

## **Council – 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

### **Councillor Questions**

#### **1. Councillor Cox asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and SEND (Cllr Burton)**

##### **Question**

One of the Monitoring Officer's roles is to report to Council and Executive on any proposal or decision that may be illegal, maladministration, or breach a statutory code.

Can the portfolio holder confirm that they and the Chief Executive are notified via the monitoring officer of upheld LGO SEND complaints plus informed if the SEND department are breaking statutory laws and timeframes with EHCNA, EHCPs, Annual Reviews and Providing education in section F of an EHCP?

##### **Answer**

The Monitoring Officer fulfils their statutory duties by:

- Reporting monthly on Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman complaints, including SEND complaints, to the Corporate Leadership Team. This report is used by the Executive Directors in their regular briefings with the Leader and portfolio holders.
- Providing an annual report containing a summary of the findings of all complaints investigated and upheld by the LGSCO (which has been reviewed by CLT) to Audit Committee. This process will capture all Ombudsman decisions made within the reporting period which relate to SEND services. The Comments, Complaints and Compliments annual report for 2023/2024 will go before Audit Committee on 23 October 2024.
- Considering whether the implications of an investigation should be individually reported to Members. This would be appropriate where that investigation outcome has wider implications for council or authority policy or exposes a more significant finding of fault.

- Advising CLT that the Leader and Cabinet should be made aware if any statutory deadlines and timeframes have not been met. The Monitoring Officer has recently requested a report to Executive Briefing, which is being arranged.

More generally, there are specific additional reporting requirements should the LGSCO issue a draft Public Interest Report as a result of an investigation. At the time of writing no such Public Interest Report has been received from the Ombudsman.

I meet regularly with the relevant Executive Director and SEND senior leaders to be updated on progress and key areas of challenge. These incorporate statutory performance and key areas for development.

## **2. Councillor Cox asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and the Local Plan (Cllr Anne Jones)**

### **Question**

Can the portfolio holder confirm that it is the Council who designates land for development in the local plan?

### **Answer**

Thank you for your question.

The Council, in its role as the Local Planning Authority, designates land in a local plan. This includes allocating areas for development to meet identified needs.

It is important to recognise that the local plan must be prepared in accordance with statutory procedures, which involves various stages of plan preparation and extensive public consultation. The Council's final version of the local plan must be submitted to the Government and scrutinised through an 'examination in public' by an appointed independent Planning Inspector. Following the inquiry the Inspector will conclude whether the plan is 'sound' and can be adopted by the Council.

Plans are 'sound' if they are:

- Positively prepared – the Local Plan seeks to meet identified needs.
- Justified – an appropriate strategy is included in the Local Plan which takes into account reasonable alternatives and evidence.
- Effective – the Local Plan is deliverable over the plan period.
- Consistent – the Local Plan complies with national policy.

### **3. Councillor Aylen asks a question of the Leader of the Council (Cllr Cowan)**

#### **Question**

I request the Leader of the Council who is also the cabinet holder covering highways to provide the following information with regards to accidents on footways.

Over the last ten years for the whole of Southend how many accidents on footways are a result of DBM surface, how many are a result of slab surface and how many are a result of ice on DBM?

#### **Answer**

Thank you for your question.

Please be advised that it is not normal practice to supply this level of detailed information, however the insurance team have worked very hard to supply the information you have requested.

The total numbers for incidents and claims and the value of those claims for the last 10 years are summarised in the table below.

For clarity we can't specifically identify the surface type 'DBM' in our claim data, so those figures include all surfaces within the 'Tarmac' group.

It can be clearly seen that the number of incidents and the subsequent payment in claims is much higher on slabbed surfaced footways than for DBM/Tarmac.

For further context, our footway surface type is approximately a 70:30 split between ‘tarmac’ and slabbed footways respectively. Paving slabs account for approximately 77% of all incidents despite covering less than a third of our footways. The cost of a claim on paving slabs is also, on average, 8.8% higher than on tarmac, further demonstrating that paved slabs are a higher incident and financial risk compared to tarmac.

