

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Council Meeting –19th July 2018

Question 1 from Mr Kelleway to the Cabinet Member for Growth

Question

At the February meeting of Council I asked whether Leigh Traders had expressed concerns regarding possible impacts on their business in respect of the proposed park and ride scheme at Leigh Railway station.

Part of the answer given was. 'Leigh Town Council and Leigh Traders Association were consulted on the SCAAP, but made no representations in respect of a park and ride.'

Subsequent press comment included in The Leigh Times quoted both Leigh Town Council and Leigh Traders Association denying that there was any consultation.

May I ask precisely in what form Leigh Town Council and Leigh Traders Association were consulted in respect of the proposed scheme?

Answer

When the Council was undertaking the SCAAP process, I can confirm both Leigh Town Council and Leigh Traders Association were consulted (by way of email and letter) about the SCAAP.

It was not proposed within the SCAAP that there should be a park and ride scheme at Leigh-on-Sea train station. The potential of Leigh Station to be utilised as a park and ride site does not form part of any policy in the SCAAP because it only covers the Town Centre and central seafront area.

However the idea was raised during the examination in public hearing, which is why it was referred to by the Inspector in his report.

The reason it was mentioned in the Examination was because it was referred to in a parking report prepared in November 2016 as something to consider for the future.

There is no specific proposal for park and ride at this time should this park and ride option be developed in the future the Council will consult with all interested at the appropriate time.

Question 2 from Mr Kelleway to the Cabinet Member for Growth

Question

At the February meeting of the Council I asked the following question;

The planning Inspector concluded that overall the SCAAP was unsound and has stipulated 22 modifications required to make it sound. He accepted entirely a critical point for businesses on the seafront and high street that developments have to, in his words 'consume their own smoke' (Para 71), of the report. This appears to mean, any developer proposing to redevelop the Seaway car park must ensure the proposed development meets its own needs, as well as ensuring there is no net loss of existing parking. How will the Council ensure that the proposed development at Seaway Car Park incorporates both enough spaces for the development AND maintain the spaces currently provided at Seaway for other users, particularly tourists? Or is the Council facilitating a further relocation of some spaces away from the car park to enable development to come forward, and if so, has the Council identified the proposed site for relocation?

The answer supplied gave absolutely no indication as to how the 480 (currently 661 spaces) proposed spaces in the current proposal will provide sufficient spaces for the development AND maintain the spaces currently provided at Seaway for other users, particularly tourists. So I would now ask the question again and this time may I be given a proper response?

Answer

Care needs to be taken to not confuse: a) the SCAAP, b) the agreement between the Council (as landowner) and Turnstone and c) any application made to the Council (as Planning Authority) by Turnstone.

a) To claim the SCAAP was unsound mischaracterises the position. The SCAAP followed the usual plan making process. The draft SCAAP was consulted on and as a result of that consultation modifications were proposed by the Council to the SCAAP. Some modifications were suggested by the Inspector as a result of the Examination in Public the Inspector in his final report concluded:

"The Southend Central Area Action Plan (SCAAP) provides an appropriate basis for the planning of the Central Area of the Borough over the plan period to 2021 providing a number of main modifications

(MMs) are made to it. Southend-on-Sea Borough Council has specifically requested me to recommend any MMs necessary to enable the plan to be adopted”.

There is nothing unusual in this process.

- b) The Council has agreed with Turnstone that whatever they do on the site they must provide 480 car parking spaces as a minimum. This is the number of spaces that were there at the time that discussions were started and the usual number of spaces provided.

The Council wanting to make best use of its land has been able (chiefly by moving the Coach Park to the newly provided temporary car park at the Gas Works site) to provide some additional temporary parking spaces at Seaway (totally 661 to which you refer).

- c) The Inspector was not considering an actual planning application but the draft SCAAP. Quite separately when Turnstone decided to submit a planning application (there is no current application lodged with the Council) officers will consider, before making a recommendation to members of the Development Control Committee whether that application will provide sufficient spaces.

