

## **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

**Council Meeting – 18<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

### **Question 1 from Mr Webb to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities**

#### **Question**

Southend Council will spend 4.3 million pounds to buy homes to help families/individuals. The rent income will be used for a series of other targeted initiatives to help the homeless and the most vulnerable.

What are the specific target initiatives to help the homeless and most vulnerable from the income from council homes?

#### **Answer**

The Council's Acquisitions Programme for Council Housing, as set out in the Corporate Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, will utilise this budget of £4.3m to purchase properties from the open market for the purpose of Council housing. Increasing this supply of council housing will directly assist those people on the Council's Homeseeker's Register.

The Council is also progressing with plans for the next two phases of the HRA Land Review Project which will potentially see another 56 Council properties built over the next 2 years.

There are also a number of initiatives in place to specifically help homeless households:

- The Housing Solutions team is able to provide assistance to people facing homelessness through a wide variety of means.
- The team negotiates with landlords and family members, exploring all reasonable options to maintain tenancies where possible.
- Where this is not possible, the team are able to help people to secure alternative accommodation through the use of our rent deposit loan scheme and can also place appropriate households in to temporary accommodation.

Also through funding received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Council has put in place a number of options for people experiencing street homelessness.

These include;

- 6 multi agency outreach workers to provide direct assistance on the streets
- a homelessness sit-up service based at HARP's Bradbury centre providing additional emergency beds
- extending the Bradbury Centre opening hours from 5 days to 7
- facilitating an extra 20 units of move on accommodation to free up first stage emergency accommodation
- a co-ordinator to oversee the project
- additional funding for the Church Winter Night Shelter program, including funding for the co-ordinator, training for volunteers and laundry costs

### **Question 2 from Mr Webb to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Customer Contact**

#### **Question**

In the Conservative pledge on police they said they would spend £400,000 this year upgrading our CCTV equipment in Southend.

Will the new coalition Southend Council put more CCTV In Westborough to combat car crime, fly tipping and graffiti hotspots which is on the increase and when will this happen and how much will it cost?

#### **Answer**

The Council is currently progressing its CCTV upgrade program which includes digitilising all existing cameras in the Borough, and siting new cameras in new locations.

Current CCTV coverage in the Westborough area is a camera by the Palace Theatre, on London Road. This camera will be upgraded as part of the digitilisation programme.

An additional camera will be sited at London Rd junction with Fleetwood Avenue, and another on London Rd junction with Southbourne Grove. These are all in the Westborough ward and all part of the Council's investment into CCTV in 2019.

### **Question 3 from Ms McMahon to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Customer Contact**

#### **Question**

Current administration members recently overwhelmingly voted against the police advice, as was proposed by the Conservative Group, to introduce injunctions against travellers illegally camping on Southend and Shoebury sites.

Is this what their residents expect of their representatives?

#### **Answer**

I recently attended a stakeholder meeting to discuss traveller issues. The senior police officer present at this meeting confirmed that Essex Police have not requested or advised that the Council should seek a borough wide injunction in respect of travellers.

Essex Police felt the matter of illegal traveller encampments needed further review with key partners, to understand what options and activity were the most appropriate to employ when dealing with anti-social behaviour.

The Council, Essex Police and other partners work very closely on the issue of travellers. A recognised process is in place and is effective in removing the camps if/when they arrive and this is currently being reviewed to ensure it remains robust.

Southend Borough Council is also a member of the Essex Traveller Liaison Group which monitors traveller activity across the County, and reviews legislation (and any new legislation) that could be introduced to address traveller camps.

There is also a robust communication process in place between neighbouring local authorities and Southend – and information and intelligence regarding large numbers of caravans on the move is shared across these boundaries between local councils and police teams.

**Question 4 from Ms McMahon to the Cabinet Member for  
Community Safety and Customer Contact**

**Question**

When Independent Councillors choose to vote against injunctions against travellers, did they make this decision individually or where they directed to do so by their Group/Party leaders?

**Answer**

The answer to this politically motivated question from a former Conservative Councillor is no, it was a free vote as was, and is always, demonstrated by the Independent group, who were split on this matter when the vote was taken.