

Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 26 February 2020

Item 6 – Questions from Members of the Public.

There was 1 question submitted from members of the public.

1. Mr Perrin to Councillor Watkins

I congratulate the Council on being named “Team of the Year” at the “Keep Britain Tidy” Awards 2020. However, at risk of raining on the Council’s parade, would you agree that there are some areas of the Borough where there is an urgent need for improvement to the environment, especially with regard to the Council’s policy for a “Cleaner, Greener Thurrock”?

Mayor

Councillor Watkins

Councillor Watkins

Thank you very much Mister Mayor and very good evening to you Mr Perrin. Firstly I would like to thank you for your kind words and equally congratulate Thurrock as you have already mentioned in your question being named Keep Britain Tidy team of the year. Keep Britain Tidy who like the residents are seeing the benefits of the conservative run Thurrock, we have improved services being delivered thanks to our financial control otherwise we would not have won this award, and I believe would be award number 17 now actually for this administration since 2017. And what exactly are those improved services been that the residents are benefiting from and ensuring areas are clean and tidy. Well since 2016 as Keep Britain Tidy have seen over £10m has been reinvested back into clean it cut it fill it and stop it. New tractors have been brought back in to cutting the grass, barrow beats back on our streets cleaning our streets and towns, new sweepers cleaning out roads and pathways which you may have seen out and about which came in November we have some great new sweepers out there, capped weekly bin collections, our fleet vehicles replaced with newly compliance, over 600 street bins have been replaced and the final stages to come this year. Increased enforcement activity across our high streets tackling litter and graffiti amongst many other things. Increased enforcements in regards to fly tipping as well, a brand new fly tipping campaign launched whilst working with our increased enforcement officers and police to stop those from doing it and also more police thanks both to the amazing work this council has done lead by Councillor Gledhill in his role as portfolio for anti-social behaviour and also for the police fire and crime commissioner as well. Again with financial control and surplus investment into policing and I would also like to thank our government as well for the manifesto of pledging 20,000 new police officers across the UK as well. And it is delivering on the streets and the most recent Keep Britain Tidy scores which saw us reach a whole new high score of 5.36% only 0.36% away from our final scoring. We have seen massive crack down on our gangs and also new police on the streets and I would happily

argue that our borough is better than it has been for a many number of years. We have achieved a lot over the last four years recovering from the devastation that labour left us in with cut after cut. Heading today with financial awareness. But Mister Mayor I am modest although we have had many successes I am humble enough to say there is more than we can do. I have always said that we strive to do better in Thurrock and we must continue to innovate and improve where that needs to happen. I am fully supportive of the budget to ensure that we continue to do that we have been investing in our borough to keep it clear safer and greener. We will be going over in greater detail later this evening of the full ins and outs as this is announced but we continue to have a cleaner safer Thurrock with such initiatives such as tree planting strategy where planting over a 1000 new trees, a new air quality strategy work has kicked off alongside the carbon neutrality, testing modelling being undertaken this year and £150,000 surplus being put forward for new schemes to help it and even tonight we will be seconding a motion to in due course to have a new wood. Extra policing and enforcement and numerous parking improvements plans in place alongside many other things we continue to be ambitious where improvements or changes are needed.

Mayor

Mr Perrin do you have a supplementary.

Mr Perrin

Yes please Mister Mayor. Protection of the environment is not just about fly tipping and littering important though those issues are. The Council should be equally concerned about preserving grass verges and green spaces. Drivers of motor vehicles park on unprotected grass verges and green spaces simply because they can. Such behaviour is every bit as anti-social as fly tipping. I would go to so far as to say it is vandalism. If the Council is seriously committed to keeping Thurrock cleaner and greener will it protect all grass verges and green spaces and clamp down on offenders. I am assuming most Councillors and Council officers own or drive a motor vehicle so I feel I may be rolling a very large boulder up a very steep hill and I fear it is likely to rollback and crush me.

Mayor

Thank you Mr Perrin. Councillor Watkins.

