

PUBLIC QUESTIONS
PLACE SCRUTINY - 9 APRIL 2018

Question 1 from Mr Webb to Executive Councillor for Culture, Tourism and the Economy, Cllr Holland:

Last year Westcliff Library held a Summer read that was increased from last year. Events was organised for children to read with their pyjamas and 34 attended, adults poetry session with a local author had 6 attended. Regularly successfully Story Rhymes on Tuesday for both sessions where 30 parents and toddlers come each time.

QUESTION: Why were there no activities at the Library in Easter for children and what activities will be planned for children, families and adults during Summer, Halloween and next Easter and who plans them?

ANSWER:

There was an activity at Westcliff over the Easter holidays, which was a community-led Easter Egg hunt.

We are currently working on the Summer Reading Challenge which is held during the summer holidays and the Childrens Book Festival which is held every October. Events for the childrens book festival are usually held at the Forum and in rotation, at one of the branch libraries. Last year, the branch event was held at Westcliff but not at any other branch.

The bedtime reading event when children dressed in their pyjamas and read books was not part of the Summer Reading Challenge events but was part of the Bedtime Reading event which was held at the Forum and one other branch; on this occasion it was the turn of Westcliff but it will be held at another branch this year, to ensure that we reach as many children as possible across the Borough.

We would like to be able to hold events regularly at all branches but with limited resources, both in terms of staff time and costs incurred when booking an author or in providing other entertainment, we have to be diligent and mindful of expenditure and hold events where there will be maximum attendance and impact.

We are not yet planning events for Easter 2019.

Events are currently planned by the Strategy and Development Manager.

Question 2 from Mr Webb to Executive Councillor for Transport, Waste & Regulatory Services – Cllr Cox

QUESTION: How many Environment officers are there in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 and do you think they are able to check, report and fix environmental issues in Westborough Ward and other wards in Southend at the expected monthly, quarterly, 6th Monthly and yearly to pick up Environment issues such as pavements, blocked drains, kerbs, potholes, lights above road signs, signs effectively?

ANSWER:

The entire Borough is divided in 6 areas and each area was covered by the Environmental Care Officers (ECO's) as part of their generic role whereby they undertook Highways inspections, picking up defects in carriageways, footways, street furniture, signs, drains as well as undertaking environmental enforcement where needed. They also monitored standards of cleanliness of roads, graffiti and monitoring of the Waste & Cleansing contract.

In 2017, the elements of highways inspections were separated from the role of the Environmental Care Officers. An additional role of Senior Highways Inspectors was created supported by 6 Highways Inspectors. This change was implemented to ensure a greater focus on maintenance of our roads and footways, improve the situation and better co-ordinate our inspections, reactive and planned maintenance. The current organisational arrangements are sufficient to meet foreseeable needs.

Question 1 from Mr Grubb to Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Sustainability – Cllr Flewitt

There does seem to be a lack of joined up thinking when it comes to the planning and highways.

Planning Permission is being given for new residential developments with off street parking but a dropped kerb is not in place.

One such development is located in Fairfax Drive, behind The Chase School, next to the children's playground, opposite Fleetwood Avenue.

A few years ago a new property was built with a hard standing to the front of the property, where a times, two vehicles are parked but a dropped kerb is not in place.

Why are we in this position where this problem is in place without any of the departments mentioned above willing to except the responsibility for the problem?

The problem as highlighted above is not unique.

ANSWER:

The development at 423 Fairfax Drive referred to in the question included a crossover as part of the planning application, this was sufficient to park two vehicles. This was shown on the submitted plans approved on the 8th July 2013. If a development is not built in accordance with the approved plans the Council has powers under The Town and Country Planning Acts to take enforcement action if it is considered expedient to do so. It is a matter for the Council to decide whether it is expedient and appropriate to take action in the light of all the relevant material considerations.

Question 2 from Mr Grubb to Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Sustainability – Cllr Flewitt

When there is a planning application and as a result, resident/residents write letters of objection, and in due course the planning application is refused, the person who has objected will receive a letter from the planning department, confirming the planning application has been refused.

However the letter does not give the reasons for the refusal, even though there is plenty of space on the reverse side of the letter. This does put the writer of the letter who has objected to the planning application at a disadvantage for the following reason.

As we all know the applicant who has submitted the plans which have been refused, will submit amended plans, but unless the person who submitted the objection in the first place knows the reason why the first set of plans were refused, the person cannot see if the new plans cover the reasons for refusal.

Therefore I do believe it would be beneficial for everyone, if the reasons for the refusal were put in plain English on the reverse side of the letter as mentioned above.

ANSWER:

When a decision is made on a planning application and the council writes to inform a person who has made a representation of the outcome it includes a link to the Council's web site where the decision notice in full can be viewed at any time.