

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were 6 questions from members of the public.

1. From Mrs Saunders to Councillor Watkins

We would like to ask the Council why so many trees are being removed in Thurrock in particular in Dell Road Orsett Hill, Orsett Cock roundabout, Rectory Road, Chadwell Road and a whole row taken down at Coalhouse Fort?

2. From Mr Jones to Councillor Huelin

The community environment development fund has been going for about three years now, what difference has it made to Thurrock communities?

3. From Mr Perrin to Councillor Maney

Would the Council consider outlawing the practice of parking motor vehicles on pavements?

4. From Mr Arnold to Councillor Gledhill

Can the Cabinet Member for Public Protection reassure the community regarding the safety of students, given recent coverage of knife crime?

5. From Mr Rikowski to Councillor Watkins

What is Thurrock Council going to do to address the toxic levels of pollution in the air, which damages and negatively impacts people in the area?

6. From Ms Sisterson to Councillor Coxshall

Please can Councillors tell residents how the damage caused with the widening of the A13 is to be compensated for in terms of the carbon capture lost with the destruction of the trees?

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Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 23 October 2019

Item 6 – Questions from Members of the Public.

There were 6 questions submitted from members of the public.

1. From Mrs Saunders to Councillor Watkins

I would like to ask the Council why so many trees are being removed in Thurrock in particular Dell Road, this is near where I live, I'm in Rectory Road, the Orsett Cock roundabout, Rectory Road, Chadwell Road and we noticed some had been taken down near Coalhouse Fort whilst out walking. Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Watkins, please respond to the question.

Councillor Watkins

Thank you very much Mr Mayor, and thank you to yourself as well Mrs Saunders. Trees can be removed for a multitude of different reasons, such as development or issues specifically related to that tree or for particular safety issues as well. I would just like to point out, and I'm not sure how you feel, but I don't like seeing trees being taken down. They will only ever get taken down if there was ever an actual need to do so. In case you were wondering where, Cabinet in February, thanks to a motion which was passed actually through Council, approved of a Tree Planting Strategy, which would replace trees taken down on public land, tree planting within that was also back-dated as well, so there were sixty six trees being replaced in total. There's also been additional ones, since the storm for example we've had this year, and in which trees which came down within that, those ones will equally be replaced. Regarding specific sites which you've mentioned in here, the Orsett Cock has had trees taken down, which is part of the A13 road widening scheme, they will be replaced as part of the – once it's been finished, and obviously, that's a multi-million pound project which is being done to improve congestion across the A13, up to Highways England's section. Dell Road, which I know you've also mentioned specifically as an area you've got an interest in, that's actually a private developer, so the Council has no power over what residents do with those particular trees, unless a Tree Preservation Order is in place in a particular time, which I'm not sure if that land has. Any trees removed at Coalhouse Fort would be from recommendations made by Natural England, who at this point in time, we do believe that they would be outside of the Coalhouse Fort boundaries, which would be in private areas as well, but we are just looking into that to be doubly checked. As I say, any trees which would be taken down from Coalhouse Fort would be through the recommendations made by Natural England. But I hope that fills some confidence, but equally as I say we don't like trees being taken down. Any trees which were taken down by the Council, would be replaced.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Watkins. Mrs Saunders, do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

Mrs Saunders

Yes please. It's mainly now about replacement, and if you could explain what the ratio of replacement is please, and bearing in mind that not all of them survive because they're not watered apparently - the trees, and some are damaged as well. So you need to replace more than one for each tree because they don't all survive, I'm afraid. Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Watkins.

Councillor Watkins

Thank you very much Mr Mayor, and equally thank you very much for your supplementary. I can completely understand what you're saying regarding new trees being planted, and then the life expectancy of those trees. We don't actually plant the small, sapling ones, we actually try to plant grown trees as much as we can do, to ensure that survival rates have increased. We have an excellent tree specialist here at the Council, who I'm sure Members across the Chamber this evening will know and have dealt with previously. She does take the job seriously, as we do. Every single tree which is currently in council land or which is planted by council is monitored closely, and we do continue to, as I say, replace like-for-like at this period of time. We also announced as part of that Cabinet paper as well, which as I say did come from a motion from Councillor Redsell, that we would also be exploring what further opportunities are available through the Local Plan for mass tree planting expansion. And also, which is in my report as well, there is mention as well, that we are still exploring as part of the re-development of the Air Quality Strategy, what further planting of trees we can be looking into as well for particular sites and areas. But equally, it's not just always down to the Council, we do have some Councillors as well who do their own tree planting in their particular wards. I'm not trying to make this joint with Ben and I, but I know that they have planted a lot of trees, also Councillor Pothecary and also Councillor Kelly as well. I know a lot of Councillors themselves plant trees in their own wards, which they do on their own and with the community.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Watkins.