Councillor Watkins

Thank you Mister Mayor I will keep it brief this one. What I am going to say Mr Perrin is that you are completely correct in that verge parking which has absolutely ruined certain parts of our borough where there has been grass verges there up to now but are no longer grass verges but mud baths and equally aware that consistent parking over a many number of years as well which has meant a lot of the pathways themselves are now cracked and obviously (*coughing*) more importantly. Hopefully you may have seen it, some

wards will have briefly seen this, we launched only last year our “Kerb It” scheme which was a million pounds worth of investment through our surplus which again thank you was for the stronger financial control I would like to say some whereby we saw some roads and pathways repaired with new parking measures put in place in order to stop inappropriate parking taking place. Just to name some of those were Webster Road in Stanford, Dell Road and Dean Path in Ockendon, Woodford and Lampits Hill in Corringham and you may have seen if you haven’t already is in there we are putting forward another over £600,000 worth of surplus budget if people decide to vote for it, which they are apparently not going to so they are saying no to this scheme funny enough whereby we would be putting more money into to try and stop this inappropriate parking and repairing, quite rightly so, those pathways where they have been damaged in the past not just with concreted over but sometimes we have been using that grass seed protection so that it can still be grass where cars can still park to get the best of both worlds. But we are doing something about it quite rightly so and we are also exploring what other measures are available to us through enforcement as well.

Item 15 – Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that no questions had been received to the Leader of the Council and 9 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 CABINET MEMBERS, COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND MEMBERS APPOINTED TO REPRESENT THE COUNCIL ON A JOINT COMMITTEE

1. 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?

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

The answer to that question is undoubtedly yes.

Mayor

Councillor Fish do you have to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Fish

Yes please Mister Mayor. My question should not be taken as a criticism of the individual care takers that work on Seabrooke Rise, the residents feel they do the best that they can. My question is more on how the services are delivered strategically so what residents have to put up with is landings not moped, green areas that aren't cleaned properly, litter in the green areas, graffiti in lifts, drug use in lobbies and no weekend care takers. The residents tell me this is caused by someone being pulled away to deal with other areas to cover for sickness and holidays. Therefore what I am asking for is what I would like the portfolio holder to do is to carry out a review of the service, not just in Seabrooke Rise but right across the borough to make sure that it is fair and equitable for someone in the borough.

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

Thank you Mister Mayor and thank you for your supplementary. Just to say there is a care taking service charter that covers the standards all residents

receive across the whole of Thurrock. The Council is committed to maintaining high standards of cleanliness across all communal land, areas and buildings in the neighbourhoods we manage. This question was in last month and it has now come to this month's council, if there are real problems going on councillor who don't you come to me and we can sort them out hopefully rather than bringing it to council and asking general questions so my answers back to you, I think there was a question, that a review has been undertaken already and I am quite happy with the review that has been done. If there are any problems on that estate come to me and speak to me and we will try and do something about it.

Mayor

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

Councillor Fish

Yes Mister Mayor. The portfolio holders talks about a review of the service and I know people having been walking the estate with residents looking at improving the service in the last few months since my question was raised in fact. No improvements have taken place and these things are still happening. As far as I am concerned that review is inadequate and wont the review done properly.

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

No there wasn't a question there Mister Mayor. As I have said to you just a little minute ago come and speak to me if there are problems.

2. Councillor Byrne to Councillor Mayes

Can the Portfolio Holder assure us that related STP proposals satisfy the health needs of Thurrock residents for emergencies and walk in patients?

Mayor

Councillor Mayes

Councillor Mayes

Thank you Mister Mayor and thank you Councillor Byrne. In light of the question that was asked commissioning and provision of these services are primarily a matter for the NHS. However, members will be aware that the Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding back in 2017 when all partners, the Council and the NHS, committed to ensuring that all services

currently on the Orsett Hospital site will be relocated elsewhere to more local sites within Thurrock, principally the proposed four Integrated Medical Centres. That includes the Minor Injuries Unit which is proposed to move into the Thurrock Hospital site.

There are no proposals from the NHS to scale down wider emergency services in fact quite the opposite. Thurrock residents will be able to continue to access necessary emergency services due to the A&E department remaining at Basildon and Thurrock University Trust. The STP reconfiguration of services strengthens the position of Basildon Hospital with the expansion of the stroke service and the development of the radiology hub.

