

## Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 31 January 2018

### **Item 6 – Questions from Members of the Public.**

4 questions were submitted from members of the public.

#### **1. From Ms Blackshaw to Councillor Gledhill**

Please tell me why there is a holdup on letting properties on the new Treetops estate as many would be tenants (including myself) have been waiting a year since we were accepted.

#### **Mayor**

Councillor Gledhill

#### **Councillor Gledhill**

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Ms Blackshaw for your question. The Treetops scheme is a private development by Keepmoat and not a Council project. However we do organise allocations of social housing element from the Council's housing needs register. I understand in the summer of last year, we were notified that the affordable housing units will be complete fairly soon and the allocation process began.

When it became clear that social housing units would be delayed, every person in the allocating unit was informed of the delay and reminded they could withdraw their bid to continue to bid for other properties. I cannot tell you why there has been a holdup in the completion of social housing.

I know Officers have been asking questions of Keepmoat but as it's a private company, they are under no real obligations to tell us. However, there is a clear planning condition that states that only 80% of the private units have to be built before the affordable units can be completed. My understanding is that Keepmoat is going to keep to that.

#### **Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Ms Blackshaw, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

#### **Ms Blackshaw**

Aren't you embarrassed of the fact that we have so many homeless people and the loss of income to yourselves and to the public? These houses were offered to us in the February of last year and I, myself and other members that have been waiting for these houses, have been following this up ourselves, with the understanding from Keepmoat/East Thames who have got the properties, although they were given to us from the Council, but it's legal documents that they are actually waiting for.

## **Mayor**

Thank you. Councillor Gledhill

## **Councillor Gledhill**

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Ms Blackshaw. We have lost no money in this. This is a private enterprise run by Keepmoat/East Thames. As I say, the Officers have been chasing this up, it is wrong that they were allocated so far in advance but it was done so on the understanding that they will be completely shortly after we were notified that they were done. As I say, we will continue to press for this and as soon we know they will be completed, we will write to everybody who bid for them, to tell them when that will be.

## **2. From Mr Perrin to Councillor B Little**

What action, if any, does the Council take with regard to the parking of motor vehicles on the grass verges and green spaces adjacent to Council rented houses, flats and maisonettes?

## **Mayor**

Councillor B Little

## **Councillor B Little**

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Mr Perrin. Where this occurs on Housing land and the vehicle-owner is known to be a tenant, Housing staff seek to resolve the issue informally by warning the tenant that this could be a breach of their tenancy and monitoring the situation at ground level.

Where the driver is not a tenant the Housing team will still tackle the issue informally as a first step through a range of actions, including: writing to all residents in the area asking for the vehicles in question to be moved; further intelligence-gathering by visiting nearby properties; and if appropriate approving works to create physical barriers, such as bollards, knee-rails and other features.

If the problem persists or cannot be resolved by specific works, the Tenancy Services team in Housing report the issue to colleagues in the Environment and Highways service who have responsibility for parking enforcement.

Green areas that fall within restricted areas and are enforceable under a Traffic Regulation Order e.g. Highway Land and within the remit of yellow lines or controlled parking zone restrictions are enforced by the Council's Community Enforcement Officers.

Housing Services can also use, where appropriate enforcement powers in the form of Community Protection Warning notices which can be deployed

through the Anti-Social Behaviour team provided statutory thresholds are met. Housing is working closely with parking colleagues to address these issues on our estates and elsewhere, in order to ensure that tenants and other residents can enjoy the green spaces near their properties.

Should Mr Perrin have a concern about a particular green or verge, a member of the team will be happy to investigate.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor B Little. Mr Perrin, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

**Mr Perrin**

Thank you Mayor. I asked the question, Councillor little, because in my opinion, drivers park their vehicles on grass verges and green spaces with impunity, safe in the knowledge that the Council is unlikely to take any effective action to stop them. Would you instruct Officers to be more robust in future in dealing with this antisocial problem and consider wheel clamping as a possible deterrent along with a charge for the removal of the clamp? In short, will you clamp down on these events?

**Mayor**

Thank you Mr Perrin. Councillor B Little

**Councillor B Little**

Thank you Mr Perrin for your supplementary question. We will consider all options to enabling people not to park on the green verges. If it's within our remit, we can do it, we will look at clamping as well. Yes.