Please note that the last 3 years data assessed would not be considered closed and could therefore be subject to further claims.

	2014 to 2024	
	Tarmac (all types inc DBM)	Paving Slabs
<b>No. of incidents &amp; claims</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>838</b>
<b>No. of claims</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>421</b>
<b>Total Cost paid</b>	<b>£ 279,900.06</b>	<b>£ 982,943.85</b>
<b>Total Cost outstanding</b>	<b>£ 8,991.00</b>	<b>£ 110,292.75</b>

#### **4. Councillor Aylen asks a question of the Leader of the Council (Cllr Cowan)**

##### **Question**

At Cabinet it was stated that Dense Bitumen Macadam (DBM) is 20% cheaper so 3 extra streets could be converted from slabs to DBM. There was no evidence of this or that the 20% DBM was achieved or what the statement refers to. There was no basis or figures.

It could refer to lifting a broken slab and placing it on a truck, disposing the slab, digging out the broken slab area and placing, rolling, DBM. Or refer to removing and disposing a complete street of slabs and digging out, placing in under footing DBM and a top layer to the correct specification, adding fall to allow drainage or the 20% might refer to a cost save per year or might it be based on the report presented to Cabinet. Slabs last 100 years and 20% is over 100 years old so that's 0.2% per year or the 20% per year is over a complete street footway replacement but there is no record of the council previously lifting all the slabs in a road removing them and relaying new slabs.

Could the Cabinet member for highways please explain the 20% saving?

##### **Answer**

Thank you for your question.

The price comparison and subsequent saving was detailed from a theoretical scheme of the same area, using both surface types (DBM and slabs) as a replacement, and developing the costs for each scheme based on the appropriate items from our contract schedule of rates. The main savings are from the reduction in time taken to complete the DBM scheme and therefore reduction in traffic management costs, and for the costs for additional equipment required to lift in paving slabs, as manual handling rules now restrict workers from self-lifting any loads above a certain weight.

This saving does not include the additional costs that would be required to store and secure a significant number of slabs to enable the effective delivery of our footway resurfacing programme.

**5. Councillor Garston asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Major Projects and Regulatory Services (Cllr Robinson)**

**Question**

I thank the Portfolio Holder for his answer to my original question which was referred to Place Scrutiny. I would like him to advise Council what controls are put into place by our officers to ensure that when major events are held in our parks, residents living nearby are not made to suffer excessive noise?

The onus should be on the Council rather than the applicant.

**Answer**

All large events are taken to the Council's Safety Advisory Group at which time advice is given on controlling noise. Once an application is made for an event, Regulatory Services require a noise management plan from the organisers. This document details where event stages are situated and how the organiser is going to control noise. Regulatory Services will also check on previous events and may modify the hours which the noise is expected, for example, stopping the music at an earlier time. The organiser is also required to notify surrounding residents of the event and give a contact number for them to report to if nuisance is being experienced. The organiser is always required to monitor the noise and ensure that it is within the criteria that have been agreed with the Council. Compliance with the noise management plan will be a condition of the license. Following the event a post event report is required.

The Council issues a permit for events on its land, and it is made clear on this permit that the Council has a right to cancel or not permit an event in the future.

## **6. Councillor O'Connor asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Healthier Communities (Cllr Sadza)**

### **Question**

I note from the Annual Public Health report and the Council's Ageing Well Strategy for Southend, that life expectancy in our city has reduced in recent years and is lower than the national average. It is average 60 years and 3 months for males in Southend compared to 63 years and 3 months, elsewhere in England. This is an indicator of poverty and deprivation.

Can the portfolio holder please advise what current measures or strategies are being taken by SCC to address the inequalities in life expectancy that are occurring in the most deprived parts of Southend (compared to more affluent areas in the city and the rest of the country), and also for the poorer outcomes in the BAME and ageing communities?