Mayor

Councillor Byrne do you have to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Byrne

Yes, will there be adequate resources for the ambulance services when the extra pressure has been put on with moving patients around with treating transfers. You know Basildon Hospital will not be their local hospital any more, it will Chelmsford or Southend where ever they choose it to be. Is it also true that it falls well short of vehicles and crews and be heavily reliant on St Johns Ambulance to cover the number of flaws in this proposal?

Mayor

Councillor Mayes

Councillor Mayes

Thank you for your supplementary question. In terms of the STP as I said it is not an NHS matter and how they provide their ambulances and what they do in return to that would be up to their service but of course we would lobby and work with our partners across the many partners that we work with across the NHS to ensure we get the best services which would obviously improve the transport between the services.

Mayor

Councillor Byrne do you have a second supplementary question.

Councillor Byrne

I didn't get an answer to that one. St John's Ambulance was the question.

Councillor Mayes

Thank you Mister Mayor. I repeat this is primarily an NHS matter and not a council matter therefore it would be up to them to sort this issue and will lobby

our partners as I said to get the best results for our residents within the STP proposal. Thank you.

3. Councillor Okunade to Councillor Coxshall

Can the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration confirm that the £25M Government funding for Tilbury Town has now been received by Thurrock Council?

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall.

Councillor Coxshall

I can't say thank you for the question because it's the same thing and I have to repeat the same thing over and over again.

Tilbury Board has to be constituted and it has to say what it wants with the money. It's not my job, it's not anyone else's job to say it. The government said it's offered us up to £25 million to the people of Tilbury and for the Board to decide how we run with the money. This is a Conservative government giving us £25 million, not a Labour government, thank the Lord. It means that they don't just throw money at £25 million, they've got to know what we're going to spend it on first and then the £25 million would be coming.

If the Tilbury Board comes up with good suggestions, it will get £25 million to spend in Tilbury. But I must say this again, you asked me lots and lots of questions about it, so.

Mayor

Councillor Okunade, do you have a second question?

Councillor Okunade

Yes. Just a quick comment that I wouldn't have been asking that question, I did, being, you did not say to the public that yes you have that money or you are receiving that. So, my question, supplementary question, will be that, can you assure all Tilbury residents that you will deliver on your promise regarding this money and also to spend it on what the community needs.

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall.

Councillor Coxshall

I can answer that simply, no. It is not my decision to spend the money or how to spend the money. It is the Tilbury Board that are constituted to spend the money. If the members of the Board decide what they would like, the

government would necessitate their great ideas. I'm pretty confident of any bids that we've put in in the last 10 years, we've been exceptionally lucky and got fantastic results. Millions and millions, in fact, hundreds of millions from the government. This is money specifically for Tilbury, it would be spent on Tilbury, with subject to what the Board wants to do.

Mayor

Councillor Okunade. Do you have a second supplementary question?

Councillor Okunade

No, thank you.

4. Councillor Okunade to Councillor Coxshall

Can the Portfolio Holder tell us the composition of the Tilbury Town Fund Board that has recently been set up?

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall

Councillor Coxshall

Yes, I can obviously send you the papers that were published by the government if you really want to see what they look like. I am glad you are interested because the ward member for Grays has been invited and I hope he turns up tomorrow night for the meeting in Grays as well. If he didn't turn up last time I hope he can turn up as well to find out. But the paperwork for that is out and about for it but the Tilbury members is set out by the majesty's government published last year it has to have a Member of Parliament and the Member of Parliament is Jackie Doyle-Price after December. The local representative from the CLLD was Simon Harper, representative from Greater Skills and Places is Lucy Harris, a representative from the community is Yewande Kannike, a local ward councillor which is Councillor Allen Mayes there are two business representatives which are on there which is someone from Amazon site, who haven't provided a name yet, and the Port of Tilbury which is Peter Ward and of course myself.

Mayor

Councillor Okunade do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

Councillor Okunade

Yes please Mister Mayor. Thank you for giving the list of those on the board. I just want to ask if you can tell us what rights you have for excluding the elected Labour Party Tilbury councillors.

