

## **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

**Council Meeting – 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017**

### **Question 1 from Mr Webb to the Executive Councillor for Transport, Waste and Regulatory Services**

Over the past few months Veolia has been unable to present monthly recycle of household waste and not hitting the 54% target on a regular rate.

Question: Why is data not been produced monthly and why is the need to rebalance the targets and what strategies has the working party and Veolia going to put into action to increase and promote recycling in Southend?

#### **Answer**

All Local Authorities complete Waste Data Flow which is a statutory reporting requirement set by DEFRA, which has to be returned on a quarterly basis.

There have been some differences between the Council and Veolia in respect of waste data produced, and the Council is using the contract mechanism to enable these differences to be resolved.

The Council is currently working jointly with Veolia on recycling levels and a communications plan is being developed. A range of initiatives are being pursued to encourage residents to recycle as much as possible. In particular the 'Unusual Suspects' campaign launched in November, schools educational activities, work with community groups, establishment of the community liaison group, social media campaigns and press releases throughout the year.

### **Question 2 from Mr Webb to the Executive Councillor for Culture, Tourism and the Economy**

When will Leigh library be refurbished, what will be carried out in the time and how much money will be spent?

#### **Answer**

We have begun work, on planning the refurbishment of Leigh Library and expect work to be completed by April 2019. The scope of the refurbishment works will be similar to those at Westcliff and Kent Elms,

and the anticipated cost will be in the region of £150,000, a figure which reflects the fact that the building is listed.

**Question 3 from Mr George to the Executive Councillor for Health and Adult Social Care**

When was the contract for the St Luke's Health Centre awarded to Virgin Care and what actual scrutiny of this and similar contracts is being carried out (given that one of my local Ward Councillors knew nothing about it when asked at a public meeting and that Virgin Care sued the NHS last year) in the continued move towards the privatisation of the NHS?

**Answer**

I understand that Scrutiny Members and Ward Councillors have been advised about Virgin Care being awarded the contract which commenced on 2nd June 2016 and is for a period of 10 years, and that some further information has been circulated recently following questions raised at the most recent People Scrutiny Committee meeting. The particular contract is an APMS (Alternative Provider Medical Services) and is a contracting route available to enable NHS England to commission or provide primary medical services to the extent that they consider it necessary to meet all reasonable requirements

**Question 4 from Ms Dron to the Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning & Sustainability**

It would be helpful if as many Landlords as possible worked together with the Council to follow the potential Licensing process that the Southend Council is investigating, would the Housing Portfolio Holder agree?

**Answer**

At this stage we are still on a path of exploration and investigation of licensing of all residential landlords and will require a full range of views to inform our considerations. It is important that the Council works with partners in developing its thinking around licensing, including members of SEAL and national associations as well as individual landlords, tenants and residents alike. Additionally, the consultation conducted with all interested parties will be a further opportunity for landlords to have a say. We want to work with Landlords, not without them.

**Question 5 from Ms Dron to the Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning & Sustainability**

If the National professional organisations such as the NLA and the RLA, could help our town to develop 'Best Practice' with proper support and information, thus working with private landlords, who are absolutely critical to helping solve the housing issues in the Borough. Would the Portfolio Holder agree?

**Answer**

Licensing is expected to be part of the Council wider intent to improve the private rented section in Southend. While enforcement measures are prescribed in law, contributions from those professional organisations will give a landlord perspective on the introduction and conduct of licensing and will be welcome as part of the wider consultation and consideration of schemes.

**Question 6 from Ms Codarin to the Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning & Sustainability**

Has the Portfolio Holder sufficient time and manpower to research the possible cost and timescale of starting up different types of Licensing, and to then compare it to what the Borough can already do legally, (perhaps could have been doing), which might allow the updated SEAL scheme to operate within weeks, and at more moderate, even self-financing costs?

**Answer**

At this stage we are undertaking preliminary explorations of ideas and seeking to take a broad view of these. We will be seeking to identify a range of options, including their estimated benefits and costs. We are still on a path of exploration and investigation of this matter and at this point we do not wish to pre-empt the outcome of these explorations by commenting on the viability of one course of action over another. It is not an easy process, but it will be of value in the medium to long term.

**Question 7 from Ms Codarin to the Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning & Sustainability**

Has the Portfolio Holder considered that there might need to be another Consultation on any Proposal for Licensing, and what the costs of that might be to the taxpayers of the Borough?

## **Answer**

We are aware that there would need to be appropriate consultative work undertaken should this idea be progressed. It is also important that we fully understand the financial implications different approaches would entail. At this stage we are still on the path of exploration and investigation of this matter and at this point we do not wish to pre-empt the outcome by commenting on the viability of one course of action over another. In terms of costs, I would refer to the previous answer.

## **Question 8 from Mr Solomons to the Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning & Sustainability**

What is the basis for assertion in the Deputy Chief Executive (People's) Report that the recommendation in favour of compulsory Licensing in the PRS would result in no financial implications for the Council or wider community, or is this just a comment meaning that we are awaiting calculations?

## **Answer**

At this stage we are still exploring the idea of licensing and do not yet have all the necessary financial information. The statutory basis for licensing is that it is cost neutral to the Council; this means that the licence fee would be carefully calculated in order to achieve this. Resultant enforcement forms part of the normal statutory duty of the Council and so would be funded as part of the Council's normal duties.

## **Question 9 from Mr Solomons to the Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning & Sustainability**

What economic impact assessment has the Council made to ascertain the impact on local community and businesses should their lobbying efforts in favour of rent control succeed, and considering the Governments stated opposition to it what is to be accomplished here, and will the Council share any associated correspondence with the residents?

## **Answer**

The Council has only spoken with DCLG officials who have indicated orally that rent controls are not on Government agenda. A letter is about to be sent to the Government asking it to re-examine rent controls. Therefore at this stage options are being explored and investigated and no economic impact assessment has been undertaken.

However, analysis of costs and models will be undertaken as part of fuller consideration of different approaches should the response to our letter encourage further consideration.