**3. From Mr Fletcher to Councillor B Little**

In recent months we have seen murders in Dilkes Park and Dart Green. Only this month a local man was beaten up by a pack of youths in Derwent Parade. What concrete steps will Councillor Little take to reassure the residents of Belhus and Ockendon that their safety is a priority?

**Mayor**

Councillor B Little

**Councillor B Little**

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank Mr Fletcher for your question. The Council are working closely with Essex Police to address residents' concerns in Ockendon following recent incidents. Essex Police have arrested and charged someone with the Dilkes Park murder. The Dart Green murder is still under investigation

but arrests and charges have been brought. I'm informed that there is no outstanding risk to the general public following these incidents. It is imperative that if members of the community have concerns in their area regards crime, drug dealing and anti-social behaviour that they bring it to the attention of their local housing officers, to Essex Police either through the phone system, 101, which I'm not a great fan of. That will be something we will mention tonight, I imagine. Or on line or if they wish to remain anonymous report to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor B Little. Mr Fletcher, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

**Mr Fletcher**

Thank you. Recently, this weekend, I was speaking to a couple of young mothers in Daiglen Drive who are having to take their children to Upminster rather than using the park across the road. This is because the park has been repeatedly vandalised, there are burnt wheelie bins, various bits of other damage and on one occasion, somebody had managed to defecate on the children's slide. Clearly, there is not much feeling of safety using this park. Would Councillor Little be prepared to come and view the park in question and discuss with us and local residents what he thinks he can do to improve the state of the park and actually make it safe for mothers to take their children to?

**Mayor**

Thank you. Councillor B Little

**Councillor B Little**

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you for your supplementary question. Very happy to come and look at the park with yourself and the other residents. Also, through the windfall on the bit of money that we're going to spend, we are looking at antisocial behaviour and we have allocated £250,000 to do that within the next year. So that's something that should enable us to take some action against people that are doing things that they shouldn't be. Thank you.

**4. From Mr Strange to Councillor B Little**

Residents in South Ockendon have recently been kept awake by road works into the night. Can you tell me why it was done in such a way to disturb the peace of numerous residents around Daiglen Drive?

**Mayor**

Councillor B Little

## **Councillor B Little**

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Mr Strange for your question. I would first like to apologise to people within that area for the disruption we did cause.

Daiglen Drive is currently having 1.5m wide cycle lanes installed on both sides of the carriageway. This is not a street repair. This project aims to improve Thurrock's cycle network. The creation of these cycle lanes has involved full width resurfacing of the carriageway and the removal of the existing central hatched area and refuge island.

Local residents and businesses were notified by letter before works commenced. We did not receive any objections from residents when the January letters advising them about the works were delivered. On the first night of the works when road planning was being undertaken, concerns were raised by three residents. We reassured them about timing and that the resurfacing on subsequent nights would be less noisy.

The resurfacing works were originally planned as a three night operation to take place on week commencing 16th December 2017. However, due to the Christmas embargo the works were rescheduled to Wednesday 17th January. The works were scheduled at night to ensure the safety of children walking to and from local schools, including the Ockendon Academy; to minimise disruption to traffic flows during the day; and to minimise disruption to shops and businesses at Derwent Parade Shopping Centre. Had a daytime road closure been used, the disruption would have lasted four days longer.

Our contractor was working as quickly as possible to minimise construction noise and disturbance to local residents. The works were completed within the time scheduled. We apologise for any disturbance caused.

## **Mayor**

Thank you Councillor B Little. Mr Strange, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

## **Mr Strange**

Yes Mr Mayor. Could these works not have taken place outside of the working week? It started right in the middle of the working week late at night when people had to get up for work the next day and kids going to school. Couldn't this have been done over the weekend, like Friday night start? What would the problem have been with that? Do you think they were given enough reason for instance? The considerate contractors this applies to.

## **Mayor**

Thank you. Councillor B Little

## **Councillor B Little**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you for your supplementary question. I think, hindsight is always a good mediator. In hindsight, I think looking at how we done this and we got a bit more work to do in the near future, this is a good example of a project in which we need to change the type, the way that we operate. I think you're right. If costs allow and costs are a big consideration of this because when we start paying people overtime to do things outside of them hours, even night shifts are more expensive than it would be during the day.

