

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Council Meeting – 21st February 2019

Question 1 from Councillor Ayles to the Cabinet Member for Growth

Question

In the event of a major pier fire, would the cabinet holder responsible for the pier, be confident in the current firefighting system to be fit for purpose and not fail under all weather and fire conditions, considering that the main water supply pipe has been changed from plastic to steel?

Answer

Fire crews regularly visit the Pier to familiarise themselves with the site, test flow rates and carry out some small scale exercises. Two different fire crews have attended the Pier during January this year for familiarisation and to update their firefighting plans. We also participate in major exercises to test responses in various scenarios with the Coastguard, Fire, Police and Ambulance services.

The sprinkler system is serviced and tested on a regular basis, the sprinkler system has a frost protection mechanism which circulates water at low temperature to prevent the pipework freezing in extreme conditions. As well as the main sprinkler system there are breeching points for either a fire tender or tug boats to connect into should mains water supply fail. There is also a pumped sea water hydrant system to protect the pier head in addition to the main sprinkler system.

Question 2 from Councillor Ayles to the Cabinet Member for Growth

Question

I request a response as to why a cabinet holder diverted the supply of bicycles from the recycling centres at Stock Road and Leigh to the community reuse shop at Stock Road.

That led to the supply of bicycles to Southend Council bicycle recycling centre at Brunel road being curtailed. This led to the closure of the bicycle recycling centre that was opened and supported by Southend Council to encourage more residents to safely cycle, thus reducing pollution and assisting in healthy residents.

The cycles sold on from Stock Road are not serviced and checked for safety as the cycles from the Southend council bicycle recycling centre were, as well as fitted for size. If there are no bicycles to recycle you cannot recycle them.

Answer

Sustainable Motion, the company that ran the Recycle Centre, had an agreement with Community Reuse who are a sub-contractor of Veolia to supply up to 10 good quality bicycles per month to Sustainable Motion with the remaining being retained and sold through the Reuse Shop. The closure of Sustainable Motion was made on business grounds and wasn't in relation to the number or quality of the bicycles they received from Veolia.

Question 3 from Councillor Burton to the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

Question

Can the Cabinet Member confirm a date when Pickett's Avenue will be resurfaced and whether this will be the entire road or a section of it?

Answer

Picketts Avenue is part of our Planned Maintenance Carriageway Resurfacing programme for next financial year 2019/20. The date for these works will be in the Autumn, once detailed specifications and survey work has been completed and discussed with our contractor.

Question 4 from Councillor McDonald to the Cabinet Member for Growth

Question

Please could the Cabinet Member provide the following information about public toilets in the Borough:

- The number of male toilets, female toilets and unisex toilets that are currently open and available for public use and their locations.
- The number of male toilets, female toilets and unisex toilets that are currently closed or not available for public use and their locations.

- The number of urinals or toilets that are made available temporarily on specific nights or occasions and their locations.

Answer

1. Currently, 92% of our public toilets (34 out of 37) are available for public use, including:

9 x unisex, 8 x female and 9 x male public toilets are open permanently and 4 x female and 4 x male toilets are open only during the summer season (April – September) and will all be available during that period as planned.

The location of permanent public toilets are:

Bell Wharf, Old Leigh High Street – Unisex
 Chalkwell Park, London Road – unisex
 Dalmatia Road – 1 x male 1 x female
 Elm Road – unisex
 George Street entrance to East Beach – 1 x male 1 x female
 Marine parade (Southend)/City Beach – 2 blocks Unisex
 Ness Road 1 x male 1 x female
 Seaway – 1 x male
 Shoebury Common Road– 1 x male 1 x female
 Shorefields, Western Esplanade – 1 x male 1 x female
 Sutherlands Boulevard – unisex
 Hamlet Court Road– unisex
 Crowstone, Chalkwell Esplanade – unisex
 3 Shells Lagoon, Western Esplanade – unisex
 Belfairs Park – 1 x male 1 x female
 Shoebury Park – unisex
 Priory Park – 1 male 1 x female
 Southchurch Park – 1 x male 1 x female
 Southchurch Park Café – unisex

The location of seasonal public toilets are:

Chalkwell Esplanade - 1 x male, 1 x female
 East Beach – 1 x male 1 x female
 Thorpe Bay Corner, Eastern Esplanade – 1 x male 1 x female
 Alexandra Bowling Green, Cambridge Road 1 x male 1 x female