### **Answer**

Inequalities in life expectancy are mainly driven by behavioural risks to health such as smoking and poor diet, variation in access to and use of health care, the impact of wider socio-economic determinants such as income, education, housing and employment and specific characteristics such as sex, ethnicity, disability and social exclusion – leading to inequalities in population subgroups. In the past 3 years, this has been further impacted by COVID.

Several targeted interventions have been either initiated or planned, including earlier prevention around the common causes to reduce ill-health related to cardio-vascular diseases, cancers, access to primary health care and respiratory conditions. For example, we have worked to increase the uptake of health checks for adults in our disadvantaged communities, for people with learning disabilities as well as people who have serious mental health conditions.

We continue to have a targeted approach to support people to quit cigarette smoking, rehabilitate those who misuse drugs and alcohol and improve our information, advice and guidance to local residents (such as through Livewell Southend). We are collaborating closely with the NHS to improve access to cancer screening programmes whilst also working to improve all our immunisations rates.

Tackling the challenges of obesity is multi-factorial and we are developing a system-wide approach that will focus on healthier food and diet choices. The impact of poor health on worklessness has galvanised partners to explore new opportunities to support people to improve workplace wellbeing and support people to return to work.

## **7. Councillor O'Connor asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism and Business (Cllr Dent)**

### **Question**

This year's Southend City Jam was very impressive, showcasing some outstanding artwork, yet again, across the city. Can the portfolio holder please advise whether there is any data to suggest there was an increase in the number of visitors from previous years to the city to date, as a result of this event, as this would have had a positive, knock-on effect to local businesses?

### **Answer**

We are still waiting for other datasets to come through, but the initial figures are very promising. Based on the footfall data we have for the first two days of the event, which took place in August, there was a significant 13% increase compared to last year. This year, we saw 184,087 visitors over the first two days, compared to 162,993 during the same period last year.

The final day of the event, which took place on 1st September, will not have data available for another couple of weeks.

It's worth noting that the weather this year was less favourable than last year, yet we still saw an increase in footfall. This demonstrates that more people are coming to the event despite the weather conditions, highlighting the growing appeal of City Jam.

This uptick in visitor numbers likely had a positive knock-on effect across sectors such as retail and hospitality. Events like City Jam not only enhance Southend's cultural vibrancy but also play a vital role in supporting our local economy. This administration is committed to delivering a diverse and full events calendar to support our local economy, and figures like these are encouraging.



**8. Councillor Campbell asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment and Waste (Cllr Hyde)**

**Question**

What progress has been made with the procurement of a contractor to address low-level fly-tipping, dog fouling, littering, and graffiti?

**Answer**

Thank you for your question.

The council is currently working with SEPS to scope a pilot project to address low level fly tipping, dog fouling littering and graffiti which is due to be rolled out by the end of November 2024.

**9. Councillor McMahon asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism and Business (Cllr Dent)**

**Question**

In almost all of our literature fresh air, sun and sea are promoted as, amongst other assets, reasons to visit Southend. Is this reflective of the administrations aspirational offer to visitors and residents?

**Answer**

The focus on fresh air, sun, and sea in our literature is aligned with the administration's goals for both visitors and residents. Southend's natural assets are a key part of what makes the city an attractive place to visit and live.

Many of our events and experiences take place outdoors, allowing people to enjoy these benefits while participating in community activities. We believe that by making the most of our outdoor spaces, we offer experiences that promote well-being and support local businesses, making Southend a great destination for all.

## **10. Councillor Warren asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Community Safety (Cllr Terry)**

### **Question**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety update the Council on the current strategies in place to reduce violent crime in Southend and provide an assessment of their effectiveness?

### **Answer**

The Council has a key role on Southend's strategic Community Safety Partnership (CSP), the senior partner board responsible for all things concerning crime and community safety.

Serious violence is a strategic priority for CSP for 24/25, and senior officers report to the board with progress on tackling violence and knife crime. This includes programmes to address violence, as well as data and crime performance management.