This money is allocated to us on the basis that we do things in a reasonable way and we don't incur extra costs because it would be the Council's detriment if we did. But I think you're right, we need to revisit what we done. It has been something that I already suggested because of the grief I got from it all. I appreciate the issues from residents and again, I can only apologise for the problems.

## **Item 14 – Questions from Members**

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 1 question had been received to the Leader of the Council and 5 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 Liddiard to Councillor Gledhill**

Could the Portfolio Holder for Housing please update Members on the lettings, sales and vacant properties on the St. Chads site?

**Mayor**

Councillor Gledhill

**Councillor Gledhill**

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Liddiard for your question. As you're aware, when the St Chads site was built, it was built with two aspects of it and that was the main part of the properties that was being rented out for a period of time before they were sold and the second part being the affordable unit.

St Chads site is owned by Thurrock Regeneration Limited, a private company which has overall responsibility for the properties. I have received an update from the Thurrock Regeneration Limited Directors who confirm that 100 of the 102 private units on the site are let. I understand that the last two units are currently waiting for the normal tenancy checks to be occupied shortly.

Thurrock Regeneration Limited sold 26 affordable units to Estuary Housing Association and I understand 13 of these units have now been allocated according to the Council's Housing Allocation policy and the remaining 13 are currently being advertised and will be allocated by 9<sup>th</sup> February this year.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Councillor Liddiard, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

**Councillor Liddiard**

Thank you Councillor. It appears to be a number of empty properties at the moment, as you probably know, there's a lot of vandalism and arson as well. Residents are blaming the Council, just wondering, what can we do to deflect those criticisms from local people?

**Mayor**

Councillor Gledhill.

**Councillor Gledhill**

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Liddiard. I can assure every single person in Thurrock that we do not have a department that goes round and sets fire to our properties or other people's properties or indeed damage them. So to point the finger at the Council is somewhat disingenuous by anybody that has done so. These properties are as I say, were owned by Thurrock Regeneration Limited that were sold onto Estuary Housing Association for let. That took somewhat longer than expected, that wouldn't be an invite for some people to smash them up or set fire to them, I would have thought. They are now, as I say, all in the hands of Estuary and are being let out in line with the Allocations Policy of the Council.

But I can't reiterate this enough – Thurrock Regeneration Limited are the owners of the remainder of the site. Estuary Housing are the others so this is a private matter between two private companies. As an aside, I have also reported a number of times to TRL and indeed, their managing agents about the appalling state of the roads, the overflowing bins and indeed the parks not being cut. Again, this is not the responsibility of the Council, it's a private estate run by two private companies and are responsible for their upkeep. We will continue to chase them when they do not comply with their contracts.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Councillor Liddiard, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

**Councillor Liddiard**

No thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor.

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

**1. From Councillor Snell to Councillor Hebb**

The Money Advice Trust, as part of their Stop The Knock Campaign highlighting the trend in increased use of bailiffs by local authorities, recently sent in a FOI request for information about the use of Bailiffs by this Council. Unlike most neighbouring Councils, Thurrock did not respond. Can the Portfolio Holder explain why?

**Mayor**

Councillor Hebb

**Councillor Hebb**



Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor Snell. As you know, debt recovery, the practising way that we go about it is something that means very much to me, hence, why we've announced the Fair Debt Review. I'm pleased to report we're in the throes of doing all the mail merges to all the recipients, one for the Labour Party, one for UKIP, one for CAB, all the good stuff, that's going to go ahead. We're going to have the great summit, that's going through so much.

To answer your question directly and bluntly, the information has since been provided, that was in November. We received the request, our system requires us to pull out the data in a specific format which would have taken us and our systems over 18 hours. The data has since fed into the FOI request so that has gone in, yes, late but we got there.

### **Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Hebb. Councillor Snell, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

### **Councillor Snell**

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor Hebb. As I say, I was well aware this had been resolved as a hangover from last Full Council. I do agree with you that it's an important issue that we need to discuss wider. One of the common complaints I get is people that do get into difficulty with their council tax particularly, are dealt with, in what I can put in best, in an offhand manner by the people in that department. I think it is only right that we should look at that and go some way to resolve it. Can I be sure that we will all get an invite to some kind of forum where we can sit down and have this conversation in a public arena and get all this abuse aired properly? Thank you.

### **Mayor**

Councillor Hebb.

