

COUNCIL – 25 November 2021

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(1) Question from Mr David Webb to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health Integration (Cllr Nevin)

Question

On 10th October we had World Mental Health Day. How is the Council supporting Mental Health patients of all ages and how much money is allocated each year in tackling Mental Health from the Council?

Answer

It is worth noting that some services will be funded directly by Southend Borough Council and others by the Clinical Commissioning Group as part of a part partnership working arrangement.

Directly funded by The Council, we have the following services specific to those with Mental Health problems allocated at £0.83m PA:

- CYP Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health Service Main Contract;
- The Mental Health Wellbeing Hub provides advice, guidance, and support alongside the ability to access The Recovery College with a range of wellbeing courses;
- Transitional Supported housing for adults with a mental health problems.

There are also several services funded by The Council that may not be specific for those with a Mental Health need but are accessible to Mental Health Clients. These include:

- Information, Advice and Guidance services;
- Carers services;
- Drug and Alcohol services;
- Homelessness Services and Housing First;
- Complex needs Hostel;
- Domestic Abuse services;
- Everyone Health & Sexual Health services.

There are also several services which the council are linked into via joint commissioning agreements. These include the following:

- IPS Scheme which is a Pan Essex employment support service for those with severe mental health conditions;
- The Employment retention project working to assist with difficulties within existing employment;
- The Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme of talking therapies;
- Perinatal Mental health service for mums, mums to be and their families;
- 111 option 2 Crisis Response Service which is a 24/7 service offering immediate Mental health support.

The Council provides direct for those with Mental Health problems via the Social Care Teams and Essex Partnership University NHS foundation Trust (EPUT). People may receive services such as support within their home, Day Opportunities, Accommodation Services. The provision of these services is under a budget allocation of £4.9m for year 2021/22, this includes costs for Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy.

The council are currently producing three strategies which have recently been out for consultation:

- The Living Well Strategy, for people who might have a disability, a learning disability or mental health needs;
- The Caring Well Strategy, for people who care for others in an unpaid role, often family members. We are also working with a group of young carers, so their views are heard;
- The Ageing Well Strategy, for people who might need help to live independently or be in supported housing.

Also - In line with Government recommendations Southend, Essex and Thurrock Councils have produced a Southend, Essex, and Thurrock Suicide Prevention Strategy.

The Council also promotes national mental health and wellbeing campaigns and local websites through its digital platforms: [Health Matters | Livewell Southend](#) and [Health and Wellbeing – Southend-on-Sea Borough Council](#)

(2) Question from Mr David Webb to the Cabinet Member for Public Protection (Cllr Terry)

Question

In Westborough we have 4 fly tipping hot spots. Two have got worse over the past 12 months. Top of Brightwell and in the middle of the junction of Brightwell where the bins are. Both areas have been sent out letters to the resident, warning letters when evidence has been given to the Council. However, the bags need to be checked regularly to find more evidence because no-one has been fined.

How much has it cost the Council to clear fly tipping this year across the 13 wards and how many CCTV cameras do we have for fly tipping and what is the cost to put one up to catch fly tipping in one location for a few months and then move it down to the one in the middle?

Answer

The Council has 6 mobile cameras that can be used across the Borough, which are dependent on a power source usually from lamp columns. Mobile cameras have limited success in the detection of fly-tipping as they tend to displace the activity elsewhere. It costs £356 to install a mobile camera.

The Council currently spends approximately £1.7m per annum across street cleansing activities, which includes the removal of fly-tips.

(3) Question from Mr Jonathan Garston to the Cabinet Member for Public Protection (Cllr Terry)

Question

With increased ASB in the town please can I ask for an update of success with the existing PSPO, where they are in place?

Answer

There are 3 Public Spaces Protection Orders currently in force across the Borough:

- 2 covering the High Street, the Seafront (Shoebury to Westcliff) and Hamlet Court Road.
- 1 covering dog control order, borough wide.

In the period from 8th March 2020 to date, 2 Public Spaces Protection Order Fixed Penalty Notices have been paid, 9 non-paid Fixed Penalty Notices have been successfully prosecuted, and a further 14 have been summonsed and are awaiting a court hearing. There are 15 further non-paid Fixed Penalty Notices currently being prepared for a prosecution. Of the prosecutions undertaken, 2 have led to successful Court applications for a Criminal Behaviour Order, and in both cases, the individuals were banned from the High Street and surrounding areas for a period of 3 years.

A recently held joint operation with Essex Police “Op Jorvik”, was based on the enforcement powers of the Public Spaces Protection Order and targeted street drinkers engaging in anti-social behaviour in a specific part of the town centre. This resulted in 22 enforcement actions over a 12-hour patrol period.

