

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC
Place Scrutiny Committee
5th July 2021

Question 1 by Mr Alan Grubb to Cabinet Member (Environment, Culture, Tourism & Planning)

Question:

I understand the plans are for approx. 1700 new homes on the Queensway Site and the site occupied by the Range store. Together additional new properties being proposed within the High Street.

We are seeing planning applications within the centre of Southend to turn former offices into flats and for the additional floors above existing properties to create more flats within the High Street.

The fairly recent residential development is the Kenway development all of which will create a future problem in connection with the Education of the children, who will be living within the new developments.

For as long as I can remember questions have been raised about the provision of a new school, but each time the decision appears to have been deferred.

Unless something is decided soon in connection with the possible shortage of school places for the children who will be living within the new developments, there will be a problem in a few years' time.

Therefore, what are the long terms plans in connection with the provision of education within the immediate area for the children who will be living on the Queensway Estate and the new developments within Southend? When will the public be made aware of the decision, and the location for a new Infants/ Primary School? Is the provision of Schools and Health a requirement when increasing the population, by increasing the residential accommodation (new housing estate) which will see an increase of residential accommodation from about the present 400 homes to approx. 1700 new homes, not including the additional ones mentioned above, within the area of the High Street?

Answer:

Plans are currently underway to expand the number of homes in the Borough by a significant number with the first wave expected to be occupied from 2024/2025. Proposed large developments are in the planning application phase with unknown

start on site dates. Discussions and planning both internally and externally are currently underway to ensure that the full scope of infrastructure impact is considered.

As part of its statutory duties for sufficient school places, the Council uses a variety of sources to ensure that there are sufficient places for residents who require them in Southend schools. This process forecasts the likely need over the longer term, taking account of birth data and current and predicted numbers at the existing nearest schools. Forecasts currently indicate that the local primary schools have sufficient spaces or could be expanded to take the expected pupil numbers resulting from the developments, and that given the current forecasts, a new primary school will not be required. This is kept constantly under review and should the need rise above the available places, and all options at that time would be considered.

With regards to the provision for Health, this would be a matter for the Clinical Commissioning Group.

Question 2 by Mr David Webb to Cabinet Member (Environment, Culture, Tourism & Planning)

Question:

What were the recycling rates last year for pink bags, black bags, garden waste, food waste from March 2020 to March 2021 and how are Veolia and the council going to increase the recycling rate target to this year (what is the target)?

Answer:

For the financial year 20/21 the unaudited estimated (the data has not been verified as yet through the data portal which reports to government) recycling rate is 43.7%. The Councils target for 21/22 is 50%. The Council will be working with Veolia to deliver a recycling and communication plan to improve performance. The headlines include:

- campaigning in low participation areas to improve take up of recycling services, e.g. food waste;
- a communication programme around reducing contamination in recycling;
- working with schools to provide education on recycling services;
- supporting national campaigns for example – National Recycling Week (Sep 21) & Global Recycling Day (March 22).

Activities to deliver these objectives will include door-knocking, roadshows, social media, posters, leaflets and other campaign material.

For information during the Covid-19 pandemic, waste volumes have increased which has impacted on recycling rates. It is also noted that producers are also using less packaging in some areas of industry, e.g. food packaging, and consumers are better informed over waste minimisation benefits, therefore presenting in some cases less recycling for collection.

Question 3 by Mr Webb to Cabinet Member (Environment, Culture, Tourism & Planning)

Question:

In Westborough ward the only green space is Fairfax Park. Some of the swings have been gone for social distancing. The large blue play basket has broken and had to be taken away. There are no benches to sit on.

How much does it cost to: 1) put 2 benches in the park, 2) fix the blue basket and attach it, invest in putting an area of tarmac to put small children equipment such as walking across wooden beams with netting, 2 spring motorbikes and a metal tunnel Is there budget for this work to be invested in Westborough?

Answer:

Thank you for your question and interest in Fairfax Drive children's play area. The cost for two metal benches with the required base and installation would be £1,700. However, in order to locate benches in this play area a feasibility assessment would need to be undertaken to ascertain the suitability given the available space and constraints relating to the national standards for play areas.

I can confirm that the basket swing is already on the work program to reinstall the seat which is due to be completed by the 21st June. Regarding the grass in the play area, this softens the feel of the area and adds green space as well as helping to manage water runoff in wet weather. Removal of the grass to add additional equipment to the playground would only be permissible after suitable investigation to ascertain if any additional measures would be required to manage surface water. The cost for installing two spring rockers and a toddler trim trail, with the necessary wetpour safer

surfacing and connecting paths, would be in the region of £18,500; however, if additional drainage works are required, the cost would increase.

At this time, there is no available funding in the Council's capital program for investment in new play equipment, to undertake these works or other play area upgrades; however, the issues and suggestions you raise have been logged and will be considered further if capital funding for play areas becomes available in the future.

Question 4 from Mr Jonathan Garston to the Cabinet Member (Environment, Culture, Tourism & Planning)

Question:

Please can I have an up-to-date frequency list for litter pick and street cleaning in Residential streets. I do not expect the entire list to be read out to the committee but a link to this information is quite satisfactory?

Answer:

All residential streets receive a clean every 6 weeks as a minimum, with monitoring in between cycles to ensure standards are maintained. It is not possible to provide a precise frequency schedule per road, as this is subject to changes for operational reasons and due to seasonal adjustments.

Concerns over cleansing in individual roads should be reported through MySouthend at my.southend.gov.uk .

Question 5 from Mr Jonathan Garston to Cabinet Member (Transport, Asset Management & Inward Investment)

Question:

With the installation of the new traffic lights at the junction of Bournemouth Park Road and Eastern Avenue, I have had residents contact me to say traffic levels and speed have increased in the residential Streets. Will the portfolio Holder agree to look into installing a pedestrian crossing in Bournemouth Park Road?

Answer:

This junction improvement has thus far been a success with the signal linked to the surrounding sets to optimise traffic flow along Eastern Avenue. To date we haven't received any concerns over traffic levels or speeds in the area; however, we will survey speed and vehicle numbers and if necessary, introduce some mitigation.