possible members participation in the 2007/08 service plans and the zero-based budgets. In order for this to happen, members will need ample time to review those service plans and budgets. Are you therefore able to assure members that there will be sufficient resources within financial services to enable timely preparation of the service plans and the related zero-based budgets?

RESPONSE (COUNCILLOR BRYANT):

The simple answer is: no, I can't do it at the moment because we are still missing three people and there is a phased introduction. But, the information I've had is that we are going to do our damnedest to get there and do it.

QUESTION 4

QUESTION (COUNCILLOR MARTIN-MAYHEW):

Cllr Cartwright has the correction of information been given to all the residents of council property in the Truesdale ward re large Scale Voluntary Transfer. The necessity of this action was we know brought about by the disinformation in the leaflets that were put out by the Liberal democrats in the by election. Can you please advise what the cost of this action was to the council.

RESPONSE (COUNCILLOR MRS CARTWRIGHT):

Yes Councillor. Unfortunately we are obliged by the Housing Corporation, to correct mis- information that is given to our tenants and so every one of our council tenants in the Truesdale ward was sent a letter by the Bridge Group, who are our communication consultants. The cost of this was £76 (£5 printing, £41 postage, and £30 officer time).
Sadly we could not justify the expense of correcting this mis-information to all the other residents in the ward.

QUESTION 5

QUESTION (COUNCILLOR MIKE TAYLOR):

Madam Leader can you give the council a succinct update on the current position reference the Grantham Hospital following the apparently successful meeting that was held in this chamber.

RESPONSE (COUNCILLOR MRS NEAL):

Well, Councillor Taylor, I really wish that I had good news to announce in that Grantham hospital's future was secure with a growing agenda for service delivery and patient care. However this is not the case.
Unfortunately owing to circumstances pertaining to the hospital trust the consultation promised has yet again been delayed leading to prolonged uncertainty. I am in two minds as to whether this is a good or a bad thing. The good thing is that all the services currently provided on the Grantham site are continuing presently (not diminishing) but would we, the council, and the community, prefer the certainty of knowing the reality of Grantham hospital's future?

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION (COUNCILLOR MIKE TAYLOR):

I thank the Leader for the answer and I am dismayed at the answer. My question is: is she of the same opinion as me that all does not bode well for the

health service within Lincolnshire or in the fact of the Treasury announcement that the Chancellor of the Exchequer intends to cut the National Health Service budget?

RESPONSE (COUNCILLOR MRS NEAL):

I wasn't aware of that announcement but if that proves to be the case, then I would be absolutely dismayed because clearly with the existing budgets we all know that health provision within Lincolnshire is in absolute quandary about where it should go because clearly there is not enough money to go around. And if there isn't enough money to go round, we all know what that means: that the service levels cannot continue to exist in the format with which they are currently running, and that means something has to give. I sincerely hope that we will be able to overcome these difficulties and the information that you have provided about cutting the health service budget does not materialise. At the end of the day, people have paid to have a national health service; they pay through their earnings and contribute to the National Health Service and the National Health Service should deliver the service that the community and contributors through tax and national insurance should deliver what those people have paid for. Particularly with the elderly: they will have had an expectation, through their lives they have paid for a National Health Service and now it is failing them because they can't get the treatment they want when they want it and where they want it. And so I am absolutely dismayed to hear what Councillor Taylor has said about the Treasury cutting the health service budget.

<u>QUESTION 6</u>

QUESTION (COUNCILLOR BRYANT):

Mr Chairman I am offended that comments on my health affecting my judgement were made by the leader of a group despite all the equalities training that is offered to councillors. Despite subtle prodding in this chamber there has been no apology. At the last council meeting, and personally just as hurtful to me, comments were made about the way I personally addressed a fellow councillor. The fact that this comment about me 'sneering' was retracted when challenged is no comfort. The comments should not have been made as per the code of conduct which, incidentally was modified at the request of the Labour party following their motion to the full council. Can I ask you Mr Chairman to ensure fair play and honesty ensues and that offensive personal comments are not tolerated in this chamber or even in literature that councillors put out.

RESPONSE (COUNCILLOR G TAYLOR):

This is indeed an interesting question – not least because it seems to ask that I do something in the future, and not answer for past actions.
Nevertheless, it gives me the opportunity to reiterate what I said in this chamber on 27 April 2006 when I had the privilege of being elected as your Chairman, and is recorded in précis form as minutes approved by Council on 25 May 2006.

These say that I expressed the hope that Councillor colleagues would maintain the highest standards of debate, demeanour, deportment and dress, and that business would be conducted in a congenial atmosphere.

These words were no mere hyperbolic semantics, but were meant to be taken with some seriousness. I wish to assure not only Councillor Bryant, but all fellow Councillors, that these are still my aims but this time I leave it to each individual to ask themselves "Am I living up to these high ideals, if not why not, and what should I do about it?"

As regards literature issued outside this chamber, Councillor Bryant will be aware that Chairman of Council have very little control over this aspect, and nor should they. However, I express the hope that all Councillors are aware of the legal framework under which we all operate.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION (COUNCILLOR BRYANT):

I just want to say thank you for your succinct answer and I hope you use the gavel very firmly if you think it appropriate, Mr Chairman.

RESPONSE (COUNCILLOR G TAYLOR):

I certainly hope that members, one of whom has left today, take these things to heart because I think they are very important and if we let standards slip, they will keep slipping and I am determined they won't.