

COUNCIL – 22 JANUARY 2025

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Questions to Portfolio Holders / Committee Chairs

(A) Question from Councillor Julie Ashley-Wren

As we try to encourage residents to walk and cycle more can the Council, in conjunction with ward councillors, undertake a town-wide survey of pavements and footpaths, whether maintained by the County Council or the Borough Council, to reduce trip hazards and pavement obstructions by vehicles, ensuring safe and ease of passage for all including those with prams, disability scooters and walking aids?

Answer (Councillor Simon Speller):

We share your concern that pedestrians and cyclists who are often the most vulnerable users of the highway network should have good quality unobstructed paths to travel on. The vast majority of footways and cycleways within Stevenage form part of the County Council's highway network for which a team of inspectors carry out routine inspections for hazards and assessment of condition. Most low traffic footways in the town are inspected every six months but medium and high traffic footways are inspected quarterly and monthly respectively. Cycleways are inspected in conjunction with carriageways again with frequency determined by traffic levels. The inspection frequencies, defect classes, intervention levels and intervention response times are detailed in the "Defect Management Approach Schedule 15 - Inspection Manual" published by HCC at <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/highways/plans-and-strategies/defect-management-approach-inspection-manual.pdf>. A much smaller number of footways, mainly in the town centre, are managed by Stevenage Borough Council and inspected in a similar way by the Engineering Inspector. As well as the routine inspection process we encourage everyone who notices a trip hazard or other issue on a footway to log it at <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/report-a-problem/report-a-highway-fault/pavements-and-verges/pavements-and-verges.aspx>.

Stevenage Borough Council has rolled out traffic regulation Orders prohibiting pavement parking across most wards of the town. Where vehicles are noted parking obstructively on footways, this can now be addressed by enforcement action against the culprits. Enforcement requests can be made by phoning the Parking Office on 01279 502039. More information is available at <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/parking/report-illegal-parking>

(B) Question from Councillor Andy McGuinness

What assessment has been undertaken to consider the value of ward Councillors locality budgets?

Answer (Councillor Sandra Barr):

At the end of each financial year, we compile a comprehensive breakdown of how members' budgets have been utilised. For more detailed information on this or for specific data on individual wards, please contact

community.development@stevenage.gov.uk

LCB funds are designated to address community needs and enhance local amenities. Here are some examples of how these budgets have been effectively utilised:

- **Community Infrastructure:** Installation of public benches and enhancements to parks.
- **Public Safety Measures:** Installation of CCTV in key public spaces to enhance security.
- **Educational and Youth Programmes:** Provision of essential equipment and resources for schools and libraries.
- **Health and Social Care Initiatives:** Development of community gardens to promote healthy living and community engagement.
- **Environmental and Sustainability Projects:** Implementation of community recycling and waste reduction programmes.
- **Green Space Projects:** Bulb planting to enhance local green spaces
- **Installation of Defibrillators:** Placing defibrillators in public spaces providing essential first aid in the event of cardiac emergencies.
- **Cultural and Recreational Activities:** Organisation of local festivals and cultural events to encourage community spirit and cultural appreciation.

Each application undergoes a thorough review by officers to ensure it aligns with the scheme's terms and conditions and fits our community values before being submitted to members for consideration. For applications that do not meet the initial criteria, officers engage with applicants, offering guidance and support to ensure their proposals have value and meet the intended objectives.

Additionally, prospective applicants are encouraged to initially contact our officers, who will provide a Project Proposal Form for completion. This form requires detailed information about the project, including its title, proposed date, detailed description, location, target audience, potential partners, specific benefits to local people, a detailed breakdown of project costs, other funding sources, and expected outcomes.

We also evaluate the impact of applications through our monitoring process to ensure that the agreed outcomes from the funding have been met. Applicants are required to complete a monitoring form twelve weeks after receiving the funding. Failure to submit this form can affect their eligibility for future funding.

In January 2024, the Local Community Budget process underwent a comprehensive audit conducted by an external auditor. For a copy of the report, please contact the Community Development team.