

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Council Meeting – 23rd February 2017

Question 1 from Cllr Aylen to the Executive Councillor for Technology

Question

May I ask the cabinet holder responsible for the new council communications equipment if they can confirm that the system has been fully tested in the field. In simple words, is it fit or purpose for all councillors of all abilities and usages within reason?

Answer

Yes, the current equipment being the Surface Pro and the Nokia Lumia were trialled in the field and work well for most Councillors and staff today. At the time of deployment all Members were visited at home by staff from ICT to determine the best Mobile network provider for their local circumstances and how to connect to their home broadband or tether using broadband connectivity available within the phone.

Nevertheless some Members find the existing equipment difficult to use. Accordingly we are now offering such Members the alternative of a laptop or IPAD along with training.

Question 2 from Cllr Aylen to the Executive Councillor for Culture, Tourism and the Economy

Question

The 125 year celebrations of Southend include events around Priory Park. This is because it is 100 years old, apparently. However applying the same reasoning Belfairs Park is also 100 years old.

Would the cabinet holder explain why there are no events planned for Belfairs Park especially when it's taken into account how Priory Park came to exist?

Answer

As well as the Borough celebrating 125 years in 2017, it is also the centenary of when Prittlewell Priory and grounds were gifted to the town by RA Jones. I have no information to suggest that 2017 is a particular anniversary for Belfairs Park.

I have previously advised that community events support is included in the budget for our celebrations which have been publicised. Groups from all areas are very welcome to submit a bid to this.

Question 3 from Councillor J Garston to the Executive Councillor for Transport, Waste and Cleansing

Question

Will the Portfolio holder agree to look at the Driveway Protection Markings Policy (H Bars)?

Answer

At present, the Council has a Policy as to when White H markings will be put down to protect driveways. This requires that the driveway must:

- A) Be used for 12 or more parking spaces (this demonstrates the serious need for keeping the access clear), or
- B) Be used regularly by a Blue Badge Holder and
- C) In either case there must not be any yellow lines or zig-zag lines on the road.

This Policy has been in place for some time.

While the Policy can be reviewed the presence of white lines across driveways to act as a visual deterrent loses its impact, if they are used too widely. As such, it is advisable to have a policy criterion that controls such installations based on justification which complies with the spirit of the government advice on de-clutter and avoiding the need for unnecessary signs and markings.

Question 4 from Councillor J Garston to the Executive Councillor Housing, Planning and Public Protection Services

Question

Please can the Executive Councillor provide the council with a breakdown of the improvements that will be made to the Boroughs CCTV system and control room following the funds allocated to this in the Budget?

Answer

Due to the age and condition of the current analogue cameras, it is proposed to replace them with new digital cameras.

Following discussions with the Police it is also proposed to locate some of the new digital cameras at different sites in order to support Community Safety activities.

Question 5 from Cllr Mulroney to the Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Public Protection

Question

In a recent article in the newsletter of the Essex Society for Archaeology and History it was reported that this Council lacked proper provision of an historic environment service to inform its planning process. Matters are similar in Castle Point which means that the whole stretch of the north Thames Estuary from Shoeburyness to Hole Haven creek has no adequate historic environmental planning service.

I understand the ESAH has written to the Council on this point. Could the Council be advised whether a response has been sent to the ESAH and of the number of staff employed with the relevant qualification/experience to deal with the historic environment in planning terms and whether they are dedicated positions or our historic environment is an add on to a mainstream planning role. Given the huge pressures on our historic environment witnessed by recent applications and the iconic buildings within the Borough, not least the Pier and Kursaal, is this considered adequate for this important role?

Answer

The Director of Planning & Transport has responded to the ESAH in writing.

The Council employs one full-time Design & Conservation Officer within the Planning section, who has a planning qualification with a specialism in conservation. This officer provides specialist conservation and heritage advice to the Council. Where necessary, planning officers also liaise with specialists at Historic England (formerly English Heritage) and Essex County Council's Historic Environment team, and have a close working relationship with Southend Museum and its Archaeology Curator. Planning staff also have direct access to the Museum's Historic Environment Record (HER).

The Council's qualified officer provided professional advice in relation to recent works at the pier and the Kursaal, resulting in successful schemes that will assist with the on-going viability and conservation of those buildings. The planning team therefore has sufficient expertise, or access to it, in order to carry out all statutory requirements pertaining to the historic environment.