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall

Councillor Coxshall

As set out in the majesty's government the people on the board, it is a small board but you are more than welcome after last year you did not think it was interested, there was no interest at all as you said it would not happen and there was no money coming in. There is an advisory board, I am very happy for you to be on the wider advisory board and will make sure you have an invite to the advisory board.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Coxshall.

Councillor Okunade

I must really mention that you have been really really disrespectful, you have, for saying that, you know, if I feel like coming, I can come. You know you are really really very disrespectful and I am sure you are using the council officers, you are putting them in trouble because you are using council officers to do something for you. Did you use council officers to personally dedicate these and knowing that council officers have to be inclusive when they have to think about who and who should be representing a local area because I am the elected member and have been the elected member for Tilbury for a long time. You have been very disrespectful and you will get council officers into trouble. He is rude and needs to apologise.

5. Councillor Fletcher to Councillor Johnson

Regarding the plans for new build in South Ockendon, and particularly the Culver and Callan sites, what consideration has the Portfolio Holder given to the infrastructure, including school places, medical facilities and shops, that such an increase in population will require?

Mayor

Councillor Johnson.

Councillor Johnson

Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you Councillor Fletcher for your question.

I have to begin by pointing out that the Housing Development List was agreed at Cabinet earlier this month has made no definite plans to build anywhere in the Borough. As we await on the results of public consultation in order to decide where the 500 new council homes proposed by this administration are best placed. With regards to the infrastructure, I will say should we reach the

point of a planning application I am sure the suitability of any site will be considered on a number of criteria with appropriate financial contributions towards education and health care through section 106 agreements. But I must point out that schooling in the area is very adequate. In fact, the Benyon School is already in the process of converting to a two form entry. There's also a strong possibility of a dedicated medical hub in Ockendon.

However, as you have specifically mentioned the Culver Centre and Callan Grove, I do believe this will be an appropriate time to show how this administration's consultation policy is putting residents at its very heart. As you may be aware, that a round of consultation began previously on both sites and I am pleased to say that under the strapline of, 'you said, we did'; an amended site plan will be offered up for further consultation very soon regarding the Culver Centre site. With regards to Callan Grove, I have revisited the latest consultation feedback with Officers and I've had several meetings with residents. I've seen for myself how this site is a really very, very well used amenity within the close community and does not need to go through a second round of consultations and I will therefore announce that this site will not be considered for housing development.

Mayor

Settle down please. Councillor Fletcher, do you have a supplementary question?

Councillor Fletcher

Thank you Mister Mayor. Councillor Johnson, I think I love you.

Mayor

That was a statement, rather than a question.

6. Councillor Kerin to Councillor Johnson

Does the Portfolio Holder believe that building 89 flats on the Grays Beach car park is a good idea, please consider the previous answer?

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

I don't want you telling me you love me. Thank you for the question councillor. However as I have said before I must point out the Housing Development Options List that went to Cabinet earlier this month highlighted sites that are technically possible to be considered for development. Which could be part about infrastructure first high quality commanded approach for development. Therefore until the consultation with residents is returned and analysed the

only good idea that I am fully backing is for this administration to build 500 new council homes for the people of Thurrock. The Labour Group would do well to understand unless they do not agree with 500 new council homes they should ensure that the residents in their wards are given help and encouraged to return the consultants with as much detail as possible. I would refer you to a motion presented by Councillor Gerrish back in July 2018 which called for and was agreed asking for our asset disposal process to include consultation with ward councillors and be more open and inclusive decision making process which I believe I have done. The introduction of the criteria process paper on how we select sites followed by an open and transparent called for sites and indeed I remember you, Councillor Kerin seeing you sitting there nodding your head in agreement when I explained this process when questioned in my portfolio presentation. We don't want to see any more sites inclusions such as Kings Street being put forward by your administration whereby public consultation was either ignored or not even sought.

