

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Council Meeting – 23rd April 2013

Question 1 from Mr Webb to the Executive Councillor for Adult Social Care, Health & Housing (responding on behalf of Cllr Ann Jones)

Question

Sir David Amess said quite clearly that the present funding system is simply unfair for grammar schools. Perversely, they seem to be penalised for their very success. What is the Council's view on the fairness of the government funding between Southend Secondary Grammar, academies and comprehensive schools?

Answer

The main source of funding for all schools in the borough is the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) which is allocated locally via the Southend Funding Formula. This does not differentiate funding on the basis of the type of secondary school, instead it uses nationally prescribed factors to calculate the funding awarded to each school. The amounts used for each funding factor are set locally in consultation with the Southend Schools Forum, a body which is representative of all local schools including academies.

The Council and the Schools Forum will continue to work together to make funding within all Southend schools to be as fair as possible, in a way that supports school improvement and secures the best outcomes for all children and young people

Question 2 from Mr Webb to the Executive Councillor for Community Development

Question

Between January and February 2015 Prittlewell Ward had the highest burglary rate in Southend. The Police introduced to 500 homes 'smartwater' on valuables in 5 roads which show up under ultra violet light.

What has the success been to the 5 streets and will the 'smartwater' be given to other wards in Southend to tackle burglary?

Answer

This was a limited stock of Smartwater due to the associated costs with the kit. The Southend LPA has been trialling the distribution of Smartwater across burglary hotspots and the Police will now assess the effectiveness.

At the moment there appears to be a reduction in the Prittlewell area, although we need to review the results of this trialling over a longer period of time.

Question 1 from Mr Ali to the Leader of the Council

Question

What kind of issues do individual constituents need to take to their own Ward Councillors rather than deal with themselves even if they need to contact Council Officers?

Answer

Residents of the town can contact council officers if they have any queries about the provision of Council services. They are also free to contact their Councillors if they wish to do so.

Question 2 from Mr Ali to the Leader of the Council

Question

Do constituents need the assistance of their own Ward Councillors to get their personal concerns handled by Council Officers?

Answer

No.

Question 1 from Miss Diack to the Executive Councillor for Adult Social Care, Health & Housing

Question

Your cuts could most likely result in people, myself included becoming very unwell without the support that they are currently getting and will end up costing the NHS a lot more money. Is it a case of passing the 'buck'?

Answer

I can assure the questioner that the closure of the Council funded element does not affect the Health element of the service therefore the group therapy service currently in place will be continuing, provided by SEPT. The configuration of the groups may change over time but this will be done in consultation with service users.

Question 2 from Miss Diack to the Executive Councillor for Adult Social Care, Health & Housing

Question

Why were the service users NOT consulted about this prior to the decision being made back in October 2014 after all WE are the ones that are most likely to know which services and in what format given are BEST for us?

Answer

Just to be absolutely clear the decision to close the Council element of the service was made by the full Council as part of the budget setting for 2015/16 on 26th March 2015 and not in October 2014 as stated.

Since that time the Council have been working with SEPT regarding transitional arrangement for service users and carers. Consultation with service users and carers affected by the withdrawal of the Council funded staff is currently underway and will only affect a very small number of users of the service. All service users and carers will transition to other services. In fact a list of all the carers and service users will be produced illustrating what they get now and what they will be getting. I intend to oversee this exercise to ensure that service users or carers continue to receive on-going support, in line with the promise I made at the last Council.

The Mental Health strategy for South Essex which involved extensive consultation with service users and carers, and the impending introduction of the Care Act will require that mental health services need to change to give individuals more control and choice over what support they feel will best meet their needs. It is widely believed by health professionals that this will actually help to promote an individual's recovery through a more personalised approach and support at their time of need.

Question from Ms Wormald to the Executive Councillor for Adult Social Care, Health & Housing

Question

The Mental Health Resource Therapy Service is presently under the threat of closure as result of proposals for budget savings. Therefore I am extremely concerned over the loss of this service and would ask the following question to the council:

As the service presently appears to be supporting service users at a cost of approximately £100,000 on staff salaries despite having a budget of £240,000, would the Council accept the budget saving this already constitutes of £140,000 this year and maintain the staff in employment, thus both making a saving and keeping the service running?

Answer

The Mental Health Resource Therapy service is not under threat of closure. In fact, the health element of the service will be continuing. All but one of the current support groups will be continuing. The service users in the group which will close will be transitioning to other groups. The Council funded staff are currently providing one to one support to 7 service users and once again these service users will transition to other services.

The whole budget for this service has been now taken as a saving, as approved by the Council at its March meeting; therefore there is no budget for staffing which would enable the continuation of the previous service.

Question from Mr Wilson to the Executive Councillor for Adult Social Care, Health & Housing

Question

I am currently a mental health service user. I currently receive 3-4 hours per week essential group therapy treatment. This essential service and the essential staff that provide this essential service are to be cut due to budget restrictions and to be replaced by so-called personal budgets and individual treatment.

How many hours per week will I be receiving from this unnecessary change in service?

Answer

In future, the group therapy treatment will be supported by SEPT Health staff. I would suspect that there will be no change in the service that you receive.

Question 1 from Miss Barton to the Executive Councillor for Adult Social Care, Health & Housing

Question

Please clarify if cuts go ahead what specific Mental Health Services for patients and carers will be available in addition to Personal Budget Allowance?

Answer

All but one of the group therapy service will continue, supported by Health staff. The carers groups will continue to be offered, but through other organisations. Carers and service users currently being managed on a one to one basis will be transitioned to other service managed by SEPT or commissioned by the Council.

Question 2 from Miss Barton to the Executive Councillor for Adult Social Care, Health & Housing

Question

Please advise who on Southend Clinical Commissioners board has specialist qualifications in mental health as they are making key decisions on medication for Mental Health Patients and services for Mental Health Patients and Carers?

Answer

The council is unable to answer this question as it relates to the Southend Clinical Commissioning Group which is a separate statutory body. This question needs to be put to the Southend Clinical Commissioning Group.