

## APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONS

#### A PUBLIC

There were 2 questions from the public

1. **Mr. G.P. Bigg to Councillor N. Rockliffe, Portfolio Holder for Highways & Transport**

- a) “Why, on 11 June, did the Cabinet decide to apply for a Gating Order on Footpath 129, when over 200 residents and the local Ward Councillors had already objected to the closure?”
- b) Why are the Council debating closure of footpath 129 to stop anti-social behaviour, when the anti social behaviour takes place on private land?
- c) Shouldn't the Council be directing the owners of this land to secure their property, as the other property owners along the footpath have, and thus eliminating anti-social behaviour and leaving the footpath open?”

#### **Councillor N. Rockliffe**

Mr Bigg, undoubtedly you are aware that as you referred to earlier in your question, that on 11 June we put forward the recommendation that consultation only is taken place with regards to the gating order for part of footpath 129. Unfortunately it is inappropriate for me to comment as yet because we are still collating all of the views from members of the public and other Ward Councillors and obviously if I were to express any kind of view now, I could potentially be making a predetermination, so therefore unfortunately, I can't answer that at this time. Thank you Mr Mayor.

#### **Mr Bigg**

I would like to know why they wish to close the footpath when all the unsocial behaviour etc. takes place on the private land adjacent to the footpath and not on the footpath. Why haven't the Council asked for this piece of private land to be fenced and gated exactly the same as everybody else along the alleyway has done.

#### **Councillor N. Rockliffe**

Well Mr Bigg, Obviously you are going to think that I am not giving you any answers but you know, all I am going to say, as I said earlier, is that I can't express a view at the moment because we are still at

consultation level and so for me to express any kind of view could be classed as predetermination. So unfortunately I can't give you an answer but I am more than happy to work with yourself and other concerned residents and I am aware that councillor Gupta put forward a petition, so I am obviously willing to work with the three of you to see if we can reach some kind of resolution. But obviously I can't do anything until we get the results of the consultation back. Thank you Mr Mayor.

**2 Joanne Cooper (Friends of Orsett Village) to Councillor S. MacPherson, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services**

"At the last Council meeting on 25 June 2008, the Friends of Orsett Village Playground submitted a petition concerning the poor state of the existing playground in Orsett Village.

- a) At the same meeting, Councillor Suzanne MacPherson talked about the three-year plan to transform play areas across the borough using the £1.1 million received from the Government's National Play Investment Programme. Why has Orsett not been included in this funding?
- b) The Corporate Director of Children, Education and Families stated that the Council bid for the funding included a promise to hold a wide-ranging public consultation. Will the Portfolio Holder confirm this promise and include Orsett residents in this consultation process?"

**Councillor S. MacPherson**

With regards to the Playbuilder capital that has been awarded to Thurrock, it is still in its embryonic stage. A project plan for this funding is due to be submitted by the 31<sup>st</sup> July to the DCSF. This is being led by the Play Partnership for Thurrock.

In the first year we will be expected to refurbish / replace a minimum of 6 play spaces in the Borough at an average cost of £50k each – a minimum of 22 areas over 3 years. We are currently waiting for information as to whether we will be able to do more than 6 in the first year. These sites have not as yet been confirmed, as processes are being put in place to ensure that the Playbuilder guidelines are met. We will ensure that every ward throughout the Borough will benefit from this funding over the 3 year period, so that every child and young person, in Thurrock, will have access to good quality, safe play space that is easily accessible.

It is our intention that all the local community forums, together with local members, will be very much involved in the process as will the children and young people in those communities throughout Thurrock. We would welcome the opportunity to present to each of the Forums or to

any other group with regards to the programme. Indeed their involvement will be key to the success of the Playbuilder programme.

Officer will be approaching Friends of Orsett Village Playground to assess how their plans can be supported through the additional Playbuilder Capital.

### **Ms Cooper**

I would also like to ask, in relation to the act that there has not been any funding for Orsett Village Playground for a number of years now. It has been brought to my attention, as the Orsett Forum Committee Member and Friends of Orsett Village Playground, that there has been some accidents recently, two separate accidents recently with children from Orsett Village. I just wanted to ask why there has been no funding put into the maintenance of the playground so far. It has not been maintained, it is a health and safety risk and will there be plans to decommission this equipment.