Mayor

Councillor Kerin do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

Councillor Kerin

Yes please. Thank you for that answer obviously very disappointed I thought I was going to get a moment like Councillor Fletcher did. I'll have to wait I have another question later it might happen. It was a simple question really I asked you for you whether you think it was a good idea to put 89 flats there, you know, I don't think that is going to be answered. But as a supplementary what I am really worried about is not just individual sites but how they make up a collective whole in the sense that we all that we also have Darnley Road and Crown Road on the agenda only 90, 32 flats proposed for Argent Street, we have 82 proposed for the civic offices ..

Mayor

Councillor Kerin please get to your question.

Councillor Kerin

I wish he would get to the answer in the first place then we would have more time. Those are only in my ward in Grays Riverside but taking it up with the whole of Grays you also have 20 units in Bridge Road and 60

Mayor

Councillor we understand there is a list of what is going, please get to your question.

Councillor Kerin

Next time we will wait for their clarity of their answers as well. Ok. Which brings me to my conclusion. 373 proposed unit across the whole of the Grays Riverside Grays and Grays Thurrock so my question is does Councillor Johnson believe that those 373 units across Grays is a good idea.

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

It sounds like an old record here I'm sorry but my idea is good that we are building new council homes. We have put it out to public consultation, we will be putting out for public consultation and we will get the view of the people that really really matter then us 49 councillors can then discuss it as much as you like. I am sorry that I keep repeating myself but you said it these are proposals they are not stuff we are going to do they have been brought forward so much earlier now. You will have a lot more time to discuss this where you know the consultation will bring it forward to have time to talk about it was your administration you talked about it when it was at planning that is not the case now and like I said you sat there and agreed to the process that I have put in place.

Mayor

Thank you councillor. Can you get to the question please?

Councillor Kerin

Ok, get to the question. Do you personally believe that these sites are a good idea, yes or no? I hope that was brief enough.

Councillor Johnson

I am not going to give you a yes or no answer because we are waiting for the people that matter to come back to give us some form of consultation feedback.

7. Councillor Holloway to Councillor Mayes

What consideration has been given to the health implications of removing green spaces from our borough?

Mayor

Councillor Mayes

Councillor Mayes

Thank you Mister Mayor. Thank you Councillor Holloway for your question. The Council's emerging Local Plan will be supported by a suite of evidence based documents which identify the needs within Thurrock and how future policies should be designed in order to meet these and support growth. All the policies and proposals to be set out in the Local Plan will be subject to a Health Impact Assessment as part of the Integrated Assessment process which will ensure that both individually and cumulatively the Plan has positive impacts on Health and Wellbeing considerations.

At the point of any planning application the suitability of each site is considered on the basis of a number of criteria, including accessibility to services. Planning policy also considers the impact on development proposals on the local community with appropriate financial contributions towards education and healthcare facilities amongst others negotiated through a Section 106 agreement as a commitment between the applicant and developer and the Local Planning Authority.

Mayor

Councillor Holloway do you have a supplementary question.

Councillor Holloway

Thank you Mister Mayor and thank you for your response. It was a bit planning heavy in regards to the response rather than health focused. Numerous studies have pointed to the direct benefit of green spaces to both physical and mental health wellbeing. Studies which I am happy to send references to so that you can read in detail they are about 27 which say that green spaces have been associated with the decreased in health complaints including blood pressure and cholesterol, improve mental health and reduce stress levels, receive better general health and the ability to face problems. The presence of green space also has indirect benefits it encourages social contact and integration, provides space for physical activities and play and it improves air quality. My question is as portfolio holder for health will you agree with your Tory colleagues who have recently come out against the destruction of our green spaces just one this evening from removing it from a list of destruction sites and say that residents health and wellbeing is up most important and we need to save our green spaces.

Mayor

Councillor Mayes would you like to respond.

Councillor Mayes

In relation to the site planning I believe my colleague, Councillor Johnson, answered that adequately and think that is where we are with that one. In terms of obviously green spaces to help air quality there is a bigger impact with the planting of 1000 trees that we are planning to do than green spaces not disregarding green spaces obviously they are important. However this

clearly says that there will be an health impact assessment of any green space so it is not just that there is a green piece of land we are going to do that with it, it is the ability to see what is going to happen with the health of the area and also the accumulative plan, the health and wellbeing consideration so therefore is not just a straight pave over greens so that I believe you are trying to suggest it is consideration taking health and wellbeing as well. Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Holloway do you have a second supplementary question.