2. In relation to the number of toilets that are currently closed or not available for public use, there are only 3 toilets that are currently closed and out of use:

- Eastwood Park – unisex (currently closed due to vandalism/anti-social behaviour, however these are opened for scheduled community events in park)
 - Southchurch Hall Gardens – unisex (currently closed due to vandalism and to disrupt anti-social behaviour, however we are aiming to get them open again for the summer season from April)
 - Seaway – 1 x female (currently closed due to fire damage)
3. In relation to the number of urinals or toilets that are made available temporarily on specific nights or occasions, this number fluctuates during each year depending on the number and type of events taking place and the anticipated footfall those events bring.

Locations for portable urinal locations (for use during the night time economy on Friday and Saturday evenings):

Alexandra Road - opposite old ABC Cinema
York Road - side of Marks and Spencers store
Whitegate Road - side of Halifax
Warrior Square - by Mayhem night club
Dead end of London Road - by WH Smith

During most years, events take place around the borough and depending on participation levels, some events include the provision of additional public toilets. Additional temporary toilets have also been sited on City Beach during busy periods, the amount has fluctuated so is not possible to confirm precisely what provision is made; however, the site is planned to be supplemented during School Holidays and weekend's from Easter – September.

Question 5 from Councillor Dent to the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

Question

Does the portfolio holder for Infrastructure, in his capacity as the council's representative on the Pension Strategy Board of the Essex Pension Fund, feel that arms dealers and tobacco companies are appropriate investments for the council's pension fund?

Answer

The main responsibility of the Essex Pension Fund is to ensure it has sufficient funds available to pay pensions in relation to over 160,000 present and future pensioners. The Fund's asset strategy, as determined by the Investment Steering Committee (ISC), is therefore based on an objective of maximising investment return.

The ISC has appointed specialist external managers to a range of investment mandates.

The ISC does not place restrictions on investment managers in choosing legally permitted investments in companies, except in limiting the size of single investments. The ISC expects investment managers to place their primary consideration on financially material factors when selecting investments for inclusion in the portfolio, including any Environmental, Social & Governance factors considered to be financially material. The Fund's Investment Strategy Statement (ISS) is scheduled for review and consultation in the first half of 2019.

Question 6 from Councillor J Garston to the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

Question

In recognising the help this Conservative administration has provided the Town Centre with parking, in terms of short stay at a reasonable cost, could my following suggestion be considered?

"Many yellow lines exist close to the High Street, if some of these were removed then some free spaces could be offered with a maximum stay of either half or one hour"

Answer

It is recognised that there are some areas of lines to be removed and while the progression of amendments was approved by the Traffic Regulation Working Party on 13th September 2018, this is programmed for consideration and investigation in March and April with any resulting amendments being proposed in the later part of May. Any comments received in relation to the proposals can be considered by the Working Party in June.

Short term paid for parking is to be provided in a new parking area in Pitmans Close and the existing car park in London Road west of the Cinema.

Question 7 from Councillor J Garston to the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

Question

Does the Portfolio holder agree with me that Tylers Avenue Car park should have an entrance and exit in Tylers Avenue? This simple change would save congestion in this area and make access easier for motorists coming from the West of the Town.

Answer

The layout, entrance and exit arrangements for Tylers Avenue and York Road Car Parks are currently under review to allow for easier access.

Currently, vehicles can access the car park from Queensway via York Road (southern section) or from Chichester Road via York Road (northern section).

The entry arrangements are planned to be retained in Baltic Avenue to allow for ease of access from Queensway. Moving the entry to Tylers Avenue could be problematic as the western junction of the street is signal controlled and queues could prevent access to the car park when the signals are on red.

Providing an additional entry into the car park from Tylers Avenue would result in a significant loss of spaces due to the traffic flow requirements around the car park. This has been investigated as part of the layout work and moving the access and exit to Baltic Avenue provides a greater increase of parking bays.

The proposed new layout with an access and exit onto Baltic Avenue increases the current number of spaces to 381, an increase of 41 spaces.

This work is being done in conjunction with a new right turn facility to allow vehicles travelling southbound on Queensway to turn into York Road thus making access far easier than present arrangements which entail vehicles using Seaway Roundabout to then head northbound on Queensway and turn left into York Road.