

ITEM 12

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

COUNCIL 24TH JULY 2019

QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OR THE CHAIR OF A COMMITTEE SUBMITTED UNDER PART 4 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES, PARAGRAPH 10.4 OF THE CONSTITUTION

1. Question from Councillor Walker

With fraud on the rise, particularly cold calling to vulnerable people, with fraudsters pretending to be official organisations like HMRC or utilities companies, how can we, as a council, get the information to people to protect themselves.

Thank you Helen for raising this important issue. It was reported this week in the national press that an estimated 4 billion pounds of pensions are being lost annually to fraudsters. Devon and Cornwall police have officers dedicated to trying to stop this happening and one way we can help is to encourage all members to join the Devon and Cornwall police alert, messaging service. The latest techniques used by the fraudsters are reported on this system. The email address is - alert@neighbourhoodalert.co.uk. If members shared this with the parish councillors in their ward it would certainly help if they too signed up to the alert system. We could have a presentation when we hold the Parish Forum to help make people aware. This is certainly a subject which as councillors we can raise when speaking to vulnerable groups.

We also put information about this on our council website and in our social media links and we have police community safety officers based here at BEC. If anyone receives an email which sounds too good to be true like the promise of a refund of money it is likely to be a fraud and people need to be very wary.

Any further ideas of how to communicate the dangers associated with fraud would be helpful.

2. Question from Councillor Barker

Could the Leader report on what action can be taken to improve response times to issues and questions brought forward by members of the Public?

As part of our corporate plan we are planning on looking at customer service and hoping to make improvements to the current service which we now offer. Obviously it is early days yet but in the meantime if Councillor Barker has specific details of where the response times have been disappointing I would appreciate knowing about it so that I can follow it up.

3. Question from Councillor Barker

The Conservative Group are happy to support the appointment of Lead Members to priority objectives of the Council....but are disappointed that Political Balance has not been applied....Could the Leader also report on the increase of cost to Council processes due to implementation of Lead Members?

I am pleased that the Conservative Group supports the appointment of Lead Members for priority objectives of the Council. You will, of course, have noted that the Chief Executive's report states that 'The areas chosen so far for Lead Members are areas where representation is required to support the Councils own emerging corporate priorities.' Obviously this leaves the opportunity for further appointments to be made. So far the Conservative Group has not approached me and asked for a member to be considered as a Lead Member. Maybe because the previous administration did not allow members of the opposition to have a special role but I hope that we can be more inclusive. Obviously we cannot have too many lead members because of the cost of each at an allowance of £2,377.00 each time. The budget which we set includes sufficient funds to cover the additional costs of six appointments and even then makes quite a saving on the previous governance.