### **Councillor S. MacPherson**

I think more importantly actually the health and safety issue of obviously everybody who uses that. So what I will do is, I will ensure that one of our inspectors goes up and makes sure all that equipment is safe. If it does need to be removed for the health and safety of the children that are using it, that may have to take place. However this is why the money is now being invested, so that we can ensure that the best play equipment is available for all our children.

## **B MEMBERS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

There were 3 questions to the Leader from Members.

### **1. Councillor Y. Gupta**

“Would you please let the residents and ward councillors know what support the Council is giving to keep The Clock, Hathaway Road, Branch Post Office, working on a permanent basis?”

**This question was withdrawn**

### **2. Councillor J. Kent**

- a) “How many days have been lost through staff sickness absence in the last two years?”
- b) What is the cost of this?”

**Councillor T Hipsey**

In the last two years, which is for the period between 1 April 2006 and 31 March 2008, the total number of days lost through sickness was 80,728. This figure includes all schools based staff except teachers. This worked out at an average of 9 days per employee in 2006/07 and 9.8 days in 2007/08.

**Councillor J. Kent**

While asking the supplemental question, I would be grateful if the Leader would answer part B of my question which was the cost of this sickness. We know that suspensions of staff over the last two years have cost half a million pounds but will the Leader confirm that the cost of employing consultants, many of whom will be to cover sick leave and suspensions, has now passed the £10,000 a day mark.

**Councillor T Hipsey**

Thanks very much. I will get back to you in writing with the costs Councillor Kent but what can I say. Consultants, we are consultant mad aren't we, Thurrock council, of course we are. Consultants, members here will know that they cover a wide range from specialist consultants to actual members of staff. Having said that, they are only temporary. We also are on the cusp on London, London Boroughs where astronomical amounts of money are being paid to specialist staff. We have to ensure that we have got the best that money can buy. Therefore we are serving our residents well.

**3. From Councillor J. Kent**

“Will the Leader list his various engagements, as Leader of the Council, since 25 June 2008?”

**Councillor T Hipsey**

Thank you very much Mr Mayor and also Councillor Kent for the question. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> May this year, Thurrock Councillors voted for me to become Leader of Thurrock Council. That I have done since that day. From the 26<sup>th</sup> June until the 22<sup>nd</sup> July, seven days a week, twenty four hours a day, I have served this Borough. The answer I gave last month has somewhat backfired on me. Some person has been trying to infiltrate my actual full time employ. I don't know what is behind it but the dates are Councillor Kent, the 26 June to 22 July I am serving with Thurrock Council as Leader.

### **Councillor J Kent**

Thank you Mr Mayor. As the Leader of the Council well knows I have never at any stage brought into question his commitment to the role he carried out or the dedication with which he carries it out. We may have differences around our policies but there is no question of the commitment. I wonder if over the last month, the Leader has had time to meet with the owners of the State Cinema in Grays. I was pleased to see the suggestion at Cabinet in June of using **LADGE** money to help fund a feasibility study to explore future uses for the cinema. When can we expect to see the feasibility study coming forward and will the Leader commit to bringing to bear whatever pressure is necessary, on Council Officers, the Development Corporation, on the owners of the State and other interested parties, to ensure the cinema is refurbished and brought back into productive use, preferably a productive cultural use, for the benefit of the community in Thurrock.

### **Councillor T Hipsey**

Thank you very much for that. My views are very well known, I have actually responded to members of the public regarding the State Cinema and no doubt will take the outcomes in due course. It is a real shame of course, a real missed opportunity, that the opposition does not ask the cost of disruption caused to our residents by the strike we had to incur last week. The Labour Group just like to bury their heads in the sand when people are out striking all about brought about by this lousy government for short changing us and they are hanging our units out to dry, at the same time making our people suffer. Councillor Kent would rather desperately like to shy away from debating major issues or asking questions about what is actually affecting this borough brought about by a government desperate to reach the summer recess so its leaders can go away on some sunny beach whilst the people in Thurrock are hit by another round of stealth taxes or excuses to put even more strain on families. They are at breaking point. Issues like the latest education debacle, robbing our old age pensioners of their private pensions, hitting the low income families, literally sucking the life blood out of the local employers, you know, yes I know it hurts, I know it hurts to have to listen, but come on Councillor Kent, that's in future, lets have some real questions and some real debate. Don't worry about what I am doing, so people can start using my dates against me, re my company, lets have some real debate. Whilst the general cost of living is going up and up through the roof, the only thing that's going down is this lousy government's popularity, which is selling out everyone, even its own voters and the financial supporters, they have had enough of acors, Gordon Brown's favorite word, Tax.