This year alone, the Council's award-winning Community Safety Unit (CSU), have supported and/or led on programmes to tackle violence, such as July's deployment of the national Knife Angel, lead roles on operational partnerships such as Op Union (seafront policing), Op Heatwave (weekend footfall management), joint policing and CSU hotspot patrols such as Op Dial, Op Grip and currently Op Dime . We took a lead role in the formation of Transport Safety Officers (TSO's), operating on our train networks, and contribute to a range of multi-agency action groups that address serious violence and ASB, including Southend Night Time Economy Group (NTEG), who have retained Southend's national Purple Flag (recognising safe and prosperous night time economies) status for 12 years.

Serious violence remains an Essex PFCC priority, and the Council is significantly involved in supporting the Violence and Vulnerability Unit (VVU), accessing VVU funds and grants to support many programmes in Southend.

The Council will continue to work with police and partners to reduce violence, reduce the fear of crime, and ensure Southend remains a safe place to live work and visit.

## **11. Councillor Sam Allen asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment and Waste (Cllr Hyde)**

### **Question**

When in opposition, the portfolio holder tried very hard to get details from the last administration on how wheelie bins would be implemented in areas high numbers of flats, HMOs, terraced streets, or in conservation areas as she recognised this was a matter of high importance for our residents.

The previous administration did not provide answers at the time. Could the portfolio holder let us know how this administration will provide answers to our residents on how properties will be assessed for suitability for wheelie bins and what the alternative will be if they are unable to accommodate bins?

### **Answer**

Thank you for your question. The previous administration introduced a general bin suitability policy in January 2024, against which all homes will be assessed. Following this, there is a review process whereby a resident will have an opportunity to challenge the initial assessment, and this reasoning will be duly considered.

As you have mentioned, I have long highlighted that there are some homes in this city where the type of property or location will present extra challenges under that policy, especially accommodating wheelie bins. We need greater clarity on the approach to HMOs, converted houses, conservation areas, densely-parked roads, and where there is limited frontage and/or pavement, and we look forward to working closely on these areas with SUEZ and benefitting from their experience of transitions in other authorities.

The previous administration took a hands-off approach to engaging with officers and the contractors on these issues, but it is not an approach I agree with. Instead, I am both engaging with our officers and meeting with SUEZ myself soon and will continue to do so regularly thereafter. We will discuss the remaining areas of concern and to ensure that over the next year we prepare a robust plan for every household. This will also include ensuring the feedback on specific areas of concern given by ward councillors during ward walks with SUEZ is acted upon and they identify practical solutions.

## **12. Councillor Longstaff asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment and Waste (Cllr Hyde)**

### **Question**

Given the claims of free bulky waste collection and the confusion this has caused residents, and those collecting bulky waste, could the portfolio holder please confirm for the public, and the incoming waste contractor, that bulky waste collection will not be free, as claimed, and how many items on the first collection, in any given year, will be free?

### **Answer**

Thank you for your question.

It is the intention of the administration to introduce a free bulky waste service as part of the new waste contract. This is part of this administration's ambition to build a city we can be proud of, by cleaning up our streets and tackling the blight of fly-tipping. This particular action makes it easier for residents to dispose of waste responsibly.

We are finalising the details of the free bulky waste offer with officers and the new contractor, drawing on best practices from other authorities who have had success with a free bulky waste offer. We will ensure that members and residents are given full details in due course.

### **13. Councillor Longstaff asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and the Local Plan (Cllr Anne Jones)**

#### **Question**

Regarding the Cattery development sites proximity to a very busy A127 roundabout, and flight path to the airport, with plans to expand to 10 million PPA (Passengers per annum), in order to measure noise and air pollution, both known to be detrimental to human health and well-being, could the portfolio holder please confirm whether there has been air and noise monitoring equipment installed at the site, as was indicated at the last council by Councillor Hyde. This would be essential in determining how the project moves forward?

#### **Answer**

Thank you for your question.

