

## **Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 29 January 2020**

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

There were 2 questions submitted from members of the public.

#### **1. From Mr Perrin to Councillor Coxshall**

When the new Council Office is built, will the Council ensure that the public gallery in the Council Chamber is sited so that members of the public are facing Councillors?

**Mayor**

Councillor Coxshall.

**Councillor Coxshall**

Thank you.

The chamber has certain characteristics and it has to maintain the top table where the Chair sits so that he would be able to see all the Councillors and makes sure that we can actively participate in the meeting. So that's one of the reasons why this style was chosen. But I agree with you, that you are correct really, that the meeting is not conducive to the public gallery who are at the back and seeing the back of the heads of Councillors.

So a way to avoid that, the latest plans were released last year and showed that a triangular shape, where the majority of Councillors will be in view and members of the public will also be able to see the top table.

I don't think it's my personal choice. I think that an adversarial position is slightly better for that very reason if you look at the House of Commons but it went through a consultation process last year, it was a triangle shape that it was rounded on. But I think I'm happy to share more details with you on that and if you didn't see that last year, obviously, I'm happy to intervene with the officer in post with a copy of the view of what they will look like originally. I'm happy to discuss with you if you think there should be something better to view. You've had some great ideas over the years that the Council has accepted.

But I must say, the Chamber wasn't the number one top of the list of the reasons of why we did this. I just want to say, the extension was to deliver better public access, not just for the Council, but we have vulnerable people –

**Mayor**

Councillor Coxshall. Councillor Coxshall.

Mr Perrin, do you have a supplementary?

**Mr Perrin**

Yes Mr Mayor, just briefly.

I'm glad that some effort is being made to make the public more participating and seeing what Councillors are doing. But I would just like to say before I actually sit back down, perhaps there are some Councillors who members of the public would rather see the back of.

**Mayor**

Councillor Coxshall that was not a question that was a statement, there is no need, no need for an answer.

**2. From Mr Hayes to Councillor Johnson**

*This question was not heard as the questioner was not in attendance.*

## **Item 18 – Questions from Members**

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 2 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 THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

#### **1. From Councillor Redsell to Councillor Gledhill**

Can the Portfolio Holder provide an update on the role the CCTV played in the recent arrest of off-road motor bike riders on King Georges Playing Field in Blackshots?

#### **Mayor**

Councillor Gledhill.

#### **Councillor Gledhill**

Thank you Mr Mayor and obviously I need to put this answer into some form of context. The information supplied to us by Essex Police for the year to date shows there's a continued reduction in the number of calls regarding quad bikes, beach buggy, nuisance motorcycles, nuisance vehicle, quad bikes, dune buggies, scramblers, mini moto and dirt bikes.

Indeed, from its peak in 2016 at 399 a year has gone down by 27% and to just over 290. We also feel that there is a bit more confidence with residents reporting this because they can actually see action being taken although they may be slightly swayed by those who have not continued to hang on to the improved 101 system. Hopefully we will see that as the PCC's point in there earlier in that it improves.

Regrettably, the police are unable to identify all the specific cases on King George V playing fields but due to the Council supporting the police, providing evidence through monitoring on CCTV as well as target hardening to protect the land and other support that we have supplied through operations. This combined effort and Council funding for operations has led to: 14 arrests, 109 Section 59 notices, these are notices warning drivers of vehicles, sorry owners of vehicles that if they continue this behaviour, they will be found guilty of the crime and they will have their vehicles seized. 112 prosecutions for various driving offences.

I do remember from my regular briefings with officers during the summer that they were very clear that it was instrumental in catching a prolific group that were using King George V playing fields and indeed, surrounding areas for the illegal use and dangerous use of motorcycles. I would also like to add as we're going forward with our new CCTV policy that we will be asking to display the faces of those that are continuing this terrible antisocial behaviour,

into a public domain or on social media or indeed in council buildings, to try to get those apprehended and bring an end to this nuisance which actually is more than a nuisance, it's actually a very dangerous practice. Thank you.

**Mayor**

Councillor Redsell, do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

**Councillor Redsell**

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor Gledhill. Would the Leader advise whether the highly successful joint police enforcement patrol seen last year in Thurrock involving Blackshots, will be repeated?

**Mayor**

Councillor Gledhill.