### **Mayor**

I think clarification is needed on the question, the state Cinema.

## **Councillor J Kent**

Mr Mayor, lets be clear, we are able to put questions and Portfolio Holders and the Leader respond as they see appropriate. People will accept that that is what the Leader feels appropriate. It may not be an answer but it is a response.

## **C CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

There were 17 questions from Members to Cabinet Members:

### **1. Councillor Y. Gupta to Councillor S MacPherson**

“Would you please tell the children, parents and ward councillors what steps the Council is taking to improve the achievements of pupils in the Grays Media College and what is the Council’s position regarding converting this school into an Academy?”

### **Councillor MacPherson**

Thank you very much for your question Councillor Gupta, I think it has come at a very appropriate time and also thank you to the press who have also been covering the achievements that are now going on at the Grays School.

The LA is required to submit to Ofsted an action plan detailing how it will support a school being removed from special measures. This was done in the autumn term 2007.

Since then the following actions have been taken.

Using the LA intervention powers, the governing body was removed and an Interim Executive Board (IEB) was put in place to accelerate progress.

The headteacher resigned.

The IEB appointed one of the deputy heads to take on the acting headship whilst advertising for a new head.

The IEB appointed Lynn Ibeji to be headteacher from September 08. She has been spending time in the school to familiarise herself this term and is doing very well.

The school has been and will continue to be supported by two of Thurrock's 'outstanding' heads (Barbara King - The Ockendon School) who has experience of getting her own school out of special measures and so has been very well received and rapidly increasing standards and John King, head of Gable Hall and William Edwards schools.

The school has been supported by the deployment of two additional strong deputy heads from high performing schools (Gable Hall and William Edwards) during this term to strengthen senior leadership and

drive improvements.

The Secondary Strategy Team have and will continue to work within the school, improving teaching in the core subjects, improving middle and senior leadership.

The school is part of a teaching and learning training programme with a high performing school in London.

The HMI visit in June showed that there has been satisfactory progress since the previous HMI visit. The feedback commended the hard work put in by the acting head and the positive changes this had brought about.

The LA has been advised that the DCSF would look favourably on the move to academy status and discussions have taken place regarding suitable sponsors for Thurrock. NO decision has yet been taken and there will be full consultation progress with school staff, previous governing body, parents, elected members such as yourself and the community as part of the process in reaching this decision.

### **Councillor Gupta**

Thank you Councillor MacPherson. I think it was a good answer and I appreciated that. We have been saying all along, Ward Councillors, that why aren't we briefing, giving a brief, this inspection happened in June and nobody really took us into confidence, nobody told us, will we leave it until a visit that these things happen. My question to you is, would it be possible for the Cabinet Member to brief Ward Councillors to any future inspection report or any developments dealing with this school..

### **Councillor MacPherson**

Councillor Gupta, when a school obviously goes into special measure it affects the community around it and as the Ward Councillor I respect your comment and request and I will see that you are involved in this and any other school that does happen to perform exceedingly well or there are problems, the Ward Councillors do need to be informed and I will ensure this happens for you.

## **2 Councillor I. Harrison to Councillor S. Veryard**

"The GMB Union recently carried out a survey, which included the cleanliness of streets in Essex.

What did this show about the cleanliness of Thurrock's streets?"

### **Councillor Veryard**

The survey conducted by the GMB Union was compiled using data from the Best Value Performance Indicator 199A for the East of England for years 2006/2007. A minimum of 900 visits are conducted throughout the year to 300 sites throughout the Borough. The report shows that 88% of these streets in Thurrock were considered to have a high level of cleanliness.

### **Councillor Harrison**

I have 2 or 3 supplemental questions, but I will only ask one. How does this compare to previous years.