Mrs Saunders

Thank you very much, that's it. Thank you.

Mayor

Question two from Mr Jones has been withdrawn, so we now move on to question three from Mr Perrin. Mr Perrin would you please read out your question to Councillor Maney, as set out on page thirty three of the agenda.

Mr Perrin

Thank you Mr Mayor. Councillor Maney, would the Council consider outlawing the practice of parking motor vehicles on pavements?

Mayor

Councillor Maney.

Councillor Maney

Thank you Mr Mayor, good evening Councillor – Mr Perrin, thank you very much for your question. The first thing that I'd like to say is that I and the Council fully recognise and understand the problems and inconvenience associated with pavement parking. Aside from the problems it causes for pedestrians and wheelchair users, it also leads to damage to our pavements, and that also costs to the council. This is something we take seriously and we know the concerns that local people have. Your question asked 'would we consider outlawing pavement parking', I think it's fair to say that per se the Council doesn't have the recourse to the law to do that, there are no legal provisions which allow an outright ban, as much as we might like to. Enforcement of paving parking rests primarily with the police. That's not to say there aren't things we can do, obviously if there is a road that has waiting restrictions in, if people park on the pavement those waiting restrictions apply, and we will enforce them. There are things we can do in terms of physical measures, we can put in barriers, talked about tree planting. I've found that planting trees on grass verges were a great way of stopping people parking there. As I say, we can put physical measures in place which prevent that. We - I want to talk about 'Kerb It', and I'll talk about that more later, but I think where you live the Council is actively installing extra parking provision on places like grass verges which become more than damaged, because vehicles keep parking on them. That in turn provides extra parking provision, and hopefully deters people from parking on the pavement. Lastly, there are things we can do from a community behaviour perspective, like in Section 43 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act, we can – but that's very much in localised circumstances, where there is evidence that it is causing nuisance to the wider community. So, I hope I've given you a flavour of some of the things we can do, but in answer to your question unfortunately there isn't any provision available to us which allows us to implement a ban per se, or a Thurrock-wide ban. Thank you Mr Mayor.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Maney. Mr Perrin, do you have a supplementary

question?

Mr Perrin

Yes please Mr Mayor. Thank you Councillor Maney for your answer so far. I ask the question because some pavements in Thurrock have become obstacle courses, and in some cases downright dangerous. Pavements are now used by some as parking areas for their cars, vans etc. Others use the pavements as permanent parking for their waste bins, some of which are overfilled and the rubbish spills onto the pavement, and the dumping of large items such as fridges, washing machines and vacuum cleaners. Such conduct can be dangerous when vehicles are parked on bends, thereby obstructing pedestrians and other driver's view of approaching traffic. So will the Council ensure pavements are safe, free of obstacles, and are for the exclusive use of pedestrians?

Mayor

Councillor Maney

Councillor Maney

Thank you Mr Mayor. Again, I would re-state that everything you say I agree with. I think, you know, in some parts of the borough there are a few parking pressures, and, you know, to be fair, it's hard to see where people would otherwise park if they don't have off-street parking of their own. But I regard it firmly as anti-social behaviour. I have a particular loathing for people who park on grass verges and, I agree with you, people who park on pavements and damage those pavements are causing anti-social behaviour; pure, plain, and simple. I think I've already said, where the Council can act, we will act. Unfortunately, we don't have the powers that we would like to have. You mentioned obstacles that are fly-tipped or left on the pavement, I think, you know, where they're reported to us or we know about them, of course we'll remove them. We spend a lot of taxpayers' money, needlessly in my opinion, repairing pavements and frankly we're fighting a losing battle. That's money we could be spending on other services, if we weren't repairing pavements needlessly. So, I can only give you my personal assurance that I think we should take, as fast as we can, a very dim view of people that park inconsiderately on our pavements. Pavements are for walking on, they're not for parking on or driving on. I do have to restate we're limited in what we can do, but where we can take action and that's feasible, I would always fully support that. Thank you Mr Mayor.