**Councillor Gledhill**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Of course, the highly visible Council and police activities that took place during the summer were not just during the day, they were also in the early evening and indeed, right through the night and were not limited to the King George V playing fields in the Blackshots area. However, it did quite clearly move a number of people that were involved in antisocial behaviour and we did see a number of those that were using the site for motorcycling and antisocial behaviour and indeed others, start to decline.

I know that speaking to Councillor Allen, also saw this in Tilbury and yes, I can confirm they will be continuing. I've approved some overtime for this year and indeed, with the excellent surplus budget that Councillor Hebb will be talking about next month as will I, will be looking to increase the number of officers in that particular area to ensure more of the Borough is covered more regularly.

**Mayor**

Councillor Redsell, do you wish to propose a second supplementary?

**Councillor Redsell**

No thank you Mr Mayor.

**2. From Councillor Rigby to Councillor Gledhill**

Please can the Leader outline what the Council is doing to protect residents from misuse of fireworks?

**Mayor**

Councillor Gledhill.

**Councillor Gledhill**

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Rigby for your question.

The Councils Trading Standards Department licences firework sellers in Thurrock which are renewed each year. Premises are visited and inspected for safety prior both to being and when licensed to ensure the premises is suitable and during the sale period to ensure they are operating correctly, safely and in line with guidance.

During these visits the proprietors are given point of sale advice to assist them in avoiding inappropriate sales of fireworks, for example sale to children or adults who may be purchasing fireworks on behalf of children.

As part of our regular activities undertaken test purchase operations on firework sellers, this was undertaken in the lead up to November 5<sup>th</sup>, firework celebrations for Guy Fawkes Night and last year none of our sellers were seen to be selling to underage consumers.

I do know that with the proximity of other boroughs being so close that other boroughs locally also take this on board but I cannot comment of how diligent they are and if they are as diligent or more diligent than our officers who put in an extremely large amount of time into ensuring that our residents are safe.

However, in this society, does seem to me that fireworks seem to be getting much, much louder and does tend to be discharged for a much longer period over the year and I know this is causing concern with residents and we must do and continue to do all we can to protect our residents from the mis-sale and therefore, the misuse of fireworks.

**Mayor**

Thank you. Councillor Rigby, do you wish to pose a second supplementary?

**Councillor Rigby**

Thank you Mr Mayor, yes.

Could the Council look upon asking the government perhaps to consider restricting the timeframe of when the fireworks are sold because at present, it almost stretches over a 3 month period from sort of mid-October for nearly 4 weeks when you can buy fireworks and then again from 26<sup>th</sup> December for five days so it is sort of a 3 month period and we are sort of experiencing fireworks for that period in this area in this borough.

So I don't know whether that can be looked into and also the decibel level, you know, the fireworks do seem to be getting louder. They are causing a lot of stress to residents and also to their pets so perhaps the Council could look into this.

**Mayor**

Councillor Gledhill.

**Councillor Gledhill**

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Rigby for your supplementary question. If memory serves me correct, the period of time in which fireworks can actually be sold is designated by Government but you are quite right. It does seem to me that the periods of time, certainly towards the end of the year is stood at a number of months where fireworks can be purchased and indeed, over that period of time, residents discharging them either within that period or outside that period, which does cause problems to our residents.

I've had a few enquiries myself and one in particular, had set fire in multiple locations within an hour and was causing distress not only to them but as Councillor Rigby quite rightly pointed out, to pets. So, obviously, I'm more than happy to look to see what we can as Local Authority in relation to this. Indeed, not just here but right across the Essex Leaders' Forum as something to take forward just because, it's not just our residents suffering, it's also pets and I know how much stress that will put further stress on residents when an animal's in distress or indeed, ends up being ill from how loud the explosions seems to be getting as Councillor Rigby and I pointed out, they are getting louder and louder. Thank you.

**Mayor**

Councillor Rigby do you wish to pose a second supplementary?

**Councillor Rigby**

No thank you.

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

**1. 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?

**Mayor**

Councillor Johnson.

**Councillor Johnson**

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you for your question Councillor.

The honest answer to your question, Councillor, is that the Council will monitor performances to ensure that repairs are completed within the fastest yet safest periods of time. Which, of course, can sometimes be extended if necessary paths are not readily available. But the best way for the Council to ensure targets are met by contractors for lift repairs, is to use our key performance indicators which are regularly reported to O&S and therefore regularly monitored.

**Mayor**

Thank you.

*(No further questions were heard as the allocated time for this item came to a close.)*