(4) Question from Mr Jonathan Garston to the Cabinet Member for Transport, Asset Management and Inward Investment (Cllr Woodley)

Question

Please can the portfolio holder give me his view on closing the seafront roads in the busy summer period. Was this course of action necessary and does the portfolio holder anticipate implementing this again?

Answer

A road closure order was put in place from Friday 1 October to be used should it be needed.

This was considered necessary following the trial of a late-night road closure of Marine Parade in July, which was in response to reckless driving and other anti-social behaviour that had led to some businesses having to close early.

The experimental road closure order gives the council the relevant powers to close the road to traffic at any time over an 18-month period but will only be used as a last resort to protect residents, visitors and businesses with the order being regularly reviewed.

The order applies to the area from the turnaround point on Western Esplanade (Robertos kiosk), through Marine Parade (City Beach) and ends at the junction of Southchurch Avenue and Eastern Esplanade (The Kursaal). Vehicles would only be able to turn left from Southchurch Avenue onto Eastern Esplanade.

We will continue to work hard with Essex Police to build on the good work we have seen in more recent weeks to tackle issues of anti-social behaviour and crime in those key hotspot areas, which would avoid the need to use the order.

(5) Question from Mr Robert Norton to the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning (Cllr Burton)

Question

Can the Cabinet Member explain why the new transport service for people with Learning Disabilities cannot get to Special Needs schools?

Answer

Thank you for your question, Mr Norton.

The Council was made aware at the start of the new contract that a small number of the larger vehicles could not drive under the canopy covering the front door at Kingsdown School. It is my understanding that vehicles transporting pupils with SEND can fully access all the other special schools in the Borough. In the case of Kingsdown, the vehicles get as close as they can to the main front door, and pupils are escorted by staff as normal. The Council will continue to work with the provider to explore how this situation may be improved over time.

(6) Question from Ms Philomena Johnson to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance Delivery (Cllr Collins)

Question

What checks and testing was employed to ensure that the selected partner (London Hire) was both experienced in this type of service development and had the appropriate level of skilled, competent operational management in place to develop and deliver the service?

Answer

The Council undertook a long and detailed compliant procurement process. It utilised a competitive dialogue process for selecting the service delivery solution as well as the company that Southend would form the Joint Venture company with. Part of this process was for each bidder to provide written evidence as to their experience in the appropriate service delivery areas.

Detailed responses were received, and these were reviewed against a predetermined set of evaluation criteria. There were also a number of technical (quality) questions which focused on how the supplier would deliver the contract and specification in Southend. Scores were allocated according to the evaluation criteria and these were combined with the scoring from other parts of the written submission and then the total was combined with an affordability score. London Hire community services met all the requirements of the tender and were ultimately awarded the contract as they provided the best overall submission.

(7) Question from Ms Philomena Johnson to the Cabinet Member for Children and Learning (Cllr Burton)

Question

Why was the service started when it was known that there was insufficient staffing in place and that Vecteo was unprepared (risk assessment not completed, parent meeting and engagement incomplete, etc)?

Answer

Vecteo had provided assurances that the correct level of staffing would be in place for when the new operating model went live. This was provided following some uncertainties around potential TUPE transfers. The Council was only informed of the severity of the issue with the number of drivers and passenger assistants the day before going live.

Vecteo had confirmed that all the parent meet and greet sessions would be undertaken in advance of the go live date. The Council was only informed the day before the start of the new service delivery that some, but not all had taken place.

The Vecteo contract manager (no longer in post) confirmed during the lessons learnt review that he had been overly optimistic and had not raised it as a serious issue with either the Vecteo company board or the Council. The Vecteo contract manager had also stated that the risk assessments had been completed when asked prior to go live, this was clearly incorrect.

(8) Question from Mr Liam Slattery to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance Delivery (Cllr Collins)

Question

What is the threshold at which SBC will act to remove the provider and under those conditions what is the plan?

Answer

The Contract with Vecteo contains a detailed service specification as well as specific requirements for performance monitoring. The performance against the contractual key performance indicators is the main route for performance monitoring and seeking improvement. The frequency of certain performance indicators being missed is taken into account when identifying routes within the contract to formally drive improvements. Contractual routes for seeking improvements include remedial plans (following audit and performance feedback) and a remediation notice (following the breach of a material obligation). Where the service does not improve and fails to meet the contractual requirements there are stated routes for escalation as well as the ultimate sanction of termination. This includes headings under breach of contract as well as consistent failure.

(9) Question from Mr Liam Slattery to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance Delivery (Cllr Collins)

Question

Given the level of Council management now being employed in Vecteo, the added expense of management time and the commission of PWC, what is happening in terms of costs being recover from the contract partner (London Hire) to balance the additional spend in tax-payers money?

Answer

Vecteo has agreed to pay all costs associated with the secondment of the Council's transport management team into them. This secondment ended on 15th November 2021. The cost of the performance/compliance audit will be borne by the Council.