

Questions submitted on Notice for the Ordinary Meeting of the Council – Thursday, 2 October 2025

Question No.	Question received from	Respondent	Question
1.	Derek Johnson	Councillor Harker	"How many illegal migrants are currently housed in the Darlington Borough, who is responsible for their accommodation and associated costs and do they have priority over long term Darlington residents to house?"
2.	Michael Walker	Councillor McEwan	Darlington Borough Council declared a climate change emergency in July 2019 and reaffirmed it in July 2023, setting a new, more ambitious target to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040. At the council meeting in July 2023, I asked you if you could give me an estimated cost to implement the actions needed to make Darlington Borough Council carbon neutral by 2040. You were unable to give me a figure, but you did give an emotional and touching answer about how the council's goal to go carbon neutral by 2040 will somehow protect your grandchildren. Having been touched by your emotional response, I then asked what measurable benefit it would bring to the global climate, unsurprisingly you did not give me a benefit. Two years on from that meeting, I would like to ask if you have finally found out how much this flagship policy for Darlington Borough Council will cost and how much has been spent, or are you still not bothered about the cost to Darlington residents of this pointless, costly, unnecessary, Labour policy, which is bound to fail in its aim to protect the global climate?
3.	Alex Paton	Councillor Harker	"In 2025, council debt in Darlington stood at £1,562.37 per person — an increase of £179.64. What is your administration doing to bring this debt down?"
4	Leigh Taylor	Councillor Curry	On 31 January 2025, care assistant Angelo Regis was jailed for 12 years after admitting attempted rape and sexual assaults on a woman in her 80s during a home care visit in June 2024. He locked her in, assaulted her in the bathroom and attempted to rape in her bedroom. The victim bravely reported the crime, and DNA evidence secured conviction. Dorset Police said Regis "took advantage of his position and the vulnerabilities of his victim to subject her to a truly terrifying and horrific sexual assault." This was not an isolated case – such crimes in care settings occur too often. Under the Care Quality Commission

		(CQC) Fundamental Standards, providers are legally required to uphold dignity (Regulation 10) and safeguard service users from abuse (Regulation 13). Yet testimony gathered by Caring about Dignity, an advocacy group for care users, families and professionals, shows these duties are regularly undermined: • male carers are repeatedly sent to women who had declined male care, to “see if they would change their minds” • women describe feeling unsafe, gaslit and voiceless when forced to accept male carers for intimate washing or go without care • parents are denied respite because providers refuse to guarantee female-only carers for their disabled daughters It is not unusual or unreasonable to request same-sex intimate care. A Sex Matters survey found 95% of respondents said it was important that they or their family could specify the sex of carers providing intimate care. As around 80% of paid carers are female, ensuring women and girls receive same-sex intimate care is entirely practicable. Ignoring these requests breaches not only the CQC’s statutory standards but also the council’s Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010, which requires public bodies to have due regard to eliminating harassment, advancing equality between women and men, and recognising women’s particular vulnerability in intimate care settings. Women in receipt of care services should not be made to feel voiceless in their own homes. Councils have both a legal and moral duty to ensure that safeguarding, dignity and equality are not compromised for
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			administrative convenience. How does the council ensure the statutory rights of vulnerable residents to privacy, dignity and safety are upheld in line with the CQC Fundamental Standards and the Public Sector Equality Duty? In your answer, please could you specify: • the council's policy and process for recording care preferences • the data showing those preferences are being met • if they are not being met, the incident rate and reasons why • how the council intends to improve compliance
5.	Suzanne Wood	Councillor Roche	My question is a result of the comments and the concerns from Darlington people endorsing my own concerns. Many of Darlington's indigenous people have waited a very long time for their own homes and now I've been informed that rented accommodation has become a lottery. On what criteria does the council base it's decisions to allocate the people of Darlington somewhere to live?
6.	Kevin Grainger	Councillor Curry	Can the Councillor assure me disabled people are being offered the best of care from Darlington Borough Council?
7.	Miriam McGeary	Councillor Garner	What are local authorities doing to ensure the safety of constituents in the event of an emergency relating to their inactivity concerning immigration. Since the police station has been relocated 20 mins outside of Darlington which could potentially result in towns being left unpoliced in the event of rioting or unrest.
8.	Jack James	Councillor Harker	Councillor Harker, enough is enough. Under your leadership, this council has failed our town. You have eroded trust, dismissed community voices, and turned your back on the very people you were elected to serve.

		Let's be clear about the reality in Darlington. In 2023/24, 28% of children aged 0–15 in Darlington were living in relative poverty before housing costs. That's over 5,500 children denied the basics of food, warmth, and security. These are not just numbers. These are children going hungry, families going without heat, entire communities struggling to survive while their leaders look elsewhere. And what has your council done? You scrapped the Stronger Communities Fund — one of the few schemes that put money directly into the hands of grassroots groups, volunteers, and local initiatives. That fund supported warm spaces, food banks, and neighbourhood projects. You didn't strengthen communities. You weakened them. Then there is your refusal to back the flying of the UK flag in our town. You may think this is symbolic, but symbols matter. They unite people. They inspire pride. They give residents a sense of belonging. By refusing this, you turned your back on the identity, the pride, and the values of the people you represent. And it's not just local leadership that has failed. Nationally, 4.5 million children — 31% of all children in the UK — live in poverty. Here at home, our MP, Lola McEvoy, has already drawn criticism for failing to meet even basic standards of responsibility. Small missteps? Maybe. But part of a wider pattern: a lack of care, a lack of oversight, a lack of leadership. It's the same pattern we see reflected here in Darlington. So let me ask you: when children are going hungry, when families are struggling to pay bills, when communities are being stripped of support — how do you intend to restore confidence, rebuild trust, and prove that the people of Darlington matter to you? How will you demonstrate that leadership isn't just a title, but a responsibility... a duty to act, to listen, and to stand with those you serve? Councillor Harker, under your watch, the people of this town have felt abandoned. The time has come for actions that reflect real accountability, real care, and real leadership... not just words. Darlington deserves leaders who will step up, take responsibility, and rebuild what has been lost.
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