### **Councillor Veryard**

In 2003/2004 21% of the borough roads were considered to have an unacceptable level of litter and detritus, this fell to 18% in 2004/2005 and something else I think happened in 2004/2005, I think that is when the Conservatives took control of this administration and then in 2005/2006 this fell to 15% and at this present time we are down to 12%. So you can see, in such a relatively short period of time, we have near enough halved this level and we are committed to making these streets cleaner and greener.

### **3 Councillor A. Wilton to Councillor A. Arnold**

“What were the results of the Judicial Review on the closure of Thurrock Workshops Ltd, in High Street, Aveley.”

### **Councillor Arnold**

The Judicial Review application against the Council was considered by Sir Michael Harrison in the High Courts of Justice on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

The application was refused and the following was noted:

- § The decision to close the workshop was one of Thurrock Workshop Ltd not the Council
- § The Council's decision to vary the Service Level Agreement was a response to the workshop's closure to enable it to keep running in a structured form.
- § There was no error in law in reaching the decision.

The applicants did lodge an appeal against this decision but they withdrew this application on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2007.

### **Councillor Wilton**

Thank you Councillor Arnold, thank you for putting the record straight. I hope this will finally end some of the rumors that were flying around during the recent election. Thank you Mr Mayor, so supplemental question.

#### **4 Councillor A. Wilton to Councillor B. Maney**

“What truth is there in the allegation made, in the Labour Party Thurrock News, that the Conservative Group will be axing funding towards the Police Community Support Officers?”

### **Councillor Maney**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Mr Mayor since 2004 Thurrock Council has continued to match fund 16 police community support officers. On 12<sup>th</sup> March 2008, Cabinet agreed a report on this arrangement in which there was no recommendation to terminate the said funding, on the contrary Mr Mayor, by agreeing the report, the Conservative administration ensured a further one year arrangement to provide increased match funding for the same amount of PCSOs. The purpose of the one year arrangement is to enable the implementation of improved performance monitoring and to allow a review on the effectiveness of the contract, which will be subject to a six monthly review in September. Mr Mayor this is the first such scrutiny of the match funding arrangements since 2004. The cost of this year's agreement with the police is £224,000 not an insignificant amount of rate payers money, therefore given this administrations track record of efficiency and providing value for money, it is only right that we seek to ensure this money is being well invested and we are right to request a degree of influence over how the PCSOs are deployed and what duties they perform.

#### **5 Councillor J. Cowell to Councillor S. MacPherson**

“At the last Full Council Meeting, Councillor Amanda Arnold, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, mentioned that there are approximately 400 youngsters in Thurrock who are providing some level of care or support for an adult or sibling.

Can I ask exactly what Thurrock Council has done, or is doing, if at all, to identify and support these young carers?”

### **Councillor MacPherson**

Young Carers are largely hidden and it is difficult to know how many young people with caring responsibilities there are both nationally, and in Thurrock. We support young carers in a variety of ways, for example

the Sunshine Centre and the NSPCC project are working with children whose parents were misusing substances. Other children whose parents have other types of illnesses or disability are supported through a dedicated young carers project. A group of 10 of these children spent a week in Scotland in April 08 engaged in activities to boost self-esteem and confidence and allow them a break from their caring duties.

While we are pleased with the work Council services are undertaking to support Young Carers, we suspect that our services are only aware of a small proportion of the number of young carers in the borough.

Our main challenge continues therefore to identify who and where our Young Carers are.

During 2007/8 we have worked with the Children's Society and Princess Royal Trust to develop a Young Carers strategy which was launched at a multi-agency conference in March 08. During the coming months activity will focus on the following areas:

- Further raising of awareness across all relevant agencies, particularly schools, so that everyone is aware of the issues that face young carers
- Comprehensive engagement with Adult Service providers so that they are encouraged to support the identification of young carers. This is probably going to prove to be the single most effective means of identifying children and young people providing care for their parents.
- Commissioning a service to meet the needs of Young Carers using the Tier 2 Commissioning process being developed by the Thurrock Children's Trust.

