

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30th NOVEMBER 2015

Questions from Members of the Public

Questions from Mr David Webb to the Executive Councillor for Enterprise, Tourism and Economic Development

(Councillor Ian Gilbert will respond to these questions as the substitute portfolio holder.)

Question 1

Over the past 3 years there have been reductions in services at Westcliff Library. The Citizen Advice Bureau and employment was closed due to the Conservative run council changing it from a dropping in service to appointment only this made it difficult for residents to book an appointment. During the summer read popular face painting was stopped at Westcliff Library. In the recent children's book festival most of the events were held at the forum and one at Shoeburyness.

Can some of these events such as guest authors (adults, children), face painting (Easter & Summer, Winter), benefits support be implemented back at Westcliff Library next year (2015)?

Response

The Council has worked hard over the past few years to ensure that Westcliff Library and all the branch libraries have not seen a reduction in opening hours or library services.

This has always included hosting sessions for third-parties such as CAB. It is in the nature of these arrangements that the third-parties change when and where they provide the service to best suit their needs and those of their clients.

The library service successfully held the Summer Reading Challenge at Westcliff Library this year. The service experimented with changing where and when it provides different activities such as face- painting and will review this again for next year. We are in discussion with the Essex Book Festival over which venues they will use in Southend for next year's festival. While we are keen to see events at several libraries the venues need to be suitable practically and economically for the Book Festival.

Question 2

Since the beginning of September 2015 – 31st December the council have introduced free swimming for over 40's on Wednesday. This tackles obesity, encourages better health long term. I have taken up this offer. How many over 40's have used this at Belfairs and Garon's Park during this period and will this be extended into the New Year and for how long?

Response

The over 40's free swimming offer covers Belfairs Swim Centre, Shoeburyness Swim Centre & Southend Swimming & Diving Centre.

The 40plus free swimming scheme will be reviewed in the middle of December; and subject to the budget being available it may be extended until the 31st March 2016.

The number of people that have taken up the free swimming offer has increased month on month from September:

Sept - 271

Oct - 611

Nov - 729