

Report to Council

19 March 2024

Subject:	Written Questions
Director:	Brendan Arnold – Interim Director of Finance Mike Jones – Assistant Director Legal and Assurance

The following written questions have been received: -

5(a) From Councillor Fisher to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Built Environment

For the past several years I've had residents who live in high rise flats being trapped in their home due to constant breakdowns with the lifts. Elderly and disabled residents have been unable to attend hospital or GP appointments or go out for essential food items.

The latest breakdown was on 24th February and not repaired until 27th February, that's 3 days some residents were unable to get out of their home. It then broke down again 2 days later on the 29th of February.

Can the cabinet member please let me know what she can do sort this ongoing problem so residents that live in Willow, Beech and Aspen on Charlemont Farm are able to attend appointments or shop for essential food items and that swift repairs are carried out.



5(b) From Councillor Tromans to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education

Can I congratulate the Cabinet Members for Children, Young People and Education and Public health on the launch of a mobile family hub – it is excellent news for the residents of Sandwell who require advice on parenting support and health & wellbeing. Can I ask the Cabinet Member what the availability is in each town and is it necessary to make an appointment?

5(c) From Councillor Pall to the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities

As we celebrate International Women's Day, could the Cabinet lead for Community Safety provide an update on efforts to address gender inequality in Sandwell, particularly focusing on initiatives aimed at supporting and empowering women and combating gender-based violence and discrimination?

5(d) From Councillor Chidley to the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism

Forge Mill Farm is a popular attraction for children and adults – there is so much for families to do and many councillors have received so much positive feedback from residents on events such as pancake making and lambing.

Construction work currently happening close to the walking trail - can the Cabinet Member let us know what is happening there and when it will be completed.

5(e) From Councillor Hinchliff to the Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Education

National Careers week is being held between the 4th and 9th of March 2024. Can I ask the Cabinet Member what work is being done not just in this week but all year round to provide our young people with the careers advice they need to give them the best start to their working lives?



5(f) From Councillor Maycock to the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism

Sandwell is a borough of animal lovers, so it was brilliant news to see that a new policy for Animal Welfare at Forge Mill Farm in Sandwell Valley has been adopted and approved by Cabinet. I understand that Forge Mill Farm looks after a variety of rare breeds and it is great news that it has recently won a trophy.

I also understand that the farm is looking to become a Centre of Excellence - can the Leader inform us when this will be completed and also out of interest what rare breeds live at Forge Mill?

5(g) From Councillor Mayo to the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities

I understand that a new prohibition has been put in place relating to BBQ's and fires on public land including campfires. This is great news as I know that members of the public are worried about the damage that grass fires can cause throughout the summer. Can I ask the Cabinet Member what will happen to a person who is caught by the council having a BBQ or lighting a fire while on public land?

5(h) From Councillor Millar to the Leader of the Council

What an accolade for Sandwell to receive praise from Minister Simon Hoare, Conservative MP during a debate in Parliament. Can I ask the Leader to clarify to this council what positive remarks were made about Sandwell Council's improvement journey?

5(i) From Councillor Owen to the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism

'Boost your Club' was an incredible opportunity for clubs to apply for funding from Sandwell Council. The fund was set up to help the club kick start their project in getting people active which is an excellent opportunity for residents to get fit. Is the Cabinet Member able to tell us how many applications were received from local clubs and when will Town leads receive what applications were successful in each town?



5(j) From Councillor Kaur to the Cabinet member for Public Health and Communities

Frozen and slush-ice drinks are popular amongst our children. In August 2023, the Food Standard Agency (FSA) issued new voluntary industry guidance on glycerol in slush-ice drinks, advising that they should not be sold to children under four years of age and parents have been warned not to let toddlers near the frozen drinks.

February 2024 two infants almost died after consuming them. Both children, aged three and four, were hospitalised. Doctors who treated the children blamed glycerol in the frozen drinks.

Consumption of glycerol is dangerous in high concentrations or quantities, Dr Duane Mellor, a registered dietitian and senior lecturer at the Aston Medical School in Birmingham, has commented -

“This is why children, who are smaller than adults, are more at risk of drinking dangerous amounts. If too much glycerol is consumed too quickly and in too large a volume, it can potentially change the blood concentration”.

How have we informed Sandwell residents of the risks to children of consuming iced slushy drinks?

5(k) From Councillor Randhawa to the Cabinet member for Regeneration and WMCA

I have read that Swan Lane in West Bromwich is to receive a makeover and extensive regeneration – it is excellent news for West Bromwich and it is news that the businesses in area will welcome. Can I ask the Cabinet Member to explain what the current situation/plans are for developing the land?



5(l) From Councillor Smith to the Cabinet member for Finance and Resources

The household support fund helps in subsidising some key services that the council provides. Can I ask the Cabinet Member if the government has made any announcement yet on the household support fund that will be needed for services to support the vulnerable including children?

5(m) From Councillor Trumpeter to the Cabinet member for Environment and Highways

We are receiving regular and multiple complaints about parking issues on Hollyhedge Road, Stanhurst Way, Harrington Croft and the streets off Beaconview Road. Parking problems are generally caused by large vans parking on pavements, or on grass verges. Sometimes it is down to just down to inconsiderate parking. What can Highways do to assist our residents with these matters?