Mr Perrin

Thank you Mr Mayor.

Mayor

Thank you. Question four from Mr Arnold has been withdrawn, so we move

onto question five. Mr Rikowski, would you please read out your question to Councillor Watkins - sorry I should have waited for you to get to your seat – as set out on page thirty three of the agenda.

Mr Rikowski

What is Thurrock going to do to address the toxic levels of pollution in the air, which damages and negatively impacts people's health in the area?

Mayor

Councillor Watkins

Councillor Watkins

Thank you very much Mr Mayor again, and thank you Mr Rikowski for your question this evening as well - a very important topic which I know we'll be talking about later in the motion, and no doubt in my annual report later as well. But as my report hopefully, if you've had a chance to read it, and has - will demonstrate this evening is that we have laid out many ways in which the Council has already previously, and is currently tackling in order to try and improve the air quality across Thurrock. And we as the Council, especially myself as well, does take the tackling of air pollution, and trying to improve as much as we can do, very seriously. Just to give you a bit of background information, we do actually have some monitoring air pollution stations in Thurrock. We do that in two different ways, with fixed sites, and we also have some mobile monitoring tubes as well which we put up. The information we receive from the monitoring is imperative in us coming up with both strategies to tackle the air pollution, so that any strategy which we put in place actually has a starting base for us to compare against at the end of that test or within that test to see whether the improvements are being made. There was a previous – there was a strategy which was produced by this administration back in 2017, which using the data collected from the monitoring has multiple strategies already in place. Some of the work that has been carried out from that strategy, just to give you some background, is we have introduced new weight restrictions for HGV movement management across the borough, as they're quite high in producing toxic pollution, so those schemes are in place and are currently being used. I know Councillor Maney with his annual report this evening has got reference within that around school travel plans, so those are in use by a multitude of schools, but there are still some school's out there which would be very grateful in taking them up, which can also play a part in reducing air pollution. The new A13 east-facing slips which will be installed, we've mentioned previously and it's in my annual report, will be dealing with severe congestion that's built up within that particular area to help relieve that. The A13 widening project equally is to try and help traffic move freer and reduce congestion. We are also going to be introducing some further electric car charging points, which the Leader is currently working with myself to hopefully promote more of an electric vehicle take-up use. And also equally through the Local Plan which will play a large role. We're both pushing and promoting and making sure there's a more holistic approach taken with

climate change in mind. And also in the building we're currently sitting in as well, as part of the Grays regeneration and also leading from the front, we will also be improving the green, the cleanliness and air quality which this council produces, which will be a BREEAM outstanding building as well. There is more but I've gone on enough, and I could go on for longer, but equally importantly as I announced to Cllr Fish's question a few months ago, we have re-opened up the strategy. We're looking at ways in which we can improve that. We are having a cross-departmental look into this, taking into the data as well from Public Health to ensure that any of the strategies that we put in place also – will have an impact and improve the environment, but equally have an impact and improving people's lives as well.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Watkins. Mr Rikowski, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Mr Rikowski

Yes, the UK Parliament and over half of the boroughs have declared a climate emergency, as a response to escalating climate change and loss of bio-diversity. Will Thurrock declare an emergency and act upon that declaration?

Mayor

Councillor Watkins.

Councillor Watkins

Thank you very much Mr Mayor. Thank you Mr Rikowski for your supplementary. As you may have seen from the amendments this evening, no I will not be supporting a climate emergency. The reason being for that is because I think it's quite well clear that the UK government is the first, I believe, in the world, at least in Europe to actually enshrine in law a commitment to have net zero emissions by 2050. We're doing substantially more as a UK government, and that's the UK as a whole not just the government, but the people themselves, than any other of our neighbouring boroughs – neighbouring nations should I say, both here and across the world as well. So I personally believe, that in my point of view, our resource could be spent actually improving the air quality and we're doing something right here in Thurrock, which is exactly what we are doing with a commitment that we will become climate – well carbon free as soon as we physically can. As soon as technology growth permits, and obviously as soon as policies, both from a UK government point of view, and also what we're doing locally come into play. But as I say, I do stress equally that I won't commit and say that I will support the climate emergency terminology. We are as a borough taking improving the climate seriously.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Watkins. We now move onto question six. Mrs Sisterson, would you please read out your question to Councillor Coxshall as set out on page thirty-three of the agenda.

