

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council

Response to House of Commons Debate on 6th September 2016

Oadby and Wigston's local member of Parliament, Sir Edward Garner MP, organised a debate in the House of Commons on Tuesday night 6th September in order to raise issues about the Council with the Minister for Local Government.

Sir Edward did not inform the Council that he was going to do this until two hours before it took place, therefore the Council was not able to respond or defend itself by providing Sir Edward with any information prior to this debate.

After he had heard Sir Edward's speech John Boyce, the Leader of the Council said:

"Unfortunately Sir Edward did not let the Council know that he was going to hold this debate. What I do know is that Sir Edward had a constructive meeting with senior council officials in February of this year and my understanding is that he went away from that meeting with an open invitation to raise any issues he had about the Council direct with any of us at anytime.

We also offered to provide him with any information that he wanted, which was declined as Sir Edward has not been in contact with anybody from the Council since that meeting in February.

The Council is therefore concerned that Sir Edward does not have the full facts and from the first reading of his speech any solid evidence to support his claims that the Council is dysfunctional.

Sir Edward is correct that the Council has had to deal with a difficult and complex internal staffing issue and it has put in place an independent and fair process. In order to do that correctly, regrettably there is a cost attached.

One of our main priorities has been to ensure that these internal issues have not had any adverse effect on the delivery of valued front line services to residents. For example the Council still provides free parking for shoppers, weekly refuse and recycling and the recent opening of two new leisure centre facilities.

The Minister for Local Government said in his response to Sir Edward concerns: 'Oadby and Wigston Borough Council is in many respects a well performing organisation that punches above its weight and there is evidence to support this'.

The Minister did not recommend Sir Edward's call for central Government intervention in any way regarding the running of the Council and he said he was pleased to see that the Council was already working closely with the Local Government Association (LGA).

The LGA have in turn confirmed to the Minister that the Council has a thorough understanding of what happened and what it needs to do to put it right. The Minister

also confirmed that the Council's external auditors KPMG have also been kept informed and it does not feel there are any matters that warrant further scrutiny.

Finally, Sir Edward makes that comment that the atmosphere with Council offices is "poisonous". I can confirm that is not the case and my understanding is that Sir Edward has only visited our offices once in the last five years."

ENDS