

Questions submitted on Notice for the Ordinary Meeting of the Council – Thursday, 17 July 2025

Question No.	Question received from	Respondent	Question
1.	Mr. Michael WALKER	Councillor HARKER	<p>‘At last month’s Extraordinary Council meeting, concerns were raised about the possibility that this Labour-run council could consider building housing on Darlington green spaces — including much-loved areas such as Tommy Crook’s Park — to accommodate immigrants, including those who have entered the UK illegally.</p> <p>I would therefore like to ask a question about immigration — specifically illegal immigration and its impact on the people of Darlington.</p> <p>By “illegal immigration,” I refer to individuals who enter the UK by crossing the Channel in small, unsafe boats, without using legal ports of entry, in breach of UK immigration law, and often by paying criminal gangs involved in human trafficking, drug smuggling, and exploitation.</p> <p>In an email exchange with me dated 10 June 2025, Cllr Harker stated that for immigrants who have not arrived through official resettlement schemes (such as those for Afghans or Ukrainians), the Council “<i>does not have details of their entry to the UK</i>” — despite acknowledging that such individuals are being supported locally.</p> <p>This raises a serious concern: there are individuals in Darlington receiving support from the Council, yet the local authority has no information as to whether they entered the country legally or not.</p> <p>The Council does not collect or record information on how many asylum seekers or refugees currently supported in Darlington arrived in the UK via illegal routes, such as small boat crossings. This is deeply concerning, especially given that their entry is documented by the Home Office.</p> <p>Will Cllr Harker commit to ensuring that this information is requested from the Home Office, properly recorded by the Council, and that the number of individuals in Darlington who entered the UK illegally and are receiving local support is made publicly available to residents?</p> <p>Surely this information is vital for assessing pressures on local services, making informed decisions on housing and welfare, and supporting an honest and informed public debate — based on facts, not speculation.’</p>

2.	Ms. Suzanne Wood	Councillor McEwan	<p>“The extensive recent and intended future housing developments in and around Darlington will inevitably strain the local infrastructure, including the water and sewage capabilities.</p> <p>Will the existing sewerage and water facilities be able to cope with the increased demand?”</p>
3.	Mrs. Leigh Taylor	Councillor Harker	<p>Q1 The Sullivan Review of Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender two reports have recently been published. The review’s aims were:</p> <p>‘Identifying obstacles to accurate data collection and research on sex and on gender identity in public bodies and in the research system</p> <p>Setting out good practice guidance for how to collect data on sex and gender identity’</p> <p>It stated, ‘All public bodies, as defined by the Cabinet Office, are in scope of the review.’</p> <p>Report 1 catalogues how the word ‘gender’ started to replace sex in some data collection in the 1990s and, from around 2015, the word ‘gender’ started to be understood in terms of ‘gender identity’ and not binary sex. This meant that robust and accurate data on biological sex was lost from some government and public body survey data. There was an ‘eliding [of] data on sex with data on self-declared gender identity.’</p> <p>The report stated that: ‘It is important to remember that the purpose of survey data collection is to gather data about populations rather than to provide an opportunity for each individual to express the full complexity and richness of their identity.’</p> <p>It made 10 recommendations for public bodies such as government departments and local authorities. Its core point is simple common sense: biological sex is binary and immutable, and recording it accurately requires a clearly defined, consistent data field. The review explained: ‘Sex is a key demographic variable and collecting high quality, robust data on sex is critical to effective policymaking across a wide range of fields, from health and justice to education and the economy.’</p> <p>The government welcomed the review’s recommendations. For local government data collection etc, key</p>

			<p>recommendations numbers 3 and 4 stand out:</p> <p>‘3. The default target of any sex question should be sex (in other words, biological sex, natal sex, sex at birth)...Using natal sex future-proofs data collection against any such change, ensuring consistency.</p> <p>4. The form of the question should follow the UK Censuses (England and Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland) question and response categories.’: What is your sex? Response categories: Female, Male</p> <p>In contrast, I took part in the council’s Taxi Policy Review consultation. Question 6 asked,</p> <p>What is your, or the person on whose behalf you are responding, sex?</p> <p>The choices were</p> <p>Male</p> <p>Female</p> <p>Prefer not to say</p> <p>Other (please specify)</p> <p>Darlington Borough Council consultations don’t invite respondents to ‘choose’ their age, which is obviously also a biological data field. The addition of ‘other’ sex renders the data collected useless for the purpose of disaggregation.</p> <p>Cllr Harker, what do people specify for ‘other’ when they complete council consultations and as it doesn’t appear that recommendations 3 and 4 have been put into place in Darlington yet, which of the Sullivan Review’s 10 recommendations is Darlington Borough Council going to implement and when?</p>
4	Mr. Jordan Davidson	Councillor McEwan	<p>"Councillor McEwan, as a small independent business owner interested in participating in local outdoor events, could you please advise on the process for applying to have a trading pitch at events organised or supported by Darlington Borough Council?</p>

			Specifically, I'd like to understand what licences or permissions are required, how far in advance applications should be submitted, where to retrieve these applications and whether there are any support schemes or resources available to help small businesses navigate this process."
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