Councillor Holloway

I do thank you Mister Mayor. It is not ok to remove green spaces from one place and plant trees in another. Mister Mayor it is important I think to highlight the destruction of our green spaces will impact on some of our most important residents of our borough children and older people and providing some context for the new portfolio holder. Children's physical activity are increased when they live closer to parks, play grounds and recreation areas

Mayor

Councillor can we get to the question otherwise we wont get through the questions.

Councillor Holloway

I am raising some context with which residents have raised with me.

Mayor

Councillor. Councillor I won't the question please.

Councillor Holloway

Yes Mister Mayor ... the survival of older people

Mayor

I am sorry Councillor, please be seated. I asked you for the question you never asked it.

Councillor Holloway

Called a Point of Order and referred to Chapter 1, Part 2, 3.1 (b) and (d) – Mayor's functions and responsibilities – The mayor will have the following responsibilities to preside over meetings of the Council so that its business can be carried out efficiently and with regard to the rights of Councillors and the interests of the community and to ensure that the Council meeting is a

forum for the debate of matters of concern to the local community and the place at which Members who are not in the Cabinet are able to hold the Leader / Cabinet to account. Mister Mayor, I ask under your constitutional responsibilities this evening that you allow us councillors who are not in cabinet in ask our questions will you allow me to finish my questions.

Mayor

Councillor I understand exactly what you are saying but it quite clear states that a supplementary question must be a question you spent more time than required not asking a question, you should have asked a question straight away you have been making a statement and not asking a question. That is the reason why I cut you short.

Councillor Holloway

Mister Mayor I have my second supplementary question.

Mayor

Right, can it be a question rather than a supplementary.

Councillor Holloway

Yes Mister Mayor I understand how democracy works under a Tory administration.

Councillor Holloway

My question to the cabinet member is the original question a yes or no answer will he agree with his Tory colleagues who have recently come out on the destruction of our green spaces and state for the resident's health and wellbeing we need to save our green spaces. Yes or no.

Councillor Mayes

They are my conservative colleagues and I would encourage everybody residents and everybody to engage in the processes and consultation which would give the actual answers the residents want. It is not up to me, it is not up to Councillor Johnson give a yes or no answer, it's up to the residents they know best, not us.

Mayor

Thank you councillors.

8. Councillor Redsell to Councillor Watkins

Could the Portfolio Holder inform the Chamber what we are going to achieve in the next phase of tree planting in the borough?

Mayor

Councillor Watkins

Councillor Watkins

Thank you for the question Councillor Redsell and congratulate you on your continued persistence and passion on the work done in helping to shape the Council's tree planting into the agenda. With the right questions and motions to this Council you can get policy through. As you are aware and as from your motion we have a policy to replace trees like for like so the recent storms which unfortunately did see trees fall will be replaced alongside any tree that needed to be replaced. However, as you have seen this evening from our past budget agenda our surpluses will be used however to be reinvest into Thurrock for Thurrock residents. Over the course of the next two years we will be planted in the excess of over 1000 new trees. These new trees will be planted back down our avenues and can't wait to see our avenues repopulated with trees once again. We will also be working with transport and air quality teams to ensure that trees are planted at existing acre main sites and any new sites identified under the new round of data modelling commissioned by this council. Ensuring that we are planting trees in our poor air quality areas both existing air quality as it currently stands and also what the air quality monitoring also says. The surplus will enhance the maintenance of our trees also. I will also be supporting your motion this evening which if passed will feed into the tree planting strategy separately looking at the inclusion of the new wood and lastly we hope to have our new ambitious strategy working with educational colleagues and what further we can do with our schools on tree planting. Mr Mayor we are doing an awful lot of tree planting over the coming two years.

Mayor

Councillor Redsell do you have a supplementary.

Councillor Redsell

No thank you Mister Mayor.

Time fell on this item. Councillor Kerin will receive a written response to his question.