The proposed Cattery development is at an early phase in the process however on-site acoustic testing will begin shortly to inform our designs.

Air quality monitoring has been conducted next to the junction slightly west of the site since 2021. The annual NO<sub>2</sub> averages per year were:

2021: 18.7 Micrograms per cubic meter (ug/m<sup>3</sup>)

2022: 17.9 Micrograms per cubic meter (ug/m<sup>3</sup>)

2023: 17.1 Micrograms per cubic meter (ug/m<sup>3</sup>)

The limit for intervention is 40 Micrograms per cubic meter (ug/m<sup>3</sup>) so therefore this location does not have a concerning level of air quality and is improving year on year.

The site also falls outside the airport's 63 dB LAeq 16hr noise contour (which is the 'equivalent continuous sound level', i.e. the average sound level calculated to UK standards where LAeq noise contours are produced for the average summer day, where 'summer' is defined as the 92-day period from 16 June to 15 September and 'day' is defined as the 16-hour period 0700–2300 (GMT)) and, according to the most recent annual reports, the airport has received no noise complaints in this general location.

However, the Strategic Housing team will work closely with the Regulatory Services team to ensure acoustic comfort and air quality are reviewed throughout the design phase, including consideration of the use of monitoring equipment where this is deemed beneficial to inform our work. These points will also be addressed through the planning application process.

#### **14. Councillor Faulkner-Hatt asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism and Business (Cllr Dent)**

##### **Question**

What is being done to improve overnight tourism in Southend?

##### **Answer**

We are actively working to increase overnight tourism in Southend through several initiatives designed to extend visitors stays and enhance their experience of our city.

Our strategy includes developing a year-round events calendar with attractions like City Jam, the Halloween Parade, and seasonal events that encourage longer visits. We are also collaborating with local accommodation providers to offer appealing packages and incentives for extended stays.

In partnership with travel operators and London Southend Airport, we are also promoting Southend to both national and international visitors. This ensures the city remains accessible, with a range of travel options, to further encourage overnight tourism.

Additionally, we continue to showcase Southend's diverse offerings—museums, theatres, restaurants, shopping districts, parks, and our seven miles of coastline—positioning the city as a place to explore over multiple days.

Through collaboration with Visit Essex, the Southend Tourism Partnership, and local businesses, we are aligning marketing efforts to present Southend as a vibrant, multi-day destination.

These initiatives are part of our broader Tourism Strategy (Destination Southend) which highlights in more detail our approach to boosting the local economy by attracting more overnight visitors.

### **15. Councillor Ferguson asks a question of the Leader of the Council (Cllr Cowan)**

#### **Question**

How much money does the council need to spend on highway maintenance to maintain the asset and to avoid entering what is commonly known as ‘managed decline’?

#### **Answer**

Thank you for your question.

The Highway Maintenance budget is under extreme pressure and will need to see continued support, such as shown through this administration’s budget amendment which increased the capital budget by £2.5m to £6.5m, for results to be noticeable on the network.

To answer the question in broad terms, the council needs to spend at least £6m per annum in capital (resurfacing) for a sustained period, alongside around £2.5m in revenue (maintenance for potholes, replacement signs, road markings etc), to maintain the network in its current average condition or marginally improve it. Sustained, unfavourable weather conditions could increase this.

If the capital and revenue budgets were to fall below this level, then our average condition would deteriorate, which is often referred to as managed decline.

**16. Councillor Norman asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment and Waste (Cllr Hyde)**

**Question**

When was the option to tender for a weekly bin collection service removed from the bidding process?

**Answer**

Thank you for your question.

In October 2023, the then administration made the decision to proceed with alternate weekly recycling and waste collection as part of the ongoing waste procurement – this will see residual waste (also known as black bag waste) collected on alternate weeks (sometimes referred to as fortnightly collections). Following this decision, it was not possible for this administration to move back to weekly collections for residual waste through the competitive dialogue procurement process.

