

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Place Scrutiny Committee – 7th October 2019

QUESTION 1: From Mr A Grubb to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Planning

Question:

May I bring to your attention an item in Thursdays 11th July 19, Page 2 edition of the Southend Echo, this refers to the additional street lights.

At the same time there have been ongoing problems highlighted in the Press and on TV, on how to site the additional vehicle charging points which will be required.

One idea put forward, was to have little traps on the kerb/pavement, where the vehicle owner will lift of the lid of the trap to connect with the vehicle charging facility. This would mean major road/pavement works.

I have noticed in many of the streets within several Wards, where there is a higher dependency to park vehicles on the streets, because the properties do not have off the street vehicle parking facility, there is also the problem of very poor street lighting, and many of the properties within these streets have been converted into flats and this in turn does attract more vehicles.

Therefore, the additional street lighting would be very welcome.

However if the intention is to have additional lighting to the same height as the existing street lighting, then by virtue of the cost and the installation, there will not be many new street lights available.

May I suggest you look at the idea you have in Elmer Approach (High Street End), where there are street lights about four foot in height.

If what you have at this location is replicated in the Wards which do have the problems as mentioned above, each new light spaced apart from the previous one in an area marked out for vehicles, together with a vehicle recharging facility incorporated into the light, then you would be supplying better lighting within the street and at the same time encouraging the ownership of electric vehicles.

By having the vehicle parking spaces marked out, you will also be able to increase the amount of parking within the roads.

The added bonus would be by adopting the above the vehicle owners would not be able to park their vehicles on the pavements, and as a result the pedestrian some who are in wheel chairs can walk the pavements in safety.

Is there any concrete reason why this idea cannot be adopted?

Answer

The installation of low level lighting in Elmer approach is classed as Amenity lighting and is not intended for the illumination of the public highway. Unfortunately, these lights have been, repeatedly, subject to vandalism and subsequently removed.

The standards that apply to street lighting are different. The British Standards specify that streetlights are spread at a distance appropriate for the type of road and height of column utilised. This is an appropriate standard set out by the Institute of Lighting Professionals.

However, we are investigating how car charging technology may be installed in areas with high levels of on-street parking without reducing the available space for residents, businesses and visitors who do not own electric vehicles.

QUESTION 2: From Mr A Grubb to the Cabinet Member for Transport, Capital, Inward Investment

Question:

Reference to the below, one question I have asked of the Council is how will they enforce the no parking at the Bus Stops. The answer I received is," The Council cannot enforce the no parking area at the new location, therefore what is the good of spending all this money in times when the council budgets are being squeezed and putting the bus passenger at a further disadvantage if the no parking at the new bus stops is unenforceable?

<https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/17869325.southend-hospital-taxi-rank-moved-safety-grounds/>

Answer:

Parking at bus stops is enforced using the Civil Enforcement Officers, who issue PCNs to any vehicle owners that contravene the traffic order.

QUESTION 3: From Webb to the Cabinet Member for Business, Culture & Tourism

Question:

Last year, the Council celebrated 125 years – what events took place to mark this and were they all met from within the budget set for it?

Answer:

2017 was the 125th Anniversary of the Borough. Council Members approved a maximum budget of £580,000 for the delivery of the celebratory events and the Poppies Wave. In total, expenditure across both projects used less than half of the amount allocated and totalled £160,000 for Poppies: Wave and £120,000 on the additional events and activities.

Of particular note is the success of the “125 funding initiative” in which Community groups were able to bid into. The £30k allocation made available through this route levered in additional funding to the Borough in the region of £250k and supported many different partners and community groups.

A full list of all the projects delivered in the year will be given to Mr Webb.

QUESTION 4: From Webb to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Planning

Question:

What steps is the Council currently taking, and planning to take in the next 5 years, with regard to tackling air pollution in the Borough?

Answer:

The Council undertakes reviews of the Borough’s air quality in line with the DEFRA guidance and the most recent statutory report to DEFRA has been accepted.

Where the air quality objective has been exceeded, the Council has declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and developed an action plan and low emission strategy to try to improve air quality across the Borough. The actions from this are monitored through the Air Quality Steering Group which is chaired by elected Members. The plan gives timescales to implement measures and quantifies expected impacts of the proposed measures.

The Council also regulates air quality from commercial businesses by reducing emissions to the air from polluting industries such as solvent based activities. The Council promotes travel plans, shared vehicle use and homeworking arrangements to reduce vehicle use. Planning controls are put in place to reduce pollution to air from dust during demolition and building sites.

The main source of air pollution in the AQMA is from road traffic emissions. Whilst emissions may come from a number of sources; transboundary, industrial, domestic, road transport, DEFRA’s Clean Air Strategy 2019 identifies road traffic as a significant source of emissions of air pollution. With respect to PM10 particulates, the main source is combustion such as vehicles, including tyre and brake wear, and domestic burning. Smaller particulates such as PM2.5 have the same sources.

Improved air quality is priority for the Borough’s 2050 vision, both for having a Connected and Smart city and Active and Involved community.

Improvements in connecting transport hubs, cycle and walking routes will contribute to the modal shift from reliance on motor vehicles to walking, cycling and using public transport. Outcome Business plans have been and are being developed to support these priorities.

The Council also ensures that where highway improvements are proposed the potential air quality impacts are assessed. The Council, together with Essex

authority partners, has secured funding to retrofit a number of buses which travel along the A127 corridor.

The Council has also sourced funding to improve the availability of charging points across the Borough, including splitting points, to enable more vehicles to charge at one location and the installation of charging points on lampposts which supports charging in areas where there is little or no off street parking. There has been funding sourced for green infrastructure, which may contribute to improving air quality and encouraging walking in areas where people feel safer because of the improved environment.

There are plans to monitor air quality in real time which could assist in re-directing and managing traffic movement across the Town, it may also be used to inform residents of incidents of poor air quality in particular areas. In this connection the Council has recently undertaken an evaluation of the different monitoring system available and will be commencing a trial in a number of key locations shortly.