Mrs Sisterson

Yes, it's related to the others really. Please can Councillors tell residents how the damage caused with the widening of the A13 is to be compensated for in terms of the carbon capture lost with the destruction of the trees?

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall.

Councillor Coxshall

Thank you. The trees that you are talking about were removed to facilitate the road widening construction of the new bridges which obviously reduces massive congestion we've had to suffer for many years there. And in fact one of my first questions to Council, to Councillor Rice when he was Highways, when are we going to sort the A13 out to get rid of this congestion in Stanford, so I'm glad it's moving forward. But on completion of the trees will be planted in a suitable locations where the widening is done, where they were removed during the clearance. So we are actually going to get out trees back in the long-term. Hopefully by the end of next year the trees will be back again after the road widening. We take seriously the benefit of trees on the environment, and like you've heard previously with Councillor Watkins, in the previous question. So Cabinet have approved a new Tree Strategy, I repeat again, in February 2019 this year, that every tree removed from public land will be replaced, and the aim, well I would like to aim, to actually increase that through the Local Plan process again. We need to think about how we use spaces to increase the amount of trees here and protect our woods, particularly Belhus woods as the areas there are great woodlands, which will actually need to be protected more than what we are. I hope tonight when you see the Local Plan coming through that will be part of it. It's not just about the development which yes we've looked into, but we've got to think about the tree planting, the woodlands, the extra green spaces here, not just green and a large chunk of meadows. We need to think about how we develop these great woodlands. Belhus woods I've mentioned previously is now, because it's very old woodlands, these historic woodlands need protecting, need looking after and that's part of the duty of this council.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Coxshall. Mrs Sisterson do you have a second question?

Mrs Sisterson

Yeah – just quickly, I'd like to take issue when you say the widening of the

A13 will improve the road traffic. Road widening's tend to increase traffic, because more roads you get more traffic, so I'll just take issue with that. About the trees, I had an answer to a question about the number of trees felled and the number of trees planted since 2015. In that four year period we've had 299 trees felled apparently, and including an extra year since 2014, we've only had 155 planted. So I'd like some assurances that that shortfall is going to be met in the future, so those ones we've lost in the past will be replaced. And also I'm concerned about the loss of the wildlife habitat, for example in Aveley where I live we're having a big, new distribution centre put on the Purfleet Road and, at the moment, that's shrub land and it's going to be full of wildlife. There's going to be rabbits, foxes, all sorts of things living there, so my big concern is the loss of that habitat, because it's not just other countries in the world that are destroying their wild habitat, we're doing it here in Thurrock too, so that's my issue.

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall

Councillor Coxshall

Yes, I agree with you and that's why I mentioned Belhus Woods because it's obviously close to Aveley, it's really important. It's a great habitat that's undiscovered really and what we really need to do is improve that. I take issue about the road, when the Dartford Crossing – I take issue about the traffic. When the Dartford Crossing was congested, and the power station then had people coming down there down Bricks Lane with their emissions, they actually found out that only happened when there was congestion of the Dartford Crossing. So when cars are stopped, slow in traffic, that causes it, and that's what was happening around Stanford junction. It took you half hour to go through Stanford through there. If we can get it free-flowing, cars and traffic can reduce emissions. I take your point that the more you build it, the more they'll come. I think we need – we do need a holistic approach on that and how we deliver that, and I think we're fully aware of that. But we do need to deliver the congestion and next year we will deliver a more congestion free A13 as we go forward. The tree-planting, I'm not the Cabinet Member for environment, but what I do like – I can point out, and I think you've seen, that Councillor Redsell, Councillor Maney, Councillor Potheary, always plant trees and we're trying to do that. One of my first things when I moved here many years ago, I walked down and I saw avenues without trees. Now an avenue, as far as I can see, should have a tree that's why it's called an avenue not a road. We've got put back the trees and that's really important. I understand it demolishes car parks – the pavement, but it is important to our communities and it is nice to see the trees and avenues. It's nice to see trees. We do need to do that and during our building processes, to move onto your last point, about building and how we go through construction. Building – construction companies have a duty to make sure that habitat, regardless if it was greenfield beforehand or brownfield, because habitat changes immediately on a brownfield. We must continue to have a duty to protect the wildlife on them, and if you see over and over again, I'm quite proud to see

that – before they have to do cultural surveys, surveys on every bit of land. And I'm sure Ponds Farm construction, and I will take it back and speak to the Cabinet – to the relevant people tomorrow morning to make sure there is a thing – a duty on that Ponds Farm development that they do have to look after the habitat and transfer the animals that were there before they started construction. I'm sure that will have been part of the provisions of the planning application.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Coxshall.

