COUNCIL MEETING – 9 MARCH 2016
ITEM 7 – PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The following question has been submitted by Barbara Warren for response by the Leader of the Council:-

"In 2010 Bishopsgarth Association of Residents (BAR) raised £168,000 from various sources to provide play equipment and a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) on the estate.

This was made up as follows:
Playbuilder: £40,000
Big Lottery: £43,000
Provident Finance: £20,000
Impetus Environmental Trust: £47,000
Councillor's Community Participation Budget: £18,000

That funding was received by SBC's Parks and Countryside Department who claimed 10% (£16,800) as management costs. We also believe that following our successful bid to Provident Finance, Stockton Council received a further £60,000 in funding for other areas.

Despite initial consultation with BAR and local residents about what would be provided, council officers have taken it upon themselves to change the specifications with no consultation – as an example, Care For Your Area estimated £65,370.10 for works but the final bill was £1,644.12 over and above that amount. This amount was approved by council officers with no discussion with BAR.

After discussion with Richard Bradley following vandalism / defects, BAR (of which I am Chair) agreed to £5,000 of the funding being made available for repairs and maintenance. We are now led to believe that this money has been spent on such things as grass cutting which the council would have had to do whether the play area was there or not.

Despite repeated requests, BAR, has never been provided with proof of expenditure nor always asked for prior approval of any spend from these funds raised in our name. A council officer has verbally stated that BAR cannot close as long as there are funds still to be spent. This suggests that BAR is responsible for expenditure.

So, can the Leader of the Council please confirm whether or not BAR is accountable for the expenditure from the income received from the above sources and exactly how much funding remains to be spent?"