

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Council Meeting – 13th December 2012

Question from Mr Majzoub Ali to the Leader of the Council

Question

SBC Councillors appointed to outside bodies

A Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust Governor wrote, inter alia, the following:-

I think the contribution from appointed Governors is generally rather disappointing.-

[Reference: Agenda item 74/11 - Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust Board of Governors' Meeting, 27th September 2011]

I would be most grateful if Southend Borough Council would kindly state whether Councillors appointed to outside bodies are expected to report back to the Council so that their colleagues are aware of their regular attendance and positive contributions to the outside bodies they have been appointed to.

For example Councillors appointed to South Essex NHS, South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust, Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and South Essex Homes.

Are there any mechanisms to scrutinise the effectiveness of these appointments?

Answer

The Council makes appointments to outside bodies each year, which include local government association bodies, partnership bodies and voluntary organisations. In most cases, the appointments are elected members, but there are some organisations where officers are appointed.

Members of the Council report back activities of outside bodies through a variety of formal and informal channels. A number of the Members of the Council's Cabinet are appointed to outside bodies by virtue of the relevance of their portfolio responsibilities and the matters discussed at meetings of those bodies can inform Council decisions on particular issues. For example, Councillors Lamb, Cox and Moring are the Council's representatives on the Essex & Southend Joint Project Board (Waste) and their appointments helped to facilitate the decisions made by Council on 15th March 2012 in relation to the Residual Waste Treatment Contract. Similarly, benefits can be derived from the appointment of members of the Scrutiny Committees to outside bodies. Councillor Kaye, in her capacity as Chairman of the Community Services & Culture Committee, is the Council's representative on the East of England Health Scrutiny Committee Chairmen's Forum. As a result, regular feedback and update reports are received at scrutiny committee meetings and issues are raised on a range of topics.

A further example of the reporting back arrangements can be demonstrated by the informative presentation given by Councillor Lamb on 24th September to Members of the Council on the activities of the Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority. Although there is no formal stipulation to report back in this way, Members are encouraged to share their experiences as Council representatives.

The main purpose of appointments to outside bodies is to represent the Council. However, each Member is responsible for providing feedback to the Council on specific issues raised at meetings of those bodies as they feel appropriate. Where significant issues are considered, Members do report back to the Council through a wide range of mechanisms which include the relevant Cabinet Member, Scrutiny process, working parties and Directors and other officers.