

COUNCIL MEETING – 2ND JULY 2026

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 (2) - PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No.	Question from	Question	Response From	Response
1	Anonymous Fernhill Ward	Council Tax Waiver – Unoccupied Homes “Will the council consider extending the waiver for council tax on an unoccupied house from 2 months to one year, to give owners a reasonable time to sell, considering it is impossible to conclude the sale of a house in only 2 months. The government allows a waiver for up to one year if the property is on the market. Imposing the full council tax is an unreasonable financial burden on the seller.”	Gaynor Austin	It was advised that historically, properties that were unoccupied and unfurnished were eligible for a 100% Council Tax exemption for up to six months. This exemption was abolished on 31 March 2013, after which, local authorities were given discretion to determine whether to apply a discount and, if so, the amount and the duration. From 1 April 2013, Rushmoor Borough Council introduced a 100% discount for a period of three months. This was subsequently reduced to two months from 1 April 2018. The primary policy objective was to discourage properties from remaining empty for extended periods. Limiting the discount encouraged owners to re-let, occupy, or sell their properties more quickly, thereby helping to reduce the number of long-term empty homes, which could adversely affect local housing supply. At the same time, the two-month discount provided a reasonable period for landlords to manage short voids between tenancies without creating a significant financial burden, while still incentivising timely reoccupation. Council Tax was a vital source of funding for local services. Extending the discount period would reduce income and could necessitate increased charges elsewhere or reductions in service provision.

				Whilst it was recognised that property sales could take longer than two months to complete, maintaining a shorter discount period helped to encourage timely progression of sales. It was also worth noting that Rushmoor Borough Council remained one of a relatively small number of authorities that continued to offer any discount for unoccupied and unfurnished properties, with many councils opting not to provide any discount in such circumstances. In comparison with neighbouring Hampshire authorities, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council also awarded a 100% discount for two months, while Hart District Council did not offer any discount for unoccupied and unfurnished properties.
2	Zack Culshaw Rowhill Ward	Future of Rushmoor “Why do the local Labour branch & councillors support the destruction of Rushmoor as a seat of local governance and our identity?”	Gareth Williams	It was advised that the Council had submitted a proposal to the Government for the reorganisation of Local Government in the wider Hampshire & Solent region, which the Government had accepted. Those proposals were a well-argued solution to the current issues that beset local government, of multiple levels of administration, distant decision making on the most important issues that face our residents and duplication of resources that waste taxpayers money. These arguments were set out in full in the proposal available on the Council's website. This administration does not subscribe to the idea that nothing must ever change, or that we can return to some mythic golden era of history. Rather we focus on practical solutions that recognise the complex and dynamic world we live in, and its ever-changing nature. The Leader was confident that the proposals for Local Government Reorganisation were in the best interests of Rushmoor residents and that they would enable our towns to thrive and to maintain their unique characters.

3	Anonymous Empress Ward	Changing Room Policy and Practice “Following the Supreme Court’s ruling in For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers that “man”, “woman” and “sex” in the Equality Act 2010 refer to biological sex, what legal advice or statutory duties did the Council consider when deciding to await EHRC guidance before changing policy or practice, and what interim steps were taken to ensure services and facilities, including Aldershot Pools and Lido, remained compliant with equality law?”	Gareth Williams	It was advised that the Council did not release or discuss legal advice received, which was subject to privilege. In making decisions on operational policy, the Council takes due regard of its statutory duties, including those under the Equality Act 2010. The council were entirely confident that they had been fully compliant with the relevant laws. The leader clarified that the Council did not permit, or allow its contractors to permit, any biological male to access facilities designated as single-sex female. People were expected to use single sex facilities on the basis of biological sex. Current practice was that, should a concern be raised about someone not using the correct facility, staff were expected to ask the individual to confirm they were indeed using the correct facility. If the answer was ‘yes’, staff were not required to challenge further. The Leader assured the questioner that, since the judgement had been published, no members of the public using any of the Council’s facilities or services had raised any concerns relating to other users of the facilities regarding any issue relating to this judgement. Now that the draft EHRC guidance had been published, the Council intended to create an operational policy to confirm how the guidance would be implemented.
4	Peter Crerar Manor Park ward	Untidiness of the Borough “Since the current administration took control, our borough has become increasingly untidy with badly maintained public landscapes, more litter	Christine Guinness	It was advised that, in the past two years, reports of offensive graffiti had fallen, while non-offensive graffiti had remained broadly stable. Following significant grounds maintenance budget reductions as part of the Council’s outcomes-based budgeting exercise over three years ago, the Council had continued to manage those reductions through less frequent grass cutting, in some areas, and increased perennial planting, both of which had additional environmental benefits. At the same time, litter reports had fallen, community

		(particularly rotting food) and increased graffiti tagging on public and private property. What is the council going to do to address this decline?"		volunteering had grown, and street cleanliness continued to exceed the Council's contract targets.
5	Member of Rushmoor People First	Community Recovery Fund "The £600K Community Recovery Fund - It is documented as to what has been spent so far and on what, but what evidence is there that this has actually had any impact on rebuilding social trust and promoting cohesion between communities? Has any of this actually made a difference as it does not appear to have done so. The community seems more divided than before."	Gareth Williams	The response to this question is not currently available for publication, as the response given by the Leader of the Council is subject to an investigation by the Council's Monitoring Officer. Contact: monitoringofficer@rushmoor.gov.uk