

## COUNTY COUNCIL

25 FEBRUARY 2015

### QUESTION FROM MR LIIV

As you know we asked full council for who was responsible for the seven garages at the Sophia site in July 2014. Since then the council had agreed to sell the remaining seven garages in bulk to the group of tenants.

#### Question One

The land in which the garages were built on at Sophia, Seaham previously came under the ownership of the homeowners. The former Easington Council then compulsory purchased their garden plots. Out of the seven garage tenants, three have held their garages since they were built in 1976. I have rented a garage for ten years having waited five years to get one.

The last tenant to rent a garage following me took up his tenancy following the death of the tenant who had rented a garage since 1976.

Who was assigned the task of overseeing the sale from July 2014 to Dec 2014?

#### Question Two

Why do we have to wait until April 2015 to re-negotiate the purchase of the garages with your former rental arm, when our combined rental period will be zero?

They have stated they will need to have meetings to see if the sale is possible and also will have to do valuation on the site if they wish to proceed with any offer. Yet again further delays due to your handling of this situation.

#### Question Three

If the sale of the garages were agreed in July August or September 2014 why are you still insistent that we are transferred at all to your former rental arm?

### Response

Firstly, can I thank Mr Liiv for his questions.

#### Question one

You may not know that the land the garages were built on was previously owned by the home owners and the former Easington council compulsory purchased their garden plots. Out of the seven garage tenants three have held the garages since they were built in 1976. I have personally rented the garage for ten years and had to wait five years to get one. The last tenant to rent after myself took over after the death of the tenant who had rented since the garages were built in 1976. Who was assigned the task of overseeing the sale July 2014 Dec 2014?

Between July 2014 and the current time, housing staff and planning and assets staff working alongside East Durham Homes have responded jointly to queries Mr Liiv has raised about the Sofia Street garages. These queries relate primarily to the maintenance and retention of the garages and Mr Liiv was consistently advised that the garages were not earmarked for demolition.

The Council confirmed by letter in October 2014, and as part of questions posed to Cabinet in November 2013, that the council would not be willing to dispose of individual garages at Sophia Street, nor any other location in the county.

In late December 2014 that Mr Liiv approached the Council to state that a group of tenants were interested in acquiring the garage block at Sophia Street. Mr Liiv was advised by letter in January 2015 that as a result of the impending transfer of the garages to East Durham Homes (as part of the large scale voluntary transfer of the housing stock via the County Durham Housing Group), there is insufficient time to progress this disposal prior to stock transfer taking place.

#### **Question two**

**Why do we have to wait until April 2015 to re-negotiate the purchase of the garages with your former rental arm, when our combined rental period will be zero? They have stated they will need to have meetings to see if the sale is possible and also will have to do valuation on the site if they wish to proceed with any offer. Yet again further delays due to your handling of this situation.**

Due to the impending transfer of the garages at Sophia Street to East Durham Homes (via the County Durham Housing Group) there is insufficient time to progress a disposal with the Council. As with Right to Buy applications, these have been paused from January 31<sup>st</sup> until transfer takes place which is standard practice in a large scale voluntary transfer process.

The Council did confirm by letter on 15 January 2015 that Mr.Liiv may wish to approach East Durham Homes post-transfer to resume disposal discussions at that time. The Council has made East Durham Homes aware of Mr.Liiv's interest in commencing negotiations post transfer of the housing stock.

#### **Question three**

**If the sale of the garages were agreed in July August or September 2014 why are you still insistent that we are transferred at all to your former rental arm?"**

As stated earlier, this was not agreed.