Question 6 from Councillor Callaghan to the Leader of the Council

Question

Recently two Departmental Heads/Directors have left the local authority. Could the Leader of the Council tell me if they need to be replaced and what is their pay?

Answer

The post of Corporate Director for Corporate Services was deleted in 2016 as part of the Chief Executive's review of senior management arrangements. The salary at this time was £117,658.

The post of Director of Public Protection will become vacant in the middle of March. Plans are underway to recruit to this post on an interim basis pending permanent recruitment. The salary attached to this post is £87,870.

Question 7 from Councillor Callaghan to the Executive Councillor Housing, Planning and Public Protection Services

Question

I put a Notice of Motion to Council on 10th December 2015 calling on the Council to review and amend the local entitlement for Social Housing from 3 years to 7 years. Could the Executive Councillor tell me what progress has been made or has the matter been put on hold?

Answer

The Allocations Policy will undergo a full review and refresh this year, work on which has already started. Member's concerns and suggestions regarding local connection have certainly informed this, with local connection definitely being one of the areas subject to review. There have been some major external influences that we have been awaiting further detail on that will need to be considered as part of this piece of work.

DCLG recently published a Housing White Paper "Fixing our Broken Housing Market", setting out the Government's future plans for housing. The policy will need to have regard to areas in the paper such as those relating to housing supply. The Homelessness Reduction Bill is progressing through the House of Lords and is anticipated to receive Royal Assent in spring 2017, with a possible commencement date of Autumn 2017. This will introduce a raft of new statutory functions relating to housing & homelessness, which will also have to be considered as part of the new policy. All Members will have the opportunity to discuss and review any proposed changes in the Allocation Policy in the coming months as work progresses.

We are also planning a Housing Working Party in April to formulate a response to the Government White Paper on Housing. We will open this to all members that wish to attend.

Question 8 from Councillor Willis to the Executive Councillor for Health and Adult Social Care

Question

Would the Cabinet Member provide the number of missed domiciliary care visits per month for years 2015/16 and 2016/17?

Answer

CM2000 is our domiciliary care monitoring and financial management tool. The missed visits report on CM2000 includes visits that the care agency have missed, visits that clients have cancelled, and visits that the care agency have attempted but not completed due to the client not being at home or refusing entry.

The number of CM2000 recorded missed visits in 2015/16 is 324 and this equates to 2.5% of all recorded visits. The number of CM2000 recorded missed visits in 2016/17 (March 2016 to January 2017) is 31 and this equates to 0.25% of all recorded visits.

The new home care contracts being let on 1st of May 2017 will ensure all providers delivering over 200 hours per week will be using CM2000. To ensure that we are providing a quality service we are currently refreshing the terms and conditions of CM2000 to be a more robust and effective monitoring tool. This will ensure capacity to respond to an increase in providers accessing the system; enable a mobile solution and alignment with the implementation of Liquid Logic later this year.

Question 9 from Councillor Bright to the Executive Councillor for Culture, Tourism & the Economy

Question

Having personally supported Havens Hospices for a number of years, I was deeply disappointed to learn that their Run to Remember Marathon on Sunday 12 March has been cancelled. This has left some 600 entrants and many local residents incredibly frustrated. Can the Portfolio Holder please reassure me and reassure local residents that the Council will continue to work with Havens Hospices to ensure that the event will go ahead at a rescheduled date, and will she join me in showing support for the marathon and for the vital work that Havens Hospices undertakes?

Answer:

Thank you for the question Cllr Bright. Of course I am happy to acknowledge the tremendous work that Havens Hospices does within our community. I should also like to say how disappointed I am that it has been necessary to postpone the marathon.

I can confirm that the Council has already made that offer to Havens and we fully intend to support a marathon event, which we are hoping may be held at a convenient time in the autumn. Not just because it is a very worthy cause, but also because it has the potential to attract many competitors to the town and support our economy. The decision not to provide an event permit was not taken lightly and was the result of several key stakeholders making representations to the Council that they had not been consulted on the route by the organiser. This information coming late in the process created considerable a challenge in then making alternative arrangements in the time left.

I do support this event being developed in the future and have instructed officers to help facilitate a solution.