

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Council Meeting – 10th December 2015

Question 1 from Mr Gittus to the Executive Councillor for Public Protection, Waste & Transport

Question

The west of Kursaal ward has serious issues with fly-tipping. To get any sort of action so far from the Council, I have had to personally report almost 60 occasions of fly-tipping in two months and organise a community clean-up of the Queensway grass area collecting 30 bags of waste.

Would the portfolio holder provide details of the long term strategy of ensuring the streets of the Kursaal ward are kept clean and free from litter and fly-tipping?

Answer

One of the many benefits of the new cleansing contract with Veolia is that it places a strong emphasis on engaging with the local communities to address the issue of fly-tipping to try and achieve behavioural change in hot spot areas, coupled with the on-going anti-littering initiatives such as the recent 'Love Essex@ campaign'.

Alongside such campaigns and local community engagement, a targeted approach to enforcement will also be considered to deal with persistent offenders by issuing fixed penalty notices where necessary.

In the Kursaal Ward the Council works closely with SEAL and other agencies to deal with these small minorities of offenders responsible for fly-tipping which has proved effective.

I would like to thank Mr Gittus for his continued commitment in reporting fly-tipping which is the exactly the kind of community engagement we want to encourage elsewhere across the town and support the Council strategy on tackling littering and fly-tipping in Southend.

Question 2 from Mr Garne to the Leader of the Council

Question

Can we be told details of progress to date made by Randall Watts in the renovation and refurbishment of the Heath House complex, and is there a date set for completion?

Answer

The Council remains in contact with the owner and developer, Randall Watts who have been working hard on the legal issues and on pre-sales, which we are advised are going well. We are advised that enabling works are due to commence in January, the main construction and development is due to start in April and run for eighteen months with handover of the units scheduled to begin in September 2017.

Question 3 from Mr Webb to the Executive Councillor for Enterprise, Tourism and Economic Development

Question

How much revenue and profit did the Cliffs Pavilion and Palace Theatre generate in 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15?

Answer

The Cliffs Pavilion and Palace Theatre are managed on behalf of the Council by Southend Theatres Ltd, part of the HQ Group. Copies of their accounts are a matter of public record available at Companies House.

The turnover for 2012/13 was £6,992,136 and profit £134,304. Turnover in 2013/14 was £7,717,578 and profit £368,977.

The 2015 accounts will be filed in late December and be available shortly after on the Companies House website.

Question 4 from Mr Webb to the Executive Councillor for Public Protection, Waste and Transport

In Westborough there are some resident who have changed their front gardens to driveways but not added a dropped kerb therefore bumping over the kerb and breaking or moving it every time they drive onto their driveway. What is the process and cost in getting a dropped kerb (concrete or tarmac) and if they do not get a drop kerb have they broken any highway rules and what is the fine they have to pay?

Answer

All residential properties must have an approved PVX installed by the Council, should they wish to cross the pavement area to gain access to their property. The Council has a Policy for residents who wish to apply for a PVX to be installed at their property and this is currently being reviewed. The Policy is accessible on the Council's website, or by contacting the Council directly for an application pack.

There is no set cost for installing a PVX as this will depend on various factors, such as the width and depth of the required PVX and as to whether there are any utility company equipment issues and/or highway street furniture concerns that need to be addressed as part of the PVX installation works. Those wishing to have a PVX installed, need to obtain a contractors quotation.

I can advise that where it is noted or reported that a person is crossing over the highway without a PVX, then the Council's Environmental Care Team will take action to try and prevent this from happening. This usually involves the issuing of a formal Notice under the Highways Act 1980. I can advise that several people who have breached the Notice, have been taken to Court and have been fined. It is a Level 4 offence and the maximum fine is £2500.

Question 5 from Mr Chambers to the Executive Councillor for Enterprise, Tourism & Economic Development

Question

How is the council going to prevent (one of Southend's main attractions areas) the cliffs garden in Milton ward becoming a long term camping site for the homeless?

Answer

The Council has reluctantly taken legal action against people camping illegally on the Southend Cliffs following concerns for their welfare and safety. Having made offers of help and assistance to the campers on numerous occasions and exhausted all options, the Council had no choice but to take the action.

On 27th November 2015, the Council successfully obtained a Possession Order, supported by an Injunction Order, requiring the campers to vacate the cliff gardens. The Injunction Order prevents campers from occupying the land for a period of 12 months from 2nd December 2015.

Question 6 from Mr Thomas to the Leader of the Council

Question

At the last full council, Cllr Woodley you stood in front of everyone and said `this administration has saved £1.5 million to £2million which WILL be spent on the most vulnerable in the town`. I welcome this as there is much need in our town. Has Cllr Woodley got any plans on how to spend this money and will he agree to a meeting with me and a colleague in the homeless circles early in January?

Answer

The savings I referred to relate to the lower financing costs incurred in our council budget over a period of nearly two years by not undertaking any long term borrowing.

These savings have helped to ensure that there is support where needed if pressures exist in the Council's in year spending. The savings have also been factored into setting the Council's overall budget, thereby protecting service cuts to the most needy in our town.