I am not being awkward here, but until we know exactly what Turnstone wants to provide on the site, I am not in a position to say. When the application is submitted it will be dealt with on its individual merits and assessed against the Council planning policies (including policy DS5).

Question 3 from Mr Webb to the Cabinet Member for Public Protection

Question

Since the contract between Southend Council and Veolia what parts of the contract are Veolia meeting and what parts are Veolia not meeting and what action will the portfolio holder put into place to ensure Veolia meet them to the expected level and agreements in the contract?

Answer

I am very happy to advise that the Veolia contract is fully functioning and delivering high levels of performance across all areas.

In answer to the question I can also advise that Veolia in the main are meeting the requirements of the contract and in some cases exceeding some of the key areas such as cleansing, where their performance has exceeded the set targets with some areas achieving the highest levels of cleanliness since we started measuring standards.

Unfortunately, the recycling performance has been a concern as it has been across the country as the recycling world has changed considerably which has been the main factor for lower recycling nationally. However, our end of year recycling figure was encouraging and recovering at 42.32% and the Council's target for 2018/19 has been set for 46.38% and both Veolia and the Council are very confident that this target will be met.

The 'Unusual Suspects' campaign that was launched last November is already starting to have an impact and Veolia have also engaged 3 new Recycling Officers that will be promoting recycling and undertaking household visits across the borough will further encourage householders to partake in recycling their household waste'.

Question 4 from Mr Webb to the Cabinet Member for Growth

Question

The town centre looks depleted and run down with empty shops, homeless, beggars, etc.

What are the Conservative Council policies and how much funding will be found and where from to regenerate the town centre and how will they attract business, residents, visitors back to the town centre and tackle the infrastructure issues of parking?

Answer

The Council is currently engaging with Southend residents, businesses and visitors as to their aspirations for Southend in 2050. This will be used to establish a vision for the town and action plans over 5, 10, 15 years. The evolution of the town centre will undoubtedly be part of that work going forward and we will need to work with our partners, residents and businesses to achieve it.

We recognise the challenges currently being faced by Southend town centre and that these are trends being seen up and down the country.

The town centre has been a focus for us and we have made significant levels of investment in it as a result both in day to day service delivery and specific major projects. It is complex and must be considered holistically, taking into account the mix of economic, social, health, environmental, education and community factors which influence the look, feel and operation of the town. In order to support the town centre the Council must, and does, work closely with a range of partners who bring different powers, funding streams, resources and expertise. We must also engage with private landlords and businesses as the Council is not a significant property owner in the central area.

Some of our activity in the town centre includes:

- Adoption of the Southend Central area Action Plan which provides a strategic planning framework for the town centre and is vital in shaping development. We are also preparing the Southend New Local Plan which will be a suite of documents identifying how land is used, determining what will be built where. Furthermore we are working with the other South Essex authorities to develop a Joint Strategic Plan to ensure that strategic matters can be planned and co-ordinated effectively across South Essex, therefore ensuring compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework.
- The Better Queensway regeneration scheme which is in the middle of its procurement process and will transform the northern section of the town centre through private investment.
- Progressing the development of Forum 2 in partnership with South Essex College funded by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, the College and the Council which will bring further footfall to the town centre while supporting education provision, the cultural offer and the digital and creative sector.
- Working in partnership with Southend BID through funding, officer support and influencing decisions through the committee. The BID raises most of its funding through a business rates levy.
- Working in partnership with the police, HARP and other related agencies in regards to the street community. We have recently secured £425,000 Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to fund additional outreach staff
- Approved implementation of a wheeled sports facility at Warrior Square to be funded by the Council.
- Delivering a parking and access strategy which takes a holistic view on access to and around the town centre.

- Secured some £20m from the Local Enterprise Partnership to enhance highways infrastructure on the A127 to improve access to the town as well as in the town centre itself. This includes the Southend Central Area Transport Scheme on London Road which is improving public realm and streetscape at the north of the High Street.