

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
25 SEPTEMBER 2020
APPENDIX I

OPEN QUESTIONS

Questions from Councillor Robson

To the Leader

1. Why have postcodes been omitted from recent editions of the Electoral Registers?

Reply from Councillor Haslam

There was an issue with the Electoral Management System setting for Councillors who requested paper or pdf formatted registers when we republished which meant postcodes were missing (Excel files were not affected).

This issue was spotted immediately and fresh copies of the registers were offered to the Councillor(s) affected at the time.

I should add that all monthly updates to Councillors, since January 2020, have included postcodes.

2. What steps are being taken to replace faulty automated fire alarm systems in Council properties which are causing multiple unwanted fire alarm signals which create unnecessary call outs for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service; and what reminders have been issued to staff to inform SFRS of alarm tests so as also to avoid such occurrences?

Reply from Councillor Haslam

There is a regular programme of testing of fire alarm systems across the Council's property estate. If any alarms are found to be faulty, they are replaced at the earliest opportunity.

The Council liaises with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) on an ongoing basis to ensure any faulty alarms are dealt with, as we have no desire to see fire appliances and crews called out in response to unnecessary false alarms.

In response to COVID 19 enhanced cleaning arrangements there have been several instances within schools since they returned on 11th August directly relating to the 'fogging' canisters being wrongly located under smoke detector heads. This issue has been addressed through training and property services have had no further false alarm callouts. Council Officers have not been contacted by the SFRS relating to an ongoing faulty fire alarm system issue.

Premises duty holders are aware of their responsibilities with respect to the management of fire safety procedures. As such no specific reminders have been issued to staff re fire alarm tests. A reminder will now be issued and I thank the elected member for bringing this to my attention. If Councillor Robson has concerns with regards to a specific establishment I would ask that he notify the Property Services Manager, Neil Hastie, or his team to address any specific issues.

Question from Councillor S. Scott

To Executive Member for Economic Regeneration and Finance

Could the Executive Member please give me a rough indication as to how many houses were built on behalf of the RSLs (Waverly, SBHA, BHA, Eildon) in contrast to the number built by the private sector in the last four years?

Reply from Councillor Rowley

The number of houses built in the last four years by Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) and the private sector are as follows.

In 2019/20 114 RSL properties were built, the number of private properties built is not yet available. In 2018/19 130 RSL properties were built and 215 private sector properties were built. In 2017/18 112 RSL properties were built and 110 private sector properties were built. Finally four years ago in 2016/17 75 RSL properties and 175 private sector properties were built.

The figures are derived from the affordable housing delivery monitoring figures and the 2019 Housing Land Audit. The figure for private housing in 2019/20 will be established in the Housing Land Audit 2020, and hence is not yet available.

It is worth noting that in addition to housing provided by RSL's through their building programme an additional affordable 60 homes have provided via RSL house purchases over the same period.

Finally our annual SHIP Report will be considered by Executive at its meeting in November and this report will contain the full details of our future programme.

Urgent Question from Councillor Haslam

Over the last couple of days Councillors have been contacted by numerous concerned residents regarding the availability of flu vaccines in the Borders and the requirements to travel in order to access the centres administering the vaccine. We have also received reports of individuals being unable to get through on the phone to book an appointment. Our elderly population are very concerned about having to travel and use public transport to access these centres. Could Councillors please have an update on ensuring that NHS Borders is making flu vaccine as accessible as possible and that our most vulnerable communities do not have barriers to them getting the vaccine and how this is going to be communicated to the public?

Reply provided by the Chief Officer Health & Social Care Integration at the request of the Convener

Mr. McCulloch-Graham advised that Nicky Berry, Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Acute Services with NHS Borders was working on this. The target was extensive following a Government increase and totalled 56,800 people in the Borders. Contact had been made with those over 65 and those with underlying health concerns. This had resulted in over 60,000 calls being received. Ralph Roberts, Chief Executive of NHS Borders, had issued an apology and had asked people to stagger their calls. 19 centres were to be opened across the Borders to minimise travel and those who were housebound or shielding would receive a visit from a District Nurse. Communications would be issued in all formats to pick up anyone who had been missed. Due to dealing with unprecedented numbers and as this was a major priority for the Health & Social Care Partnership, staff had been pulled in from other services.

Supplementary

Councillor Haslam asked why under 65s could go to their GP practice while those over 65 had to go elsewhere. This seemed to be the wrong way around. Mr. McCulloch-Graham advised that it was under 65s with underlying health conditions that were being seen at their practice but undertook to take this comment back to the NHS. Councillor Parker advised that he would request that an update on the situation be provide at the next Members' briefing.