### **Councillor Hebb**

Thank you Councillor Snell. The Fair Debt Review, the whole point is to look at the way debt collection is done and how it's categorised into three areas. One, those that want to pay but simply can't and I think there's lots of people around the Chamber that once upon a time, myself included, recognise and remember what that felt like. And frankly, I want to be in a position where I can help people who want to pay, who want to do everything in them to make them pay their dues but are simply struggling to do so. It was one of my first discussions with my team when I took over the role of Cabinet Member for Finance, to go look through the process. We're going to revisit and have a look at the whole thing. So you've absolutely got an undertaking in that regard.

The Fair Debt Review also looks at those who could pay but simply won't. Now, I take a far different line with that type of demographic. Frankly, that is money that is being starved from our frontline services, whether it be our social services people

looking after elderly, whether it be cutting grass, it's irrelevant. If you can pay, you should pay and we also need to look at that in another way.

Now the Fair Debt Review also does a third thing, I know our teams were discussing today, the common cause between finance and education. We have done a piece of work, we're going to bring this to the Fair Debt Review, about how we help younger people or young care leavers, understand what happens if one uses credit and debt as a way of life and then the implications they come with life. So if credit freezes, suddenly how are you paying your bills. What happens if you default now, you might get around it but what happens if in ten years, you've moved on and you've met someone, you might want a mortgage. That becomes a different conversation, you bring up all elements of your past.

The Fair Debt Review is going to go over so much, I've just gone over a brief outline of the content, we're looking to do that in March, we're just looking to confirm the date. But you'll be getting an invite, the Labour Party will be getting an invite and obviously we want a representative from both groups here and the CAB. The other thing I got to say is, the IRRV, who also just done an audit, which is the Institute for Revenues, Rates and Valuations, has come up with some very good feedback which supports the way we are doing things. They're going to come to the meeting as well because they want to present their findings directly to all of us. I think that will be a useful thing to do so I'm looking forward to it; I think it's going to be a great session and want to be a part of it. Thank you for your indulgence Mr Mayor.

### **Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Hebb. Councillor Snell, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

### **Councillor Snell**

No thank you.

## **2. From Councillor Collins to Councillor Halden**

Can the Cabinet Member outline the process of the Headstart Housing Scheme please?

### **Mayor**

Councillor Halden

### **Councillor Halden**

Thank you Mr Mayor. As I outlined at the last meeting of Full Council, where we discussed the council tax exemption for care leavers, I said we were going to be bringing forward a more comprehensive plan to offer care leavers in the Borough, more levels of support. What Cabinet will see in February, in regards to the head Start Housing plan, is a combination of education, finance, housing and social services. So what we piloted over the last year, is by using housing of multiple

occupancies (HMOs), helping care leavers get on the housing ladder and we're going to expand that. Helping out some of our most vulnerable care leavers into their first property and that will also include full advice in regards to debt, apprenticeships and further education for those young people. To give them the support they need to move on in life. That will be a secure tenancy for at least 24 months with a review at 6, 12 and 18 months, both from the housing team, the social care team and the education team at the same time which will ensure, that we do, as I said in my earlier report 'see the whole child'. In addition to that, I'm delighted to say that Cabinet will hopefully approve in February that we will totally, fully and completely exempt all care leavers from council tax up until the age of 21 totally and then from the ages of 21 to 25, we will exempt care leavers from council tax on a discretionary basis based on an individual circumstance.

The pilot that we've conducted over the last year, not only is tremendously helping young people, turning lives around but because it is curving and it expends an addiction to out of Borough spot placements, because it is offering people support who are getting out of the care system, the last year we are showing a saving to the taxpayer of £84,000.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Halden. Councillor Collins, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

**Councillor Collins**

I have Mr Mayor. At the last Full Council, we discussed the council tax exemption for care leavers. Can the Cabinet Member update us on this please?

**Mayor**

Councillor Halden

**Councillor Halden**

Thank you Councillor. As I said, I presented this at Corporate Parenting and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny last year and as I already replied to Councillor Spillman, additional questions were asked by the Children's Services Committee and answered. It was a tremendous disappointment that after so much fanfare created by the Labour Group at the last Full Council in regards to council tax exemption. There was very, very little interaction from the Labour Group when it actually came to the Committee and indeed when additional information was sent out when requested. There was no reply to it which just goes to show, if it was a meeting at Full Council where the Press are here, there is plenty of attention. However, when it comes to the Committee, there was none.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Halden. Councillor Collins, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

## **Councillor Collins**

No Mayor.