Item 15 – Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 2 questions had been received to the Leader of the Council and 6 questions had been received to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Member appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee had been received.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

1. From Councillor Potheary to Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor. Can the Portfolio Holder provide an update on joint working between the Council and other agencies to ensure we are working to prevent those at risk of being drawn into gang activity or taking appropriate enforcement action against gang members?

Mayor

Councillor Halden

Councillor Halden

Thank you very much Mr Mayor. So I haven't actually had the full opportunity to congratulate Councillor Potheary on the upcoming birth of her child and I'm sure it gives us some comfort to know 100% of the early years centre's in her ward are rated 'outstanding' and we're building a thousand new school places. And it is my personal pledge to your unborn child that this administration will stay in power for as long as humanly possible to give your child the best start in life. Mr Mayor, we're doing a number of things to work with partner agencies, we have – we built the Youth Offending Service that was cut under the previous administration, establishing brand new gang functions very specifically within the service. As you know our reoffending rates amongst young people is lower than the national average, with a now expanded team to raise capacity. Our youth offending service is doing far more work interacting with schools, and you'll see this year the Annual Public Health report is going to be dedicated to the issues of vulnerability. So how can we bring our public health services, such as mental health together with schools and together with the Youth Offending Service to provide that holistic support. In addition to that, we've provided over £1billion of joint working with the police to go after youth gangs. Having served well over a dozen injunctions we have virtually crippled a youth gang in this borough and we have substantially more work – more joint working with the police, with special operations due to come forward in the very near future.

Mayor

Thank you. Councillor Potheary, do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

Councillor Potheary

Yes please Mr Mayor. Thank you Councillor Halden, and thank you for your good wishes I think. In January, I asked Councillor Gledhill what he was doing to work with the Home Office to co-ordinate with other areas about resettling gang members in Thurrock. And I guess my question is what has Thurrock Council been doing since January on this specific issue?

Mayor

Councillor Halden

Councillor Halden

Thank you Mr Mayor. Well first of all it's important to view this in a context. You know Thurrock's not an island in itself, we have to work in a broader relationship with Youth Justice Board to ensure that people who are settled either inside Thurrock or very near to Thurrock are properly monitored. We've secured over £140,000 from the Essex Vulnerability Unit to aid this work. We are doing additional work to ensure that if gang members are resettled here, or if people, more critically who could be susceptible to being drawn into a gang are settled here, we have the right resources in place. I've already made the announcement that we intend to bring forward an exciting plan to bring our inspiring youth services, together with the youth offending service, along with out mental health services, to ensure that we're doing proactive outreach to the type of young people who we know are at risk of being groomed by gangs. In addition to that, at the last Head-teachers Briefing we rolled out a new protocol with the Youth Offending Service regarding the existing powers that schools have for stop and search in schools, in relation to gang-related activity. And what the correct pathway is, so both Thurrock Council and the police can intervene with appropriate sanctions against potential gang members. But, also so we can intervene to ensure that the presence is in the classroom, in the corridors, and in the playground to ensure that those who may be susceptible to this type of grooming are appropriately supported to give far better life chances than they otherwise would have had.

Mayor

Councillor Potheary, do you wish to pose a second supplementary?

Councillor Potheary

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you for your response, I do appreciate Councillor Halden that you may not have – that you may not be fully sort of over this brief. All of what you've talked about sounds very positive in dealing with one particular aspect of this. The aspect that I'm quite interested in is the – what occurred - what was shared in the Vice article in summer 2018, where the specific issue was identified, but we just didn't know, and other agencies didn't know that members of gangs were being resettled as part of a kind of rehabilitation programme in Thurrock. And we had, you know, people from rival gangs on our streets, obviously probably not actually far enough away

sometimes from the original gangs. We've got fairly good transport links into London etc. So the issues seem to be that the agencies just didn't know that they were here and weren't able to either mediate that process or give them the support and put in safeguarding arrangements where needed. Can I ask what we are doing about that specific issue?

