

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

18 October 2022

Item 18 – Members’ Questions

From Councillor Ian Thorn, Calne Central

To Councillor Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Climate Change, MCI, Economic Development, Heritage, Arts, Tourism and Health & Wellbeing

Question (22-16)

What more can be done to support Wiltshire Council’s own retail tenants during the current cost of living crisis?

Response:

We recognise that the last few years have been very difficult for businesses and this looks like to continue into the immediate future, and we are committed to doing what we can to support the local economy. As a landlord, we did not agreed to any rent reductions during the Covid pandemic but have provided support to businesses in other ways – through business rates reliefs and grants, this approach also applied during these difficult financial times.

The Council cannot provide discounts from the market rates for individual businesses, as the retail units in Calne are part of our commercial investment portfolio for the purposes of generating income that goes towards supporting council services. That part of the Council lets units at a market rent, and we have no vacant units within our retail portfolio in Calne.

As part of the Cost of Doing Business workstream officers are considering how best to support the retail and wider economy, building on the successful network and partnerships with businesses to ensure that intelligence on impacts to the local economy is gathered and shared appropriately, and that businesses are signposted to the support they require. Intelligence will look particularly on the 6-month support timescale, and what sectors may face particular challenges beyond that period.