

Public Questions

	Questioner/ Respondent	Question
1	Alex Abbey	<p>I am watching my local area near this town hall rapidly turn towards a slum with more HMOs decreasing the standard of living, increase noise disturbances, litter and straining council services while an inadequate local plan that doesn't include small HMOs progresses ever slowly. Does anyone in the council actually have any idea how many HMOs are in the borough?</p> <p>Supplementary</p> <p>How much damage to local communities has to be done before the council will take action such as bringing in article 4 restrictions?</p>
	Councillor O'Brien	<p>The council maintains a register of mandatory licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) which is a statutory requirement.</p> <p>However there is currently no legal requirement for HMOs to be licensed where they house less than 5 occupants, and therefore currently the Council only becomes aware of smaller HMOs through intelligence, local knowledge and/or complaints made to the department from the public which are triaged and investigated on their own merit. We recognise the need for additional staff to proactively search the borough for smaller HMO's.</p> <p>However, later on in this council sitting, my party will be introducing a motion to commit this council to creating a borough wide HMO policy, including an article 4 direction on the conversion of homes, new planning rules surrounding the expected standards and facilities in HMO's, tightening HMO densities and bringing in clear roles for local residents and councillors to shape local HMO plans.</p> <p>There are also new burdens being discussed by the Labour Government which may include a requirement for all private landlords to be registered on a specific national database, however the details of how and when this may be applied, or how it will be resourced by regulators, have not yet been confirmed. However, we are taking action on this issue today.</p>

The Council is committed to investigating any concerns relating to noise and litter and the public can be directly referred to the relevant council team to investigate at via the council's website (A direct link will be shared with the response to your question [Report - Bury Council](#))

The Public Protections Private Rented Sector Housing Enforcement team has been liaising with several partners to establish the locations of any HMOs attracting complaints which the service may be unaware of.

In addition, the council is currently undertaking a 'pathfinder project', funded by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, which is proactively identifying, inspecting and regulating (where appropriate) smaller, non-licensable HMOs within the Borough.

Supplementary

Across the country, HMOs have become a significant part of the rental sector in recent years, and play an important role in the housing market, particularly for younger people, those on low incomes or people looking for short-term housing. Many HMOs are well managed and maintained and operate without issue. Licensing has largely been successful in helping to drive up standards in order that HMO's are safer places to live. Small HMOs housing 3 or 4 people do not require a license or planning permission, however the landlords of these properties are legally required to ensure certain standards are met.

However, we are aware that poorly managed HMOs and over concentrations of such properties have the potential to lead to issues for both occupants and neighbours.

That is why we have a Council motion on the agenda to bring forward an HMO policy, including consideration of bringing small HMOs into planning and licensing control, as well as updating planning policies for HMOs.

The Council has the power in exceptional circumstances to propose an Article 4 Direction to require developers of smaller HMOs housing 3-6 people to apply for planning

		<p>permission, where there is evidence to justify such a restriction. An Article 4 Direction would not amount to a ban on the creation of new HMOs, but it would bring them into Local Planning Authority control. Applications for HMOs could only be refused where they are contrary to planning policy or other material planning considerations that would justify their refusal</p>
2	<p>Carol Bernstein</p> <p>(not in attendance)</p>	<p>In light of the recent Road Traffic collision involving a young person could consideration be given for a pedestrian crossing at the junction of Watling Street and Ainsworth Road?</p>
	<p>Councillor Quinn</p>	<p>Funding for all new road safety schemes in the borough is currently provided by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) via the Integrated Transport Block (ITB) funding pot.</p> <p>This money comes with the proviso that it is spent at existing injury collision hotspot locations in the borough, where there is evidence of a number of injury collisions taking place.</p> <p>ITB funding provided to Bury Council is around £500k per annum, which limits the number of schemes we can deliver. For context a new signal crossing costs in the region of £150k.</p> <p>Our 25/26 ITB programme has been approved by Cabinet and officers are in the process of delivering the schemes.</p> <p>Officers have carried out provisional investigations and found that Ainsworth Road meets the criteria for a crossing.</p> <p>So I am very pleased to announce that subject to approval a crossing will be installed on Ainsworth Road as part of our 26/27 ITB programme.</p>
3	<p>Andrew Luxton</p> <p>(submitted after the deadline)</p>	<p>Many of the grids around my area in Tottington and Walshaw are completely blocked, and a good number have plants growing out of them.</p> <p>I've reported a number of these drains, but the problem will become worse in the winter, with more rain washing more silt and dirt down them, causing more blockages.</p>

		<p>Will the council commit to a preventative clearing of the grids in Walshaw and Tottington which are currently visibly blocked and those which are the most at risk to prevent local flooding of houses and the hazard to drivers, cyclists and pedestrians?</p>
	<p>Councillor Quinn</p>	<p>The Council is committed to improving gully cleansing and has recently invested an extra £100k on-going revenue funding to help keep on top of this vital work. This extra funding is allowing us to operate 2 gully wagons all year round.</p> <p>With over 42,000 gullies on our network, keeping them clear is a mammoth task. Because of this we must work as efficiently as possible, so we try to stick to our cyclic gully cleansing regime and do not attend to reports of individual blocked gullies unless there is a risk of flooding nearby properties or flooding the road in a way that creates a significant safety hazard.</p> <p>Our cyclic regime ensures that we endeavour to check and clear where necessary each of our 42,000 gullies annually.</p>