### **3. From Councillor Gerrish to Councillor Snell**

Can the Chair of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee outline how his committee plans to ensure a robust review of the current NHS Orsett Hospital consultation process?

## **Mayor**

Councillor Snell

## **Councillor Snell**

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor Gerrish for your question. As you know, we have been carrying out robust reviews of all these matters over the recent months. Indeed, this was fully discussed at the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January at which yourself was present. All Members had expressed their concern on how the consultation had got off to a slow start. Communication was poor and that was acknowledged. For example, there was not enough hard copies of the consultation document being made available, there wasn't any review document being made available. We were assured at HOSC that this was being resolved. The NHS team overseeing the consultation was working closely with Healthwatch and the Council's own Communication team to get as many people as possible involved in the consultation exercise.

Indeed, there had been two public events arranged in Thurrock, there had been one on 24<sup>th</sup> January and there is a remaining one at 1.30pm on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> March at the Civic Hall in Blackshots which I urge as many people as possible to attend. Thank you.

## **Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Snell. Councillor Gerrish, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

## **Councillor Gerrish**

Thank you Mr Mayor. And I thank Councillor Snell for that answer and indeed I was at that meeting and it was good to see the question posed at that meeting. Many of us are concerned, Mr Mayor, that the consultation is becoming a real mess. Simply put, in terms of this group's position, we don't think the case of closure has been successfully made. We in this group consider it too risky to sign off from any movement in Orsett Hospital. Will Councillor Snell and his Group be supporting Labour campaign to keep Orsett Hospital open?

## **Mayor**

Councillor Snell

**Councillor Snell**

Thank you Councillor Gerrish. This is a difficult one. The Labour Members have been to the same meetings that I have been to where NHS England; and let's not be under any illusion that it's NHS England making the decisions and not someone else; have made it quite clear that at some point, due to the age of the building, that the hospital has to close. We have been very much at work in the Committee with regard to the Independent Medical Centres (IMCs) that we are building and NHS England have committed to keeping services at Orsett until such time that the IMCs are up and running. Now, I do agree that there is some ambiguity in the language from NHS England on that issue and we have been and will continue to pick them up on that. Because to me, whilst they appear to have given a commitment to not move services out until the IMCs are ready, I think they've left themselves some wriggle room and we do want to clamp down on that and make sure that they haven't got any wriggle room and that no services are lost in Thurrock until the IMCs are up and running.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Snell. Councillor Gerrish, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

**Councillor Gerrish**

Thank you Mr Mayor, yes I do. So, Renal, Musculoskeletal and Ophthalmic services are all apparently now do have a chance of being moved out of Borough. There's no cast iron guarantee being given on whether capital returns from Orsett Hospital site will be spent in Thurrock. There are no details to be found on the scale of the services operating from each hub or when they will operate. Healthwatch have panned the consultation process as being difficult to access and being hidden underneath the broader STP changes. There are only a couple of resident consultation events taking place, insufficient for a change on this scale. Mr Mayor, this is a bad plan with a bad consultation process. It's a yes or no question, will he join our campaign?

**Mayor**

Councillor Snell

**Councillor Snell**

I've got this document here. It's regarding something that is called 'For Thurrock in Thurrock' and this document says, 'Recent public engagement events are a recurring theme, a desire for health and care services to be more accessible for people. We also know that the system as it is, is not currently set up to cope with the rapid growth and demand of healthcare services. Care will be co-ordinated around

the patient as opposed to sufficient organisational health service structures i.e. hospitals and the like.'

This isn't my document; this is a document that was done in 2016 and it's signed off by Councillor Barbara Rice of the Labour Group. The document goes on to say, 'We want to improve people's experience of the health and care service in Thurrock by providing a more holistic model of locally neighbourhood based care closer to the home for the local population.'

Now, it's very well to criticise from the Labour Group but can I ask what's changed since then? Clearly, this was your method in 2016, you approved it. What I would say, this isn't really part of my answer as the Chair of the Health Committee, but this is as the Leader of the Thurrock Independents. And it is Thurrock Independents, and there is no third word thank you. And I don't want to deny Councillor Halden's jokes in the future which I'm quite looking forward to, thank you.