### **Councillor Cowell**

Back in June, people have obviously read the Thurrock Gazette, a Labour Euro MP Richard Howett, visited South Ockendon in June and was quoted in the local newspaper as saying "there are about 400 young carers in Thurrock who receive no extra help and support" The Labour Politician has left the impression among the residents that Thurrock Council is doing nothing whatsoever for the borough's young carers. Following that substantive answer, would you write to Mr Howett and correct his factually incorrect statement to the press.

### **Councillor MacPherson**

Of course I will. I think the trouble is, a lot of rumors get put out into Thurrock streets and we do have a duty to ensure that the information that goes out to everybody is correct information. As you have heard we do a lot of work with these people and I will make sure that a letter does go, before he leaves, so that he knows exactly where we are.

**6 Councillor J. Cowell to Councillor S. MacPherson**

- a) "How is the roll out of childrens' centres across the Borough progressing and have Phases One and Two been completed?"
- b) When is phase 3 due to start and what services do these centres offer?"

**Councillor MacPherson**

a) We currently have eight children's centres in operation across Thurrock with a further two about to begin development and completion between September - December 2009

Phase One centres are completed and operational and four out of the six centres for our phase two strategy are now complete and operational.

b) Phase Three programme started nationally in April 2008 and has a deadline of completion by March 2010. In Thurrock we have developed the Strategy for capital development (including the carry forward capital development for South Stifford). This is to be presented at September Cabinet for approval. Once this is achieved we are confident all projects will be completed by end of 2009 - therefore meeting our statutory duty in advance of the 2010 deadline. The final Phase Three Strategy will ensure that we are providing universal coverage of children's centre provision across every community in Thurrock - therefore enabling all families access to service provision within their locality.

All Children's Centres need to provide Childrens Centre Full Core Offer at the point operation with a view to extending their service provision as appropriate for their communities.

**Councillor Cowell**

Thank you Mr Mayor, another good answer. Can you ensure that the rollout of the Children's Centres across Thurrock and the facilities they offer local parents and the good work they do in the community, is given wide publicity.

**Councillor MacPherson**

It will be my absolute pleasure. I think with all the good work that is going on in Thurrock, it is vital to get all the information out, so everybody out there can benefit from the services we offer. So yes of course I will.

**7 Councillor D. Nicklen to Councillor J. Redsell**

“Can you provide an update on the planned refurbishment of Corringham Library.

How much is being invested in the refurbishment and what facilities will residents in Corringham and Stanford-le-Hope enjoy once work is complete?”

**Councillor Redsell**

CLLr Redsell has sent apologies and therefore will provide a written response

**8 Councillor S. Veryard to Councillor B. Maney**

“Could the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection please advise what action is being taken to tackle the problem of motor racing on the A126 at Lakeside and West Thurrock?”

**Councillor Maney**

Mr Mayor, the Council has been working with the local police to ensure that resolute action is taken to resolve the problem of motor cruising and racing on the A126 around Lakeside. As a result an order has been made for an Urban Clearway on the relevant part of the A126 used by those to race and this is now in force. This enables the police to apprehend the drivers of vehicles that are parked on this stretch of road if they are suspected of being involved.

Mr Mayor, in addition, I am happy to report that the council recently signed a Dispersal Order to cover the affected area and this will provide further enforcement powers to tackle this problem also.

Mr Mayor, the Police are also continuing operations in an effort to resolve the situation on the A126, details of which they will be in a position to release shortly.

**9 Councillor R. Gledhill to Councillor G. Hague**

“Did Caroline Flint MP, the Minister for Housing, ever respond to the request for a meeting with Thurrock Council’s Cabinet and what was her response?”

**This question was withdrawn**

**10 Councillor A. Smith to Councillor B. Maney**

- a) "Are Thurrock residents under observation in their homes by the Council?"
- b) If so, how many and for what reasons?"

**Councillor Maney**

There is currently one ongoing operation involving the kind of surveillance that Councillor Smith is referring to. Information or other details in relation to this activity cannot be disclosed, so as not to prejudice the investigation. Such surveillance is tightly regulated and can only be commenced if deemed necessary and appropriate. Several Council departments have in the past utilised the legislation which grants the use of such surveillance and this includes Trading standards, the Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Child Protection, Planning Enforcement, Environmental Health and Housing Benefit Fraud.

**11 Councillor A. Smith to Councillor S. Veryard**

- a) "How often are pavements cleaned in London Road, Purfleet?"
- b) How does this compare with Chafford Hundred pavement cleaning frequency?"

