

Supplementary Questions and Written Responses

Full Council – 21st July 2025

7. Supplementary Question to Councillor Anne Dorrian from Councillor Jonathan Noble

Thank you, Mr Mayor. Yes, in your response, Councillor Dorrian, you referred to some performance challenges of late with regard to customer services and revenue and benefits. Now customer contact and customer services were something I raised at the last Council. And then I did face an inordinate delay trying to get through.

I just did two test calls this morning to see if things were any better and I can report actually that in both cases the call was answered in in 2 to 3 minutes, so that was very pleasing. Now you refer to revenues and benefits. Obviously a very, very important sector. Can you tell us what are the specific problems that have affected revenues and benefits because you talked about challenges and potential problems. So, could you amplify and explain what those are please? Thank you.

Written Response from Councillor Anne Dorrian

The Revenues and Benefits service faces ongoing unprecedented level of demand, with a key driver being the current economic climate and the effect and impact on individuals, households and businesses. This is national issue, not just confined to Boston. The way in which Customers contact the Council, means it has a secondary impact across PSPS Customer Contact, hence some recent peaks of longer than normal call wait times. The demand is not just confined to phone lines, PSPS are managing increased post, emails, face to face visits and web-chat contacts. It is also important to recognise that alongside the volume of demand, many customers have multiple and more complex needs which take longer to support and resolve. In quarter 4 the volume of contacts to the Council Tax and Benefits telephony service increased by more than 22% compared to the period in the 2024. Increased demands are similarly evident in the volume of incoming work coming into the service, and whilst the service was able to deliver performance within national DWP targets, the internal 'stretch' SLA targets for speed of processing of Housing Benefit claims and changes were slightly outside.

The service seeks to mitigate the effects of increased demand through additional resources, overtime and the exploration and implementation of new technologies. We have recruited an additional 8 resources on a short term basis to support us manage the additional work, at a cost of £100k. The Company has not passed this cost back to the Councils, as it explores other options for managing demand longer term.

8. Supplementary Question to Councillor Emma Cresswell from Councillor Jonathan Noble

Thank you, Mr Mayor. Yes, because in your answer, Councillor Cresswell, you referred to the BTAC budget. Now I'm just going to this – in the minutes from the BTAC meeting on Thursday 27th of March and it says there's an existing allocation of £17,000 for a music event in the 2025 events programme which was proposed to be re-allocated to the Pride event. So, there we are. The music festival, which I think would have appealed to a wider

demographic, was £17,000 and the Pride festival is double that but my point is this. The Council seems to have put its foot into the political arena.

Because I have to ask the question, why are we promoting the agenda of a particular loud minority pressure group who have full legal protection? Surely we shouldn't be pandering and promoting the concept of identity politics. We're all Boston citizens and the emphasis should be on community cohesion.

So my question again to you is why are we promoting the concept of identity politics? Why is that the business of this Council?

Written Response from Councillor Emma Cresswell (provided in consultation with Councillor Broughton)

The council is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion for all residents, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Supporting and hosting Boston Pride Festival is a powerful way to demonstrate this commitment—creating a welcoming environment for people from all communities and fostering a sense of belonging for LGBTQ+ individuals. This helps to reduce isolation and combat discrimination.

Pride is more than a celebration, it is a unifying event that brings people together across different backgrounds, encouraging understanding, respect, and solidarity. By hosting a Pride event, the council sends a clear and positive message that discrimination has no place in our community.