Mayor

Councillor Halden

Councillor Halden

Thank you Mr Mayor. Well first of all I would say that obviously it wouldn't be genuine for me to say that co-ordination between agencies isn't a problem, of course it is. It's a very complex issue. What I'm trying to be very conscious of is that I don't want Councillor Pothecary to inadvertently draw me into certain specifics because that wouldn't actually be helpful for the outcome she's trying to achieve. The example I would draw is, prior to us serving over a dozen injunctions against youth gangs in the borough, we were asked questions month after month after month by opposition Councillors in regards to what we were doing. And at times it seemed that our answers were actually quite lightweight. In reality, there is certain information that we would rather not have in the public realm, but in terms of the very specific you're asking about the relocation, it is a problem co-ordinating between different agencies. I can assure you that in regards to us giving out and announcing over a dozen youth injunctions, there is a reason that we have a massively expanded Youth Offending Service, there's a reason we have joint resources in place with Essex Police. Work is happening behind the scenes, if she would like a more comprehensive briefing I'm more than happy to meet with her privately. I'm not willing to go into certain specifics that would be counter-productive.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Halden. We now move onto question two. Councillor Pothecary would you please read out your question as set out on page 123 of the agenda.

2. From Councillor Pothecary to Councillor Gledhill

When will Police Officers funded by Thurrock Council start walking the beat in Thurrock?

Mayor

Councillor Halden

Councillor Halden

Thank you Mr Mayor. Obviously we have dramatically more police officers on the beat now, we are seeing those far more frequently, with additional investment from the council paying for more delegated police officers we are seeing them more on the beat more regularly. Again though I would draw Councillor Potheary to the previous answer that I have given, there is a reason that we have a reoffending rate in Thurrock of young people 10% lower than the national average. There is a reason we have virtually crippled youth gang in this borough that is because there are certain issues that are tackled behind closed doors between partners agencies with the council to the police, there are certain issues that aren't always dealt with by the bobby walking around the town centre. There are issues of gang related activities; there are issues of domestic violence. These are the types of issues that frankly are dealt with in the shadows so yes we do have more bobbies on the beat than we did before, we are investing heavily with the police crime commissioner, this council and the government equally there is a huge amount of activity that you would not necessarily see happen on the streets but if you have a look at some of the figures, driven down some of those horrendous crimes like gang and domestic violence that is where some of the core activities are taking place.

Mayor

Councillor Potheary do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Potheary

Yes please. Thank you Councillor Halden. I do again appreciate that you are standing in tonight and that this might not be your particular area. I was actually hoping that you were going to give me a really straight forward answer of next month. That was what I was looking for. There was a lot of faff and I take your point about certain things that don't make the public domain etc, but you know, the council funding of those officers services was very much trumpeted, we had countless press releases there had been a lot of lovely photos of Councillor Gledhill in the High Street surrounded by people in uniforms. We have all of that and this is which something that residents thought was a very firm promise and to be honest I thought this was a firm promise, yet they are not there yet and I would really love to know when they are going to be there. Please.

Mayor

Councillor Halden

Councillor Halden

Thank you Mr Mister. I would just like to say to Councillor Potheary first of all that after nine and half years as a councillor, three and half years in the cabinet I am not entirely sure when I misled Councillor Potheary by making her believe that I give straightforward answers. But if you really want a straight forward answer let me give her one. We have got brand new town centre

police teams in Grays, in Ockendon, in Stanford and now with thanks to the investment of Thurrock Council there will be brand new dedicated officers for Tilbury and Purfleet in January next year. 3218 police officers in total in Essex by 2020 this council has put more officers on the streets than we committed to in our 2018 election and now additional 20,000 coming national from the Prime Minister. Is that straightforward enough for you?

Mayor

Councillor Potheary do you wish to pose a second supplementary question.

Councillor Potheary

Again in slight capacity in that are those additional officers, we have got the town centre funding police teams which have come out from Essex police and I am very very specifically interested in the money committed from Thurrock Council so I would just like some clarity around that. Are those officers arriving in January 2020, a year after they were announced, are they actually the ones that are being paid for by the council and secondly how much say, it would be really useful for councillors if we can understand how this scheme is going to work for example how much say do we have where those officers go, can they be drawn into Essex at any time. Do we get impact, can we influence and shape where they go into our communities.