**Councillor Veryard**

- a) The pavements in London Road, Purfleet are litter picked and swept on a 10 day cycle.
- b) The pavements in Chafford Hundred are also litter picked and swept on a 10 day cycle.

**Councillor A Smith**

I raise this question because of considerable concern being shown at the Purfleet Forum for the state of the London Road walking down into the station. As you are well aware Councillor Veryard, there are a lot more people living in Purfleet now. I think we do need a higher frequency of cleanliness than we did then, we need to have the streets swept a lot more often. Could you look into this because there is a lot more people living in the area, obviously we need more attention in the area.

**Councillor Veryard**

Thank you, indeed. I am somewhat disappointed that you have failed to come to me directly regarding any problems regarding the

cleanliness of the pavements along London Road, Purfleet. You submitted this question two weeks ago, on the 8<sup>th</sup> July. Why didn't you contact me directly. If there was a problem two weeks ago, why wait until now to let me know. Is the problem still there, has it been cleaned up. If we don't let people know straight away, how are we supposed to deal with the problem. I can't find any complaints from yourself or fellow Ward Councillors regarding the pavements along this stretch of road on the Council's complaint system over the last year. If there are problems, let me know, or the Head of Service straight away. The scheduling of street cleaning is constantly under review and resources deployed where necessary. However I am pleased to see that you are at least taking an interest in the cleanliness of the borough, especially the ward you represent. It is just a shame that when yourself was the Leader of Labour controlled Thurrock Council, you did not take a similar interest. As I have already stated earlier, to my colleague Councillor Harrison, on the improvements that we have made since 2004. let us just remind ourselves that Thurrock was officially filthy under Labour where nearly a quarter percent of Thurrock was in a vile condition. As I said earlier 21% of the Borough streets were in a very poor condition. Under labour the amount of litter and rubbish on a staggering 1 in 5 of the boroughs roads was officially considered unacceptable. Labour's legacy to the people of Thurrock was a failing Council with deteriorating services and filthy streets. Now under year after year people don't want the labour administration back in control of Thurrock Council. It was only when the electorate of Thurrock kicked out Labour in 2004 that residents have started to see an improvement of the cleanliness of the borough's streets and it is our commitment to give our residents cleaner, greener streets. It has always been our commitment and this is what we are striving for. In 2004/2005, as I said earlier, when we inherited this administration, 21% of the streets were dirty, it has then gone down to 18% and we are now currently at 12%. Year on year the cleanliness of the borough, under the conservatives, is improving and we continue to work harder to keep all 64 square miles of the borough clean. Conservatives have taken firm action against environmental offenders as well with over 500 fines and prosecutions for things such a fly tipping. Should we remind people the number of people fined for fly tipping when you were the Leader of Thurrock Council. I don't think there were any prosecutions whatsoever. Labour controlled the Council for decades, yet in all that time never punished anybody for littering and making our streets look an eyesore. Thankfully you and Labour are not in control of Thurrock Council any more. When one in five of the borough's roads are being in a vile condition and you never bothered to prosecute anyone for environmental offences. If anyone has got a problem, any Councillor, any Member, come to me or the Head of Service and we will do our utmost to resolve these issues that people are coming forward. Week on week we are committed to making these streets cleaner and greener.

**12 Councillor O. Gerrish to Councillor G. Hague**

“Purfleet has a severe lack of local amenities. This includes a lack of shops for residents.

What is the Administration doing to encourage more shops to open in Purfleet?”

**Councillor Hague**

As you should be aware, the Local Development Framework preferred options document identifies a number of sites for mixed-use development in Purfleet which may well include retail development. Indeed, the Riverside Regeneration Site is specifically identified for mixed residential/retail use. Other sites i.e. Purfleet Station Approach and Botany Way Industrial Estate are also identified for mixes of residential/commercial and health uses. At the same time the Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation Pride Project for the regeneration of Purfleet has at its heart a new centre for the town, providing the amenities that Purfleet needs for the future.

**Councillor Gerrish**

I am sure we would both agree that within Purfleet the issue of amenities is quite a serious one and he has outlined several possible paths we can take in providing more for local residents. I wonder, since he has alluded to the plan there, whether he can give us any timelines and details on that plan, as to the number of shops expected to open in Purfleet in the next two years.

