

Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 27 July 2016

Item 6 – Questions from Members of the Public.

One question was submitted from members of the public.

1. From Mr Perrin to Councillor Coxshall

In 2014 I raised the issue of the £600,000 gifted to the Council by the Heritage Lottery Fund to spend on improvements to the Mardyke Valley. Can you tell me what improvements have been made since 2014 and if any improvements are currently ongoing?

Councillor Coxshall

Well, I never thought I'd be answering questions from Mr Perrin! In 2005 the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded £611,000, like you asked in the last question in 2014, this was for a three year Mardyke Valley project on behalf of, led by, Thames Chase and including Thurrock Council. Although the project finished in 2008, it included provision for the ten-year management plan produced to make work to deliver the project rather than make further improvements at the Mardyke Valley.

Mayor

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

Mr Perrin

Thank you, Madam Mayor. I do not know if you or any other Councillors have recently walked the Mardyke Valley, either from the Davey Down entrance or the Ship Lane entrance. I have attempted to do so twice in the last seven days, yesterday 26 July being the most recent. I had to walk a gauntlet of brambles, nettles, and in some areas ankle-deep pools of stinking, stagnant water on what was supposed to be designated walkways. I also climbed the steep stepped walkway, which had a handrail rendered useless owing to the overgrown vegetation. The entrance to this step way is located off Cullen Grove, near number 52. In short, far from being a pleasant walk, it was a hazardous journey, fraught with danger. Should you consider my comments to be an exaggeration, I ask you, and any other Councillor, join me in a walk along the Mardyke Valley so that you and they can judge if the £600,000 has been well spent and provided the people of Thurrock with an asset that is value for money.

Councillor Coxshall

As we've said, Mr Perrin, the £600,000 was spent in a three-year period. I think Councillor Kent answered this question to you as well in 2014 actual capital works a ten-year management plan was put in place and reviewed in

2014. In 2014 it showed that this Council had spent £200,000 extra maintaining that in 2014. There have been no figures in the past five years because it hasn't finished in 2018. This Council at the moment is reviewing the alternative management options at this very moment for the Mardyke, in place for what happens after 2018. I take your point that there are issues around the walkways, the public walkways, but I think every Councillor in here has had said issues, I know personally, my public footpaths have been impossible to walk around in certain places in Corringham, are very, very bad. As you know, we have "Clean it, Cut it, Fill it" and the problem is, what we have got to do is actually deliver a reasonable, clean, cut area. Two of those priorities I mentioned there, so I will certainly take that back, understand that we have got to do more there and actually look into why the management is failing, let's be honest. We're nearly at the end of the management plan for up to 2018, we then will look and see issues of how we can, who can carry on looking after that, from 2018 onwards, and whether that needs to come back to the Council or be into a private outsourced vehicle.

Mr Perrin

Thank you, Madam Mayor