Mayor

Councillor Halden

Councillor Halden

Thank you Mr Mayor. Councillor Potheary is right about one thing yes it did take a little bit of time. Obviously we wanted to invest more into policing which when we took over the council we had a slight matter of the books we had to deal with by the last administration and of course when you put police on the street it is a point of fact you do have to train them, so yes it does take a little bit of time to roll them out. But lets me clear the money that Thurrock Council is committing is over and above the previous commitment they are new officers they are additional officers. In terms of the operational nature that you are requesting well like I said there is a degree to which we have partnership action, the £1 million we put in place working with the police to tackling youth gangs that is a good example of some of the influence. And it's because of the financial strength of this administration is why we have the financial clout to wield some of that work with the police and your specific question about can officers be drafted into Essex well the officers that we paid for are Thurrock officers but there are certain instances that you will see police officers drafted out of this borough, instances like that include when the police have to on mass attend Westminster to protect the general public from extinction rebellion protests when they have to prevent extinction protesters from committing crimes, vandalising public buildings those are the type of incidences when you will see police forces allocated. So we are investing in

the police force in Thurrock we are putting more police on the street and I welcome your support in making sure that the police stay here and don't have to go to deal with the type of lunatic protests we have seen recently.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO CABINET MEMBERS, COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND MEMBERS APPOINTED TO REPRESENT THE COUNCIL ON A JOINT COMMITTEE

1. From Councillor Okunade to Councillor Coxshall

With the announced £25 million Government investment in Tilbury, what are the real improvements that residents can expect to be delivered to make Tilbury become a more desirable place for people to live and work?

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall.

Councillor Coxshall

Thank you for this great question. It is really important to actually talk about how this announcement came about. We are obviously it was a great announcement made by the Conservative Government after us today there has not been enough lobbying of Government money from the leader of the third party that I continuously mentioned that we are being funded. This is obviously funding again another £25 million after the lobbying from this council and the MP the local MP to make sure we benefit and stand up for Tilbury and that Tilbury will benefit from this £25 million for town funding. We must remember this is on top of the injection of other town funding money into Grays which is up to £47.5 million we are going to be spending, spending in Grays town fund and the high street fund. There are a lot of confusion over the two different funds as they got announcements very closely together over the summer. So this is fantastic, we are in the early stages of developing, deciding what to do with these plans and we are waiting for a prospectus from the government what the scheme can include. But what I would say is that we are looking to engage with a wider area as possible in the Tilbury area to engage with partners, residents, ward colleagues around what councillors and businesses around there want. There have been some great plans; what we have got is this great opportunities over the next couple of months to think about what we would like around the delivery of these town centres funding especially not just Tilbury and in Grays as well. What we can do the Council has developed is fantastic up to £50 million that allocated, if we can come up with a good bid, we could get that money. We have got to come up with some good suggestions that are innovative and what we can do. I have got some ideas. I really like them. Councillor Redsell has many times mentioned about how we deliver and how we use the river and how we get connectivity. There is a river there. There are two bids for the river in Grays and how we use them and how we can deliver river buses, seek the fantastic opportunities that I can see in London that you can get from Greenwich into Westminster very easily using the river bus and accept that the river buses will come here at night and

park up in Tilbury and then go off to London, why are they going off. I know Gravesend are doing that but we have an opportunity there but that is my suggestion for some of it but what we need to do is engage everyone here, it is really open, the officers are here, there are a few meetings being tried to be arranged with businesses to see what is available in Tilbury and what we can do with that. This is an opportunity and I would say its once in a life time and what we don't want to do with it is what happened many years ago when I first spoke to the people of Tilbury what happened to that millions of millions of pounds that came in the early 90s, late 90s. It just disappeared we didn't know where it went. Well I am sure, I haven't looked, it was spent and it's just residents not seeing it. But this is a large sum of money and we actually do need to we don't want to give out this is what we are going to spend money on what I want to do is what does Tilbury want and how we move forward with that. That is what we want. What does Grays need and hat does Grays want so it doesn't look top down like that we were doing in the process is how we engage is really critical to that so that the people of the wider community actually see the benefit of nearly £50 million of the town funding that Thurrock has got.