**Councillor Hague**

Thank you, obviously these are emerging plans and it is difficult to put timelines on things given the present economic situation that we face and on that point really, perhaps the reason we have so few shops and so few small businesses is something to do with the politics and failures of the Labour Government over the past few years. In terms of start-up business and shops etc. at a time when the economy is slowing down with local firms struggling to keep their heads above water, small business in Purfleet, in Thurrock and up and down Britain, have ever more hurdles to cross. In fact the CBI estimates that as a result of Labour Policies, British business now pay an extra £10 billion per year in tax and if that wasn't enough, the corporate tax rate on small business will rise to 22% in 2009 bringing a further 1.5 billion into the Treasury. As a result of the last budget, small business were hammered with a total tax hike of 1.7 billion. So is it any wonder that we are not seeing so many small shops and business start up. Then we have the over regulation and red tape. There have been more than 14 new regulations every working day under Labour, which is quite

shocking and the British Chamber of commerce now estimate the cumulative cost of regulations introduced since 1998 to business has risen to 65 billion and as Chancellor, the architect of much of this, Gordon Brown burdened the UK with the longest national tax code in the world. His last budget in 2007 took the UKs tax code to nearly 10,000 pages, so again any wonder we are not seeing more small businesses start up and more shops start up. As I have said, I am pleased that you are showing such a keen interest in our local small businesses and shops and the future economic prosperity of Purfleet and the Borough. As a leading member of Thurrock Labour Party, perhaps you could pass some of your enthusiasm to your MP Andrew Mackinlay who appears to be ignoring the needs of small business in his constituency. In fact it has been reported to me over the last few days that last month the Federation of Small Business complained that over the last 18 months they had written to Thurrock Member of Parliament, Mr Andrew Mackinlay on 21 different occasions, have yet to receive a reply from him and also he even ignored three requests for meetings with them to discuss the challenges facing our small businesses. Now this Council is doing what it can, this Council is planning for the regeneration of Purfleet and making provision but unfortunately with the present Government, small business and shops are absolutely hampered in moving those things forward. So in terms of timing it is very much down to your economy I am afraid. Thank you.

**13 Councillor J. Kent to Councillor J. Redsell**

“Will the Portfolio Holder outline her plans for the introduction of free swimming for the over 60’s at Thurrock Swimming Pools.”

**Councillor Redsell**

Cllr Redsell has sent apologies and therefore will provide a written response

**Councillor J Kent**

Why cant somebody substitute for her Mr Mayor.

**Councillor Hipsey**

Mr mayor, as far as I am aware, from a couple of days ago. Councillor Redsell has enlightened me that she will be responding to her questions in writing.

**14 Councillor J. Kent to Councillor G. Hague**

“The Local Strategic Partnership for Thurrock (The Shaping Thurrock Partnership) has a “Core Staff” of 9 people and an annual staffing bill of £320,000. Does the Portfolio Holder believe this demonstrates good value for money?”

## **Councillor Hague**

Obviously getting value for money should be central to everything that the Council does. However, as you know the allocation of resources is a matter for the LSP Board itself and I know that as a Board Member yourself, you asked this same question at the last LSP Board meeting and you advised that the LSP had approved its officer structure and supporting funding as recently as 10 April LSP Board meeting and it said it was satisfied with the officer structure being put in place.

As the work of the LSP moves forward it will be the duty of all Board Members and the Council is only one of the partner organisations, to scrutinise the work programme and what is being delivered and to decide whether value for money is actually being achieved. So I think we have to see how the work programme progresses really and what it delivers. For my own part, picking up the LSP under my new Portfolio and focusing on value for money for the Council, I have looked at the officer structure and the work programme to be delivered. I am concerned that we do get value for money for the Council's involvement in the LSP, that is the bottom line and through our representatives on the LSP Board, this is something I shall be monitoring as we move forward. Thank you.

## **Mayor**

I am sorry we have now run out of time and the remaining questions

## **Chief Executive**

Mr Mayor I can advise that under the Council's procedure rules those questions that have not been answered full, that any Members may choose to resubmit them to the next Council under the normal procedures.