

Council – Thursday 2nd March 2023

Councillor Questions

1. Question from Councillor Cowdrey to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Culture and Tourism (Cllr Mulroney)

Question

I think all Councillors will be aware of the difficult decision to ask the renowned Jazz Centre UK to move to an alternative site. Notice was given in July last year for it to move from its base within the Beecroft Gallery on Victoria Avenue by 1st August 2023.

Trustees of TJC UK had a clear impression that there could be some flexibility about the 1st August. However, in November, this was abruptly withdrawn so that 1st August is now a hard deadline. As a consequence, TJC UK is in real jeopardy after six successful years.

I understand that the motivation behind this move is to facilitate the public display of currently stored artefacts and the financial savings of reducing storage facilities. However, I do understand that TJC UK has offered to negotiate a financial contribution towards the Beecroft's running cost during an interim period which would allow them to identify and secure a suitable site for this valuable resource and contribute to revenue.

I understand that a potential site had been identified but is now off the table following the lack of success with the Levelling Up bid.

Can the portfolio holder please advise where we are with the negotiations and whether any agreement to temporarily extend the lease has been made to date?

Answer

Unfortunately, the levelling up bid was unsuccessful which we were notified about in December. Since then, some other possibilities have been shared and introductions made for the Jazz Centre Trustees. We will continue to meet with them and offer support in their search for a long-term solution. Our intention is to display more of our own heritage collection in the space currently occupied by JCUK which will in turn free up current items in storage and provide much needed research and restoration space.

2. Question from Councillor Cowdrey to the Cabinet Member for Public Protection (Cllr Terry)

Question

I think we all, as councillors, are concerned about revenue. It would seem safe to assume that enforcement of fines and licences, etc., and even criminal prosecutions, whether due to anti-social behaviour, fly tipping or licensing breaches is generating some form of income for the Council. I accept this must be offset by costs.

But it is clear that the role of our Enforcement Officers is essential. For example, the new Private rented sector Housing Enforcement Policy seems to point to the need for strengthening enforcement responses.

Could the portfolio holder please advise how many enforcement officers we have in each of our various departments across the Council, as well as those which have been commissioned externally, and which enforcement areas they cover?

Answer

Thank you for your question. There are six service areas of the Council employing Enforcement Officers:

- The Community Safety Unit currently employs 7 Officers (with 1 currently on secondment). The Community Safety Officers use Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) as part of the enforcement process for Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO). The purpose of a PSPO is to protect the public from persistent anti-social behaviour. It should also be noted that the enforcement policy makes it clear that education should be provided in the first instance of an offence being identified.
- Waste Services currently has two Environmental Care officers, one of which is an agency member of staff.
- Planning currently has 2 posts, with one filled on a part time basis.
- The Foreshore & Pier team do not have any specific enforcement officers at present. Training is due to take place to our foreshore team to enforce new PSPOs and likely to be around 10 officers that would be able to issue FPNs.
- Highways has 4 enforcement officers.

- Regulatory Services has 19 Regulatory Services Officers and 11 Enforcement Officers and 1 Animal Warden within its team. Working across food safety, standards, infectious disease, air quality, contaminated land, nuisance, health and safety, stray dog service, animal welfare, licensing (premises / gambling / animal / special treatments / taxi and private hire), public health burials, private sector housing and selective licensing.

It should be noted that not all the fines generate income that can be retained by the Council.

3. Question from Councillor Cowan to the Leader of the Council

Question

In 2019, the Leader of the Council reaffirmed this administration's commitment to supporting the WASPI campaign following the motion proposed by my late colleague Cllr Julian Ware-Lane, and passed by this Council.

Would the Leader of the Council once again reaffirm this administration's commitment to support the aims and values of the WASPI campaign and confirm that a special event will be held at Porters Lodge on International Women's Day to commemorate the WASPI campaign and those women in Southend fighting for pension justice?

Answer

I am more than happy to this Administration's commitment to support the aims and values of the Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) campaign.

Furthermore, this administration recognises the great difficulty and sense of unfairness felt by the thousands of affected women living here in Southend. Whilst this is a matter for national government to resolve, this administration supports the WASPI campaign and urges government to work with the WASPI campaign to achieve a fair and equitable outcome for those affected women here in Southend and across the country.

I am pleased to confirm that the Mayor will lead a short ceremony at 4pm on 8th March, to raise the WASPI Flag at Porters Civic House on International Women's Day, to commemorate the WASPI campaign and those women in Southend fighting for pension justice.