**17. Councillor Kinsella asks a question of the Leader of the Council (Cllr Cowan)**

**Question**

What positive action is this administration taking to support vulnerable people this winter?

**Answer**

Thank you for your question.

This administration has ring-fenced £250,000 of Household Support Fund for our ‘Southend Pensioner Support’ initiative.

The funding will be applied through the Council’s local welfare provision, the Essential Living Fund. Pensioners affected by the ongoing cost-of-living crisis can receive a grant for support with food and fuel costs. A basic award is £360.



Pensioners who are entitled to Pension Credit will keep entitlement to the Winter Fuel Allowance, so we have also introduced a new process to identify pensioners who are entitled to pension credit but not claiming. So far, we have identified 715 residents who will be helped to make their pension credit claim.

In addition, the council is partnering with Citizens Advice Southend and the Southend Emergency Fund to distribute some of the Household Support Fund to local charities and support groups, helping vulnerable residents including pensioners. By working with trusted local organisations, the Council ensures that the support reaches a broad cross-section of the community.

These are just a few of the proactive things this administration is doing to support our local residents.

#### **18. Councillor Webster asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment and Waste (Cllr Hyde)**

##### **Question**

Some residents have expressed concerns regarding the changes that are being implemented under the new waste management contract.

Could this administration have changed the waste collection contract when it formed in May?

##### **Answer**

Thank you for your question.

In May 2023 the initial tender was released which requested a pair of initial proposals for a new waste contract: the first continuing with a weekly collection service 'as is', the second providing an alternative proposal for an alternate weekly wheeled bin collection.

In September 2023, the previous cabinet reviewed the two pairs of proposals received, therefore two proposals which would have continued with the weekly collection service, and two with an alternate weekly service.

In October 2023, the previous administration made the decision to scrap the two proposals that kept weekly collections and proceed only with the two alternate weekly collection proposals to the next stage of procurement.

Then in January 2024 they determined the wheeled bin policy, which outlined who would receive a bin and the limits of what waste would be collected.

Residents will be switched to the new alternate weekly service next October (2025).

Whilst this administration has inherited these decisions, we are determined to spend the next year scrutinising the detail of how this will work for Southend, and ensuring we are preparing residents for the change with regular communication and accessible information.

### **19. Councillor Moyies asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments (Cllr Collins)**

#### **Question**

How much Council Tax was raised last year 2023/24 from properties within the West Shoebury ward North of the Railway?

#### **Answer**

Thank you for your question, Councillor Moyies.

Unfortunately, the Council does not report on council tax information at ward level, as it is not statutorily required or needed to carry out Council Tax functions.

**20. Councillor Moyies asks a question of the Leader of the Council (Cllr Cowan)**

**Question**

How much has been spent in West Shoebury Ward North of the C2C railway on Pavement and Road resurfacing in the past 10 years?

**Answer**

Our records go back to 2018/19 when the works ordering process started on our current asset management system.

Since 2018/2019, £297,109 has been spent on highway improvement and resurfacing schemes in the area north of the railway line, within West Shoebury ward.

**21. Councillor Davidson asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment and Waste (Cllr Hyde)**

**Question**

On Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> September, following a period of very heavy rain, a dark plume was observed in the Thames estuary in the vicinity of Chalkwell Beach. Initially it was feared that this was the result of a sewage outflow.

Please could the portfolio holder provide an update on the outcome of the investigations by Anglian Water and the Environment Agency into this incident?

**Answer**

Thank you for your question.

As soon as I was made aware of the incident, I ensured we engaged with Anglian Water and checked that the Environment Agency had been alerted. Anglian Water investigated the cause of the dark plume and confirmed that it was surface water and not sewerage or storm flow. The evidence for this was accepted by the Environment Agency.

Specifically, it was surface water discharge from the Anglian Water surface water pumping station at Chalkwell Esplanade. The pumping station was running for approximately 40 seconds, at approximately 2pm on 8th September. Although nearby, the Combined Sewage Overflow at Chalkwell did not discharge at that time.

