

Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 28 September 2016

Item 6 – Questions from Members of the Public.

Two questions were submitted from members of the public.

1. From Mr Jackson to Councillor Tolson

With an increasing number of Heavy Good Vehicles using Thurrock's road network and a linked decreasing air quality (in recent years illustrated by increasing Air Quality Monitoring in the Borough). Will the Council introduce a Low Emissions Zone for Thurrock, following the lead of many neighbouring London Boroughs?
Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Tolson, could you please respond.

Councillor Tolson

Thank you Mr Jackson for your question, and I just wanted to say that it's not normally this warm in here but it seems very warm again this evening. As one of the elected Members of Thurrock Council, we're all concerned with the pollution that comes into our society and we want the area in our Borough to be as clean as we can possibly have it. Just off the top of my head I think we've got two tunnels coming into Thurrock, a bridge going out, two ports, an A13. So, in light of that, Thurrock Council is developing an Integrated Air Quality and Health Strategy for Thurrock outlining our approach to reducing harmful emissions and reducing exposure. There's a document coming to the November Cabinet, sorry not Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny meeting, I think that's chaired by Councillor Barbara Rice. So that's a public meeting that you can go to if you wish, or if you want to put a question forward, because I know that it's something you feel strongly about, you might be interested in that. Regarding the Lower Emissions Zone, there is some work we're doing around that and it's one of the things that we're reviewing to see whether there's going to be impact or advantages for our Borough, so that's something we're going to do as well and we're going to start a feasibility study shortly and the results of that should be ready about January time.

Mayor

Mr Jackson, do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

Mr Jackson

No, I'll leave that there, thank you very much.

Mayor

Thank you. Question number 2, Mr Perrin could you please come to the designated area and read your question out to Councillor Tolson as set out on the Agenda? Sorry I apologise, the question is to Councillor Gledhill not Councillor Tolson. Sorry

2. From Mr Perrin to Councillor Gledhill

Mr Perrin

Thank you, Madam Mayor. My question is Anti-social behaviour is invariably a traumatic experience for the persons being transgressed against, particularly when it appears to be taking an inordinately long time to resolve. Could you tell me how long, on average, a case of anti-social behaviour takes to conclude?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill, would you like to respond to the question please?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you, Madam Mayor and thank you, Mr Perrin, for your question. I couldn't agree more. Anti-social behaviour is blight; it takes far too long and it affects people, not just the one person is affected but also the neighbours and in my opinion does take a little bit too long to deal with. However, the Council's Housing Enforcement Service has three anti-social behaviour categories. They're Category One which represents the most complex cases, Category Two which are medium level and Category Three which are the lower level. Over the past year Category One took an average of 61 days from start to finish to deal with, Category Two took 54 days and Category Three took 37 days.

Mayor

Mr Perrin, do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

Mr Perrin

Thank you, Madam Mayor and thank you, Councillor Gledhill so far. I asked the question because, in my experience and probably the experience of elected Councillors, it seems that most cases involve long, drawn out procedures, which you have outlined there, which all too often cause prolonged distress and frustration to those being transgressed against whilst allowing transgressors – I shouldn't have used all these long words – to continue with their anti-social behaviour. I acknowledge anti-social behaviour can be complicated and evidence is required to justify the complaint which can take time, but there are cases where the evidence is so obvious e.g. the parking of cars in so-called "communal gardens", which could also be considered a breach of the code of conduct contained within the Tenancy

Agreement, meriting immediate action by the Council. Would you meet with officers of the Corporate Complaints Team tasked with handling complaints of anti-social behaviour with a view to adopting a more robust approach, especially where there is an obvious breach of a Tenancy Agreement Clause?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you, Madam Mayor and thank you, Mr Perrin. Again, you're quite right some of these cases do take too long, but you're also quite right that sometimes it does take a long time to get sufficient evidence to be able to move forward with the case. I was only made aware of what you're discussing earlier on today and I've spoken to officers and I'm not particularly happy with perhaps the time it took to respond to that. I'm more than happy to meet with the Director for Housing, indeed I'm meeting with him tomorrow to discuss the way forward on a number of issues of housing and this is one of them. Obviously the Corporate Complaints Team deal with the complaint itself they don't actually deal with the anti-social behaviour, but I shall bring this up with him tomorrow and as soon as I get a level of satisfaction with the outcome I shall certainly let you know in this case, and indeed what we will be doing to reduce the time it takes to process anti-social behaviour claims and indeed breaches of tenancy. It's not right that our tenants continue to breach tenancy rules, they're there for a reason and they need to be adhered to, if they want to stay in social housing they have to abide by the rules.

