

**COUNCIL – 26 FEBRUARY 2020**

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

**(A) Question from Councillor Alexander Farquharson**

"What is the Council doing to ensure that vulnerable residents, who struggle to manage their finances, are not taken advantage of by credit card and loan companies?"

**Answer:**

*We have systems in place to cater for the different types of vulnerabilities our customers are faced with. All Income Services and Customer Services frontline staff are trained to facilitate conversations that help identify customers' needs. We also refer identified vulnerable customers to specialist in-house teams and external agencies such as Money Advice Service and Citizens Advice (CA) for appropriate support. We have two Welfare Benefits and Debt Advisors and due to the increasing number of customers experiencing financial difficulties, we will be recruiting an additional part-time Welfare Benefits and Debt Advisor. The support team works with customers to minimise their overall debt by exploring options such as:*

- Negotiating with creditors on customers' behalf to reduce debt repayments*
- Negotiating with organisations such as utility organisations on customers' behalf, and*
- Sourcing goods in kind (such as white goods) from charities*

*From April 2020, we will be leading on creating a Stevenage support forum that focuses on financial support for customers.*

*The Council continues to commission Citizen Advice Stevenage to provide impartial and specialist debt and support to vulnerable residents across the town and actively supports campaigns led by partners around illegal money lending. The Council also works closely with organisations like "Stevenage Credit Union" that provide a not-for-profit savings and loan service for Stevenage residents.*

**(B) Question from Councillor Jody Hanafin**

“Could the Council provide an update on the situation regarding the provision of a new Post Office in the Old Town's High Street and advise whether any progress has been made toward sourcing a temporary facility in the meantime?”

**Answer:**

*The Post Office (PO) is discussing options for a new post office in the old town with a number of businesses at the moment.*

*The Council is supporting both the PO and the potential business partners throughout this process.*

*We have explored a temporary mobile PO provision; unfortunately this is not an option.*

**(C) Question from Councillor Graham Lawrence**

“Given the Government's decision to ban the sale of petrol & diesel cars by 2035, what is this Council doing to ensure that all new developments in Stevenage are future proofed by having a plentiful number of electric car charging points installed?”

**Answer:**

*The Council is currently consulting upon a Parking and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) which would require all significant new development to have embedded electric vehicle (EV) charge infrastructure.*

**(D) Question from Councillor Margaret Notley**

“As there is already very limited disabled parking provision at the car parks adjacent to Stevenage railway station, will extra spaces be made available after the completion of the fifth platform as the need is likely to increase?”

**Answer:**

*The 5th Platform is designed to improve the north bound services and re-connect the Hertfordshire loop line, as opposed to generating a significant increase in usage. The car park adjacent to the 5th platform is privately owned, but the Council is proposing to introduce six (6) extra disabled parking spaces by the down ramp from the station on old London Road.*