When a surface water pumping station hasn't operated for a while, silt from road run-off can settle to the bottom meaning that when it's disturbed by incoming flow, it mixes the silt and, in this case, caused the dark plume which was witnessed off Chalkwell Esplanade.

## **22. Councillor Stuart Allen asks a question of the Leader of the Council (Cllr Cowan)**

### **Question**

Over the past 7 years, the Greens have been pushing the portfolio holder's predecessors to try and improve provisions for electric car charging points in Leigh.

From this year, car manufacturers are forced to sell an ever increasing percentage of their cars as electrified leading to an outright ban of Internal Combustion Engine cars in the 2030s

Today, Leigh Ward does not have a single public charging point of any speed for use by its residents.

Will the portfolio holder please provide an update as to when Leigh ward residents are to receive a single low or high speed charger?

### **Answer**

Thank you for your question.

The Energy Saving Trust is currently in the final stages of reviewing our contract documents, which is a requirement of the LEVI fund before we can run a procurement. The aim is to issue tender documents before the end of this calendar year then engage with potential charge point suppliers.

Once a preferred bidder is identified through the process, following best practice advice, our partner will engage residents in a consultation to identify electric vehicle charging needs in each ward. It is anticipated that roads in wards that predominately have little or no off-street parking will form part of the first phase of charger installation.

We expect the first phase to be in late summer/early autumn 2025. The LEVI scheme is focussed on bringing low-voltage charge points to residential areas. Officers are also looking at other higher-speed charging options to supplement those already available across the city.

**23. Councillor Nadeem asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism and Business (Cllr Dent)**

**Question**

Southend Pier is a vital asset for our local economy, serving as a major attraction that draws visitors from near and far. The pier not only enhances the appeal of Southend-on-Sea as a seaside destination but also plays a significant role in supporting local businesses. Each visitor contributes to the economic vitality of the area, spending money in cafes, shops, and entertainment venues, which in turn sustains jobs and livelihoods for our residents. Moreover, the pier provides a peaceful retreat for local residents, allowing them to enjoy the beautiful beach and coastal scenery.

This dual benefit creates a vibrant community atmosphere. By attracting visitors, we not only bolster our economy but enrich the quality of life for those who call Southend home.

I would like to inquire about the number of visitors we have welcomed to the iconic landmark of Southend Pier this civic year?

**Answer**

As of the end of September this year, Southend Pier has seen 268,319 visitors. The pier continues to draw both tourists and locals, supporting local businesses and remaining a unique and cherished attraction in the area.

## **24. Councillor Nadeem asks a question of the Leader of the Council (Cllr Cowan)**

### **Question**

As a councillor representing Blenheim Park Ward, I would like to raise concerns regarding the ongoing parking issues in the area such as Grange Park Drive, Pavilion Drive, Cricketfield Grove, and Cheltenham Drive. We are witnessing poor and reckless parking, also near various schools, which is putting children, parents and other road users at risk.

In several locations, there is a noticeable absence of enforcement officers, leading to vehicles being parked dangerously on double yellow lines. This not only creates hazards for pedestrians, pushchair and wheelchair users but also contributes to congestion at the corners of those relevant roads. Additionally, there are irresponsible electric charging cables obstructing pathways, further complicating the situation.

It is crucial that enforcement action is taken against those whose reckless behaviour is endangering the safety of our residents. Could I ask if there is any possibility of increasing the number of enforcement officers in our area?

### **Answer**

Thank you for your question.

This administration has increased the number of Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) this financial year, funded through our budget amendment in February. CEOs regularly visit Pavilion Drive, due to the issues continually reported to us, associated primarily with the car dealerships.

The Parking team has recently set up joint operations with the Police to attend this location to advise and reinforce responsibilities that businesses have to park vehicles in a compliant and safe manner. Together, we expect to be successful in encouraging local businesses to be more considerate of residents, pedestrians and other road user needs.

