

Questions pursuant to Council Procedure 10.1

The following questions have been received, on notice, from members of the public:

Question One

From Steve Kelly to Councillor Neil Stock OBE, Leader of the Council:

“Given that the scientific research suggests that tipping points are making the climate crisis irretrievably apocalyptic; how can the Council best prepare for the extreme food insecurity and mass migration both to and from our District due to Climate Crisis emergencies?”

Question Two

From Chris Southall to Councillor Neil Stock OBE, Leader of the Council:

“Can the Climate Emergency working group justify the huge amount of money committed to an outside agency (assessing the carbon footprint) when that same money would go a long way to providing the much-needed insulation and renewable energy generation investment on council properties?”

Question Three

From Richard Everett to Councillor Neil Stock OBE, Leader of the Council:

“Last year the Council took a number of cases to a planning public enquiry with the expressed intention of eliciting guidance from the Planning Inspectorate to gain consistency over the occupancy of chalets in Point Clear.

Just before Christmas a Planning Inspector issued her decisions in relation to approximately 60 enforcement cases before her. She decided that fifteen (some 25%) of those cases were immune from enforcement because a time-bar of ten years had been exceeded and that the Council were, therefore, legally unable to bring proceedings against those cases. A Freedom of Information Act request by a Point Clear resident has uncovered that approximately £178,000 of council tax payers' money was spent on representation by the council in this enquiry against people who could not afford expensive legal representation themselves. In fact the people of Point Clear were represented legally by two volunteers with no formal legal expertise and at no cost. This accentuates the point that an expensive legal team, led by a top London QC and paid for by the council tax payer, lost 25% of the cases it took to the enquiry. Local people in Point Clear are alleging that they have been harassed by the Council for 10 years, or more.

I trust that the Leader of the Council would agree with me that it is time for the harassment of these people by planning enforcement to stop. So my question is as follows:

Please will the Leader give an assurance to the people of Point Clear that no action will be taken to raise additional enforcement notices, or start criminal proceedings, in relation to the matters decided by the Inspector at the enquiry?

Finally, I feel sure that an internal enquiry might be appropriate to ascertain whether spending £178,000 of council tax payers' money was a good use of council tax funds and whether the intention of gaining consistency of approach has been met. That referral to the Cabinet, or the appropriate Committee, could be occasioned by a Member formally moving the motion, it being seconded, and successfully voted upon by Council under rule 10.9."