

## **COUNTY COUNCIL**

**24 January 2024**

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

#### **Question from W Nixon**

Can the relevant portfolio holder or leader of the council, please explain how it is possible Stanley Civic Centre, which is the responsibility of Stanley Town Council, but owned by Durham County Council, has been allowed to deteriorate to such an extent by the Labour-run Town Council, which is required under its full repairing lease to ensure the property is kept in good condition.

#### **Response:**

I was asked in October 2021 by the then Stanley Town Clerk to visit the Civic centre to discuss any help I, as assets is in my portfolio, could give the Town Council to put the problems right that the building had.

When I was there I discovered a hole in the roof, leaking water onto the stage area and that all three of the boilers heating the building were broken.

I clarified that, in accordance with the lease agreement, it is the responsibility of the Town Council to uphold the maintenance of the building.

The Town Council engaged a consultant at the cost in excess of £30k to advise them on how to take forward the building and its responsibilities to providing cultural and statutory duties for its residents.

Despite the significant financial burden imposed on the residents of Stanley, the Town Council chose to disregard the valuable advice provided to them.

Stanley Town Council had a precept in 23/24 of £818k and since they have taken over the building they have received £7.8m in public money.

Officers from Durham County Council' Assets department have conducted a comprehensive survey of the building following the departure of Stanley Town

Council in February 2023 which has demonstrated that there are hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of repairs required to bring it to a suitable standard, all of which come under the responsibility of the Town Council.

I am at a loss to understand that a Town Council the size of Stanley has not been able to deal with its obligations to maintain the building to an adequate standard. I do wonder if the fact that this Labour-run town council have had 10 town clerks and 5 deputy town clerks in the 10 plus years since being created may have something to do with these complete failures.

Stanley Town Council has recently enlisted the services of solicitors to handle their responsibilities. Ongoing discussions between the County Council and the Town Council are taking place regarding the condition of Stanley Civic Hall, the Town Council's repairing obligations as outlined in the lease, and the subsequent steps to be taken.

I sincerely feel sorry for Mr Nixon and all the residents of Stanley being so let down by the clearly inept and incompetent Labour administration running Stanley Town Council.