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SOUTHEND-ON-SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL

Meeting of The Council

Date: Thursday, 13th June, 2019
Place: Council Chamber - Civic Suite

Present: Councillor J Lamb (Chair)
Councillors M Flewitt (Vice-Chair), S Aylen, J Beck, H Boyd, L Burton, A Bright, K Buck, D Burzotta, A Chalk, P Collins, D Cowan, T Cox, M Davidson, A Dear, M Dent, F Evans, K Evans, N Folkard, D Garston, George, I Gilbert, S Habermel, T Harp, B Hooper, D Jarvis, A Jones, M Kelly, H McDonald, D McGlone, K Mitchell, A Moring, C Mulroney, D Nelson, C Nevin, K Robinson, L Salter, I Shead, M Stafford, M Terry, P Van Looy, S Wakefield, C Walker, N Ward, P Wexham, C Willis and R Woodley

Start/End Time: 6.30 - 7.40 pm

23 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ayling, Borton, Garne and Thompson.

24 Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made at the meeting:

(a) Councillor Flewitt – Minute 25 (Notice of Motion: Traveller Incursions in the Borough) – non-pecuniary interest – has written and talked about occupation of public land from time to time;;

(b) Councillor Wakefield – Minute 25 (Notice of Motion: Traveller Incursions in the Borough) – non-pecuniary interest - reference to public security gates;

25 Notice of Motion - Traveller incursions in the Borough

The Worshipful the Mayor had agreed to call this Council meeting following a requisition by 5 Councillors, pursuant to Section 3 of Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972, to consider a Notice of Motion on traveller incursions in the Borough, which was before Councillors for consideration.

The Council also considered a report from the Strategic Director (Legal and Democratic Services) providing advice on whether a Borough-wide injunction against unauthorised traveller encampments could be obtained.

In accordance with Standing Order 12(a) a named vote was taken on proposal 4 of the Notice of Motion, (officers seek through the courts a borough-wide injunction to deter illegal encampments and ensure their swift removal) as follows:

For Proposal 4:

Cllrs Aylen, Boyd, Bright, Buck, Burzotta, Cox, Davidson, Dear, F. Evans, K. Evans, Flewitt, Folkard, D Garston, Habermel, Jarvis, McGlone, Moring, Nelson, Salter, Van Looy, Wakefield, Walker and Ward (23).

Against Proposal 4:

Cllrs Beck, Burton, Chalk, Collins, Cowan, Dent, George, Gilbert, Harp, Hooper, Jones, Kelly, McDonald, Mitchell, Mulroney, Nevin, Robinson, Shead, Stafford, Terry, Wexham, Willis and Woodley (23)

Abstentions:

Cllr Lamb (The Worshipful the Mayor) (1)

The Worshipful the Mayor used his casting vote against proposal 4 of the notice of motion.

Therefore, Proposal 4 was not carried.

Resolved:

That, in accordance with Standing Order 8.4, the following Notice of Motion including the proposals set out in 1-3 of the Motion, be referred to the Cabinet:

"Traveller Incursions in the Borough"

This Council shares public concern about travellers illegally occupying public open spaces and other areas in the Borough. Whenever travellers are evicted by the Council from one site they move on to occupy another available site in the vicinity.

This has been going on for many months at the expense of public funds. The process of undertaking travellers' needs assessments, court orders and injunctions is not only costly and time consuming but also causes a good deal of inconvenience and anxiety to the local residents. Subsequent cleaning up and securing of the sites after the travellers' eviction is achieved at further expense to the taxpayer.

By their very nature, our public open spaces need to remain open and accessible to residents. Whilst the Council uses a number of methods to seek to prevent illegal encampments on our public open spaces, this is difficult to achieve without stopping residents from accessing them.

The Council therefore seeks to achieve a balance between actively discouraging illegal encampments and maintaining access for residents from those who are determined to set up illegal encampments without affecting residents' rights of access to their public open spaces.

A strong partnership approach to illegal encampments on our public open spaces between the Council and the Police is required. Police action can speed up the eviction process and we are dependent on the police service's ability to continue to support us in this way.

The Council therefore resolves that it should:

- 1. Take a proactive approach and take any additional measures that are required to secure our public open spaces in the borough by working closely with the business community, councillors and local residents on cost effective, practical and innovative solutions that help prevent illegal encampments whilst maintaining access for residents where possible.*
- 2. Continue to adopt a strong stance in order to permanently prevent travellers from illegally occupying public spaces in the future.*
- 3. Take measures to improve communication with local residents when unauthorised encampments do occur, to ensure clear and regular communications that our councillors distribute to residents where such issues have arisen in their wards.”*

Chairman: _____

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