

Supplementary Question to PAS 6 Oct 2026

It took over a month and a formal complaint to get a response to my question from the last committee. That response contained factual errors it was retracted, and the corrected answer was only sent to me last Friday—three months late.

We are asked to accept that operational checks are in place. That seems unlikely.

FOI disclosures show that on 3 August 2026, Leader Katie Thornburrow explicitly directed officers to implement an authority-wide point-of-work map check across all operational teams prior to works proximal to properties. Councillor Smart was present when she committed to this and copied in on email confirmation, his subsequent written response rejected it.

FOI records show that on 18 August 2026, the Chief Executive issued instructions for a check around just a single address—repeating the same failed fix (and I have 20 years of incidents backing this up) used by the previous Chief Executive. But that's not the point—the point is this doesn't protect the council from a city-wide unmitigated cost risk.

FOI also revealed there is no operational risk assessment, nor any reliable record of incidents reported to council employees other than by the formal web process. You have no system to escalate or record other complaints made by phone or in person and resolved informally by simply apologizing or making repairs. The claim that there is no evidence that this is a widespread problem can be rejected on the basis that if you don't collect the data, you cannot hide behind the fact that you haven't got it.

My question is simple: Is the Leader's authority-wide mandate in effect across Cambridge today—yes or no?

Given that an authority-wide check costs nothing to run (I reject the claim that it does - a list of properties to work on that you stick to is standard practice for every body conducting every kind of work in public space and the hubris of the Cambridge City Council in assuming they should be exempt from this good practice is astonishing), did senior management override the Leader's city-wide cost free policy—and in doing so, leave public funds exposed to recurring sub-£10,000 self-insured payouts for preventable civil trespass and damage across the rest of the city? And if so, surely the committee has something to say about that?

Thanks,

PTO for answer

Answer

Your written question was submitted to the Performance Assets and Strategy Overview & Scrutiny Committee that took place on 15 July.

The constitution sets no fixed number of days to respond to public questions put to a committee. Responses should be provided “as soon as practicable” (Public questions - rule 1.11).

On 3 August you indicated your intention to withdraw your question to the Committee if the council implemented mandatory property ownership checks. You received written confirmation on 6 August that those measures had been implemented for council works in the vicinity of your home.

You subsequently enquired why you had not received a response to your written question. On 11th August the Council wrote to you to inform you that you would receive a written response by the end of August, as the responsible Cabinet member was on leave. On 20th August you wrote to complain.

The response to your committee question was sent to you 25 August. At your request, the response was amended to record that you had received a repair rather than compensation, which was your preference. The response was also published in the minutes of the committee on 28 September.

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/s73710/Response%20to%20Public%20Question%20260812%20Mr%20Davidson%20PAS%20OS%20Q%20and%20A.pdf>

Mandatory property ownership checks for all council works are unnecessary and would not be zero-cost as you claim. In many instances the Council already goes further than your proposal – as outlined in detail in the above link.

There is no evidence to support claims of civil trespass and damage across the city due to council works or service responses. The Council has not had any insurance claims that can be attributed to inappropriate incursions onto private property in the past 10 years. As such there no need to take additional measures to mitigate the unsubstantiated risks claimed.

Based on the overwhelming evidence that the issues described appear to be limited to your address only, the Leader and Cabinet are satisfied that appropriate mitigating actions have been put in place. Those measures will be kept under review to assess whether they are effective.