But, what I would say, I am in favour of the IMCs and the health provisions moving out closer to where people live. However, I do think with the growing population that Thurrock's going to experience over the next 10, 15 to 20 years, that there is a danger the STP process will not achieve its desired aims. And I think, we really do need to start the discussion now about building a new hospital in Thurrock for future provision. Thank you.

#### **4. From Councillor Fish to Councillor B Little**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Transport please tell Full Council how many of the pothole that are filled are in fact refills that have had to be repaired?

**Mayor**

Councillor B Little

**Councillor B Little**

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor Fish for your question. Reactive repairs are carried out to make the defect safe. Information is not recorded on whether it is the second time a particular defect has been repaired.

During financial year 2016/17 the Highways Team trialled the use of a new method of filling potholes and the effectiveness of the new method was very closely monitored. We identified that some of the defects being repaired using the Jet Patching method required a revisit. The repeat visits were recorded and also looking at the nature of the traffic and looking at how the traffic flows in certain circumstances whether it was acceptable for the Jet Patching method. The cost of filling a pothole with the Jet Patching method is a fraction of the cost of conventional methods, meaning we can deliver more pothole repairs in the most effective and efficient manner.

It is inevitable that depending on road and ground conditions, some defects require repeat visits depending on the urgency of a repair and the need to make an area safe when there is limited time available, due to reasons of safety for example.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor B Little. Councillor Fish, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

**Councillor Fish**

Yes Mr Mayor. I remember when the administration that came to power, they said they were going to employ a new technique to deal with potholes which was going to give a longer life to potholes and save money by having less need to repair them. So, what went wrong?

**Mayor**

Councillor B Little

**Councillor B Little**

Thank you for your supplementary question. Nothing.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor B Little. Councillor Fish, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

**Councillor Fish**

I think that's an incredibly complacent answer. Councillor Maney has already said during the course of the meeting that he's presented a petition about a road in his ward and I think all of us, every single person in this room can probably relate to what he's saying. I know in my road, they're up in there every few days and it's only a little side turning. So what steps is he going to take? And the other point I wanted to make, if you don't monitor how many refills you do, how can you effectively tell if your new scheme is working?

**Mayor**

Councillor B Little

**Councillor B Little**

Thank you. I think we've tended to my answer regarding how we fill potholes with Jet Patching, required us to do things in a certain way to change the way we do things. It's not done now in November, December, January, February because the road systems won't allow it to be. Because there's too much water on the roads, so we only do it in the summer time. So Jet Patching aside which is why I mention nothing,

we do other repairs, emergency repairs and we get there as quickly as we can, particularly if we got a statutory duty to do it, if it's dangerous and going to cause safety issues, we get there as soon as we can. We do temporary repairs, sometimes we need to go back to them in the summer time.

Councillor Maney has mentioned his petition and I would advise people that have got issues with roads, if we don't know about them already and I would be very surprised, please let me know and we'll work on them. I believe that Long Lane is due to be resurfaced – April time and that is due to us identifying in terms of, that was taken off the list a while ago. A couple of years ago where somebody decided from the other group – this lot over here, to spend the money on another avenue instead. Because that was a, I know that's a bit of a shame because that should have been Long Lane.

However, my point is that there are different types of work going on. We're going to be spending another £1 million from our windfall that we mentioned on doing road resurfacing. There's going to be more road resurfacing going on this summer than there has been in a number of years. Right the way through from the last administration so to sit there and talk to me about how you or how I am misusing the roads is a bit rich considering it was under your domain when it all fell apart.

## **5. From Councillor Gerrish to Councillor Hebb**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Finance update the chamber on his approach to balancing the budget over the next five year period?

**Mayor**

Councillor Hebb

**Councillor Hebb**

Thank you for your question Councillor Gerrish and I have to say when I read the question, it made me reflect a little. We're hearing a lot of terms about being balanced; about being self-sufficient and it means something to a lot of us in here but not necessarily outside, nor should it necessarily. We need to explain what that means. Thurrock Council is now able to provide the same services it has been for two and a half years in the future. We have heard how local government was at breaking point and we have proved in 18 months that this is simply not had to be the case and nor did we have to default to top down cuts. So this is one of the first conversations like this in years, about five years into the future. Let's contextualise a little bit. Basildon Council has an annual revenue budget of about £25.5 million compared to our £110 million budget admittedly. Our Council is spending over half of Basildon's entire yearly revenue budget on cleaning our Borough, cutting the grass and filling the potholes – a figure of over a circa of £12.5 million between revenue and capital. We are increasing reserves by nearly 40% to make sure that our services are protected from market fluctuations.



