

COUNCIL – 9 December 2021

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

(1) **Question from Councillor Garne to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance Delivery (Cllr Collins)**

Question

How is the Council dealing with the problem of “digital exclusion” in its dealings with the citizens of this town?

Answer

There are a number of initiatives taking place which provide skills, support, access, training, equipment, guidance, awareness and bring digital inclusion. A number of organisations and departments are supporting these initiatives and include (but not limited to) Family Centres, Libraries, Job Links, Trust Centre Plus, South Essex Homes, Southend Adult Community College, Rough Sleeper Outreach, A Better Start Southend, Community Renewal Fund and One Southend. Many more initiatives are being planned or discussed.

(2) **Question from Councillor Cowan to the Cabinet Member for Transport, Asset Management and Inward Investment (Cllr Woodley)**

Question

Could the Cabinet Member detail what the Council’s position and policy is on advertising boards on council owned land?

Answer

The Council does not have a specific policy in relation to advertising boards on Council owned land. There are a small number of advertising sites within the commercial portfolio. The designation of any land owned by the Council would be a relevant factor in determining the suitability or otherwise for advertising.

Commercial opportunities are considered on their merits, are subject to the agreement of suitable commercial terms and compliance with any planning requirements which would also include the assessment from a highway safety perspective.

Guidance on the planning considerations is available on the Council's website.

(3) **Question from Councillor Cowan to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Culture, Tourism and Planning (Cllr Mulrone)**

Question

Could the Cabinet Member detail what the Council's current arrangement is with Veolia for the collection of textiles?

Answer

Residents are provided with white sacks to present textiles, which are collected once a week. Refuse vehicles have pods to store textiles, when these have reached capacity, arrangements are made for support vehicles to collect the textiles.

(4) Question from Councillor Dent to the Leader of the Council (Cllr Gilbert)

Question

Could the Leader of the Council please provide me an update as regards the implementation of the proposed selective licensing scheme for the private rental sector?

Answer

Following the referral back to Cabinet at the Council meeting of 25 November 2021, further expert legal guidance is being sought relating to the scheme. In advance of Cabinet considering the revised report, officers have continued to work with local landlords with properties in the areas designated for Selective Licensing by the decision reached in February 2021, in order to support them to prepare and submit applications to license their rental properties. Officers are also continuing to work on the requisite systems and processes to ensure that these are all efficient and in good order. At this stage no licenses are being issued, nor is any enforcement activity being undertaken.

(5) Question from Councillor Dent to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing (Cllr Jones)

Question

Could the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing please provide an update as to what provisions the Council has put in place for the homeless and rough sleeping community, as we come into the deepest and coldest part of the year?

Answer

There is an up-to-date Severe Weather Emergency Protocol for 2021/22 which outlines the Council's approach to supporting all rough sleepers during periods of severe weather. It ensures prompt action to ensure rough sleepers have access to shelter during severe cold weather. Provision is accessible to everyone, including all those who may otherwise be excluded from services. The protocol is a cross partnership response whereby the local authority and other services work together to be responsive and proactive. Furthermore, it also takes cognisance of current COVID-19 regulations and will be regularly reviewed in light of new rules and Covid variants to ensure that it remains safe and appropriate. A copy of the current protocol can be supplied upon request.

In addition to this, the rough sleeping team and wider partnership are taking a flexible approach to accommodating rough sleepers through the colder months. The outreach team will be patrolling as usual, and all those found to be sleeping rough will be supported to access accommodation through the Council-led rough sleeper partnership meetings, at which the Council and other services set actions and plans for ongoing wraparound for rough sleepers in the Borough.

(6) Question from Councillor Keith Evans to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health Integration (Cllr Nevin)

Question

Does the Council have any jurisdiction over the NHS in ensuring they provide a complete and full service to residents?

Answer

As a unitary authority, the Council has the power to review and scrutinise matters relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in the Borough, to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents. The Council has delegated its health scrutiny function to the People Scrutiny Committee.

The primary aim of health scrutiny is to strengthen the voice of local people, ensuring that their needs and experiences are considered as an integral part of the commissioning, delivery and improvement of health services and that those services are effective and safe. Health scrutiny is also a fundamental way by which local councillors are able to voice the views of their constituents and hold relevant NHS bodies and relevant health service providers to account.

Health scrutiny also has a strategic role in taking an overview of how well the integration of health, public health and social care is working and in proactively seeking information about the performance of local health services and institutions, in challenging the information provided to it by commissioners and providers of services for the health service, and in testing this information by drawing on different sources of intelligence. The role of health scrutiny is not to consider individual complaints relating to the delivery of local health services. In its delivery of the Council's health scrutiny function, the People Scrutiny Committee has the power to:

- Review and scrutinise any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of local health services.
- Make reports and recommendations to the local NHS on any matter reviewed or scrutinised.
- Require the attendance of an officer of the local NHS to answer questions and provide explanations about the planning, provision and operation of health services.
- Require the local NHS to provide information about the planning, provision and operation of health services.
- Establish joint committees with other local authorities to undertake overview and scrutiny of health services.
- Report to the Secretary of State for Health where it is concerned that consultation on substantial variation or development of services has been inadequate, or where it considers that a proposal is not in the interests of the health service.

(7) **Question from Councillor Tricia Cowdrey to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health Integration (Cllr Nevin)**

Question

Approximately two years ago concerns about the closure or downgrade of the Shoeburyness Ambulance Station were raised and EEAST were called upon to report to the People Scrutiny Committee, agreeing to advise outcomes of their modelling report and plans for consultation with all those in the SS3 who would likely to be impacted by these changes.

Obviously, in the interim period we have experienced a pandemic, the trust has been in special measures and new CEO appointed. This has resulted in understandable delays.

How will the Cabinet Member ensure that this issue does not fall off the radar and remains open to scrutiny by the Council?

Answer

A report in regard to the provision of ambulance services from Shoeburyness Ambulance Station was last made to the People Scrutiny Committee in July 2020, at which time representatives of the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust undertook to report further to the Committee once the modelling and operation of service delivery had been completed. Following that meeting, my predecessor Cabinet Member and the Chair of the People Scrutiny Committee jointly wrote to the Trust expressing the concerns of members with regard to the continued provision of ambulance services from Shoeburyness Ambulance Station and seeking responses to a number of questions raised by the Committee. The response of the Chief Operating Officer for the Trust to these concerns and questions was circulated to all members of the People Scrutiny Committee in August 2020 and I understand that this information has also recently been provided to Councillor Cowdrey.

In view of the concerns already raised by members and the previous commitment of the Trust to report further to the People Scrutiny Committee on the provision of services from Shoeburyness Ambulance Station on the completion of the modelling and operation of service delivery, I intend to liaise with the Chair of the People Scrutiny Committee on the provision of an update on this matter at a future meeting of the Committee. I will also request officers to seek the attendance of the recently appointed Chief Executive and relevant officers of the Trust at the meeting, to ensure that the scrutiny of service provision at Shoeburyness Ambulance Station remains available to the Council.