The most effective way for anyone to report a parking problem is via MySouthend (Report a parking problem). The Council's parking contractor will attend the area within 1 hour of the report being received and take the relevant action (during working hours).

The information received via this method enables the team to prioritise their patrols and ensure they are present where practicable.

## **25. Councillor Courtenay asks a question of the Leader of the Council (Cllr Cowan)**

### **Question**

Can the Leader please outline his expectations for the kind of work his Portfolio Holders are expected to undertake to fulfil their brief?

### **Answer**

Thank you for your question.

A Cabinet Member is the spokesperson for the policy area or 'portfolio' they are responsible for. They lead on developing council policy and make recommendations to the Cabinet, give guidance on budget priorities, monitor performance and ensure that strategic objectives align to the council's overall vision and Corporate Plan.

All Cabinet Members are expected to contribute to debate and decision-making, work with all councillors and officers to make sure that the overview and scrutiny process works correctly and represent the council at a national and local level.

**26. Councillor Cartey asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Major Projects and Regulatory Services (Cllr Robinson)**

**Question**

Could the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Major Projects and Regulatory Services, please provide an update on the Council's existing Levelling-Up projects?

**Answer**

Thank you for your question.

Works have commenced on site at the Cliffs Pavilion and will continue throughout 2025 with the venue remaining operational throughout the construction period.'

Following a successful Marine Parade consultation, works are being programmed for late autumn, starting on the northern side that sees the greatest impact from increased climate related storm frequency and intensity.

The planning and marine licence application for Leigh Port will be submitted in November along with issuing a tender to procure a works contractor.



## **27. Councillor Poulton asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Climate, Environment and Waste (Cllr Hyde)**

### **Question**

Earlier this year there was an announcement of £1m to be invested into improving 7 selected Southend parks, including Oakwood Park in Eastwood Park ward. A consultation document was released showing outline plans to residents, with a deadline of May 6<sup>th</sup> for feedback.

On June 30<sup>th</sup>, the portfolio holder announced she was “thrilled to be able to deliver” these improvements. Can the Portfolio Holder confirm when the finalised plans were sent out for procurement, when the finalised plans for Oakwood Park will be released and when these works will commence?

### **Answer**

Thank you for your question.

Unfortunately, alongside the public consultation on the playground investment programme (introduced by our joint administration the year prior), severe cuts were made to the Parks department by the previous administration, leading to extreme capacity issues to incorporate the feedback and finish the design work.

However, I have been working closely with officers to get this project back up to speed, and over the summer the team have been reviewing the plans post the consultation and conducting the final site surveys.

We intend to go out to procurement this month, with works to start early 2025. This includes the plan for Oakwood Park, with the intention to do the hard landscaping as early as possible in the year to maximise the enjoyment of the new play space next summer.

## **28. Councillor Garston asks a question of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing (Cllr Anne Jones)**

### **Question**

Following the tragedy at Grenfell Tower the Tower Block Cecil Court was fitted with sprinklers which is a very appropriate safety feature.

It was done on an experimental basis.

Can the Portfolio Holder advise the Council if the Administration has any plans to continue this programme into other blocks of flats owned by the Council?

### **Answer**

Thank you for your question.

The council and South Essex Homes continue to work closely to afford fire safety in all our homes the highest priority. This includes our high-rise residential buildings and, whilst these are all well protected and have in place the appropriate measures already, we are currently considering installing further systems such as annunciation and fire suppression measures like sprinklers.

Considerable work has already been undertaken and all high rise and other relevant residential settings have seen much investment in recent years, seeing the installation and regular testing of fire doors and smoke alarms and their replacement where required; compartmentation of buildings to stop the spread of fire and smoke between different areas; and further investment this year in ventilation systems in 4 of our tower blocks, with more programmed in subsequent years. All of this is informed and supported by an ongoing programme of risk assessment.

The potential additional investment in measures such as sprinklers is being considered alongside other planning necessary to maintain our homes to the best standards we can and as part of our Housing Revenue Account programming.