In 18 months, we have much to be proud of and let's be clear, the CSR frame forms a part of that. It's nice to see Labour in attendance this year for that and again the middle party.

Let's get to the chase, I think this is probably the size of the pricing from year 3 onwards - the Council Spending Review approach has been well documented over the last 18 months and going forward, we'll have more commercialism and investment as part of its strategy and in addition to key service reform. Indeed, we are being asked by other councils exactly how we are doing it because they want to do what Thurrock's doing. Heads are turning towards this Borough. It is critical that our services continue to be reviewed and shaped upward. A hard look at our resident offer is absolutely critical to provide them sustainable, but this is important, right quality services first time. We have that freedom to do that now. Last October, in this forum, in this Council, supported the move for an increased investment activity and this approach has provided a balanced budget for two and a half years, not just next year but the year after as well. And it provides us with extra cash to spend, penny for penny on the community of Thurrock:

Clean It – half a million extra;

Fill It - £1 million extra;

fighting the good fight, the Lower Thames Crossing - £380 thousand;

Anti-Social Behaviour – a quarter of a million.

Mr Mayor, instead of looking at the traditional three years ahead, you can see we are now mature enough with our finances to look forward to the next decade. This is a first for this Council for some time. And even looking at papers, as sad as I am, from the mid-2000s, you can see that local government has often laden the claim that it doesn't have the amount of cash it needs to deliver local services, even in times of so-called boom. Now, going forward, we've talked about investments, we've delivered on some of that. TRL is absolutely part of that, Councillor Gerrish, as are a number of other investments. We've always said we will review them on a case by case basis – Belmont Road happened here tonight, what a great scheme, spades in the ground, giving people houses, it's a great scheme and doing all the right things.

The other question clearly is council tax revenue. You'll probably be anticipating an answer and I can provide it to you. The Cabinet have reflected heavily, as you know, Sajid Javid did increase the threshold of the revenue increase up to 2.99% this year. It is the belief of this administration as we enter the budget round that given where we are for the next two and a half years, that we will not be going forward with a 2.99% increase on General Fund. We will be moving into the budget round in our Party at 1.99%. Obviously not accounting and including Adult Social Care.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Hebb. Councillor Gerrish, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

**Councillor Gerrish**

I do Mr Mayor and I thank Councillor Hebb for that lengthy response. At the most recent Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Committee were unanimous in asking that the Council's financial modelling for the upcoming five year period be published in time for the February Budget meeting, ideally form part of the papers for that meeting. This was to ensure we can take decisions on the long term future of the Council based on all the facts. Can he make that commitment this evening?

**Mayor**

Councillor Hebb

**Councillor Hebb**

It's very much a work in progress, it isn't quite finished ready for now but yes, I want to be bringing it to the budget, this time next month so yes.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Hebb. Councillor Gerrish, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

**Councillor Gerrish**

Thank you Mr Mayor and I thank him for his commitment. It has been suggested in some quarters that the budget gap we need to close over the next five years may be as large as £20 million. Is the Portfolio Holder able to enlighten us on that point?

**Mayor**

Councillor Hebb

**Councillor Hebb**

The MTFs obviously goes over three years currently and if you stretch it out over five years and we need to clarify the numbers so let's not band the figures out, that's where we are now. Depends on what type of investments you have, some investments obviously drop out and we need to look at everything that goes forward. TRL as we have already said is a fantastic scheme, I'm very much hopeful that the Labour Party in Thurrock are very much keen on TRL, I'm hoping that we don't have a Haringey Labour Party attitude here. Frankly, I couldn't believe what's happened to Councillor Claire Clover over in Labour, a centralist 10 year Party Leader of the Haringey Council and the Party – the momentum that runs the Party, whoever it is that runs the Labour Party these days, it surely isn't just Jeremy Corbyn on his own; is now telling a Council, a democratically elected Council how to manage its affairs. We have to stop that from happening in this Borough and I'm hoping he will distance himself from that disgraceful attitude from his own Party.