Mayor

Councillor Okunade, do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Okunade

Yes, thank you Councillor Coxshall. It is very good that you admit that you do not know what you are going to spend the money on it is very (*unclear due to coughing and talking*). It seems to me that there is some confusion about the £25 million, the real reason for this I can tell you is that the original announcement in July of this year from the Government they said that 100 England towns including Tilbury were named in the £3.6 million town fund money to get improved transport and brought back connectivity. Is it not misleading, misleading, that we have stuff in the papers, you know that, that, yes I can wave it yes, that Tilbury you are going to make lives of individuals people better in Tilbury, whereas the money is for transport and connectivity so I want to ask you is this not misleading to the community.

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall

Councillor Coxshall

No, it is actually £25 million. What this is, let's be brutally honest the towns centre fund was invented as a Brexit dividend if you want to call that. What happens is that there was 100 towns across this vast country that have been left behind and Tilbury was a left behind town over many, many years. This administration acknowledges that Tilbury needs some love. Tilbury is one of the 100 towns that had been vastly left behind across the country. You look at the towns and you see how interesting where they are and you look at them

and they are left behind towns. The full prospectus, you haven't seen it that is just the starting thing, that's not the full prospectus we are still waiting for the full prospectus as I said in my answer so I think you are a bit presumptuous to think this is all we can do. We need to think about we can do and come up with initiative ways of using that money and that is what I said. Initiative ways of using up money and wait for the full prospectus. Think your being too quick and you keep on waving that thing this conservative administration is going to give some love to Tilbury. And what I would really like to say, to try and make my point is that my advice is that anyone in Tilbury at any upcoming election, any upcoming elections in the next few months we make sure don't put this £25 million at risk, so vote conservative.

Mayor

Councillor Okunade do you have a second supplementary question.

Councillor Okunade

Yes please, thank you. Well I was brought up not to tell lies. It is a false hope you are giving Tilbury residents, don't make a fool of them there are a lot of issues in Tilbury. I mean we are talking about the result of the air pollution there and we are talking about the transport, making transport better you respect people to ... yes sorry I am not supposed to be making a statement. I just want to ask you is it possible for you to use the money earmarked for something else to get our people lives in Tilbury like do other things like get create jobs for them or do whatever people of Tilbury want. What do you think is the top most priority of Tilbury people is to think bringing more traffic into the town.

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall

Councillor Coxshall

It is an initiative way of using this money we have the prospectus and then let's see what happens. But what I can say is that clearly if you don't want that £25 million around that is madness. The ward councillor is not welcoming this £25 million, it's crazy, I can't believe it, its phenomenon (*members jeering and then the Mayor ends the response*)

2. From Councillor Mayes to Councillor Johnson

Can the Portfolio Holder tell me why it has taken over 8 months to try and fix the vehicle gate to the Tilbury high rise car park?

Question resubmitted to 27 November 2019 Council.

3. From Councillor Mayes to Councillor Johnson

Can the Portfolio Holder tell me how long residents should expect to wait for repair jobs to lifts within flats?

Question resubmitted to 27 November 2019 Council.

4. From Councillor Fish to Councillor Johnson

Are residents on Seabrooke Rise Estate entitled to the same standard of caretaking as other similar areas of the borough?

Question resubmitted to 27 November 2019 Council.

5. From Councillor Worrall to Councillor Huelin

Can the Portfolio Holder please update the chamber on the results of the Thameside Theatre review?

Councillor Worrall requested a written response.

6. From Councillor Collins to Councillor Maney

Would the Portfolio Holder confirm that the proposed yellow lines which are due to be painted on the roads in Homesteads will be delayed until the full impact on the parking displacement it will cause is assessed and the resulting problems are remedied?

Question resubmitted to 27 November 2019 Council.

QUESTION TIME

Questions from Members to the Leader, Cabinet Members, Chairs of Committees or Members appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee in accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 14) of the Council's Constitution.

There are 2 questions to the Leader and 6 questions to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Member appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE LEADER

1. From Councillor Potheary to Councillor Gledhill

Can the Portfolio Holder provide an update on joint working between the Council and other agencies to ensure we are working to prevent those at risk of being drawn into gang activity or taking appropriate enforcement action against gang members?

2. From Councillor Potheary to Councillor Gledhill

When will Police Officers funded by Thurrock Council start walking the beat in Thurrock?

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