

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (ITEMS 6 & 19)

ITEM 6 – Questions from the Public

There are 3 questions from members of the public.

1. From Mrs Lodge to Councillor Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Education & Children’s Social Care

“My Granddaughter has been attending Bonnygate nursery for the last two years and was assured by Thurrock Council in 2010 that 60 placements would be available in reception for 2013, I am aware that Thurrock Council actively encouraged the school to obtain the 60 placements which would be readily available for 2013.

Could you explain why parents have recently been informed that Thurrock council's proposal although in the early stages are to cut the number of placements to just 30 due to the low attendance and low admission's of other catchment schools? ”

Councillor Gerrish

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Mrs Lodge for your question.

Thurrock Council has not made any proposal to reduce the published admission number (PAN) at Bonnygate School. The draft pupil place plan the Authority is presently consulting on merely depicts the picture of projected demand for places in the South Ockendon area. It does not set out any proposal regarding any school in the Ockendon area.

For record purposes, Bonnygate school is presently a one form entry school admitting 30 pupils in each year. Bonnygate use to be a two form entry school admitting 60 pupils in each year group (Reception to Yr 6). However in June 2008, the governing body of the school wrote to the Authority and asked for their numbers to be reduced to 30 pupils per year group – due to falling numbers. The Authority agreed to the proposal with effect from September 2009. Therefore, since September 2009, the school has been officially a one form entry school admitting 30 children per year group.

In September 2011, due to demand for Reception Year places, the Authority asked the school to admit additional pupils into the Reception class over and above the school’s published Admission number (PAN) of 30. This applied only to the Reception Year group and not to other year groups. The school

admitted a total of 49 children into the Reception Year in September 2011. 21 out of the 49 pupils admitted live outside the school's catchment area. A similar situation arose in this academic year and the school took in another bulge into the Reception Class – admitting a total of 47 pupils into Reception. 28 out of the 47 children admitted into the school do not live in Bonnygate's catchment area.

Any admissions above the published admissions number will generally, not constitute a long term increase in PAN. This is stated in the DfE School Admissions Code that came into force in February 2012. Bonnygate's admissions above their PAN therefore, does not mean the school is now admitting 60 pupils in each year group. However, I can assure you Mrs Lodge, that the school's admissions limit for September 2013 is indeed 60.

I hope that my answer this evening has been of some help and that while the official pupil admissions number at Bonnygate remains at 30 long term, there will as stated be the opportunity for 60 pupils to start in the reception group in 2013.

Mrs Lodge

Thank you very much, I do appreciate that.

Mayor

Mrs Lodge do you propose to submit a supplementary question.

Mrs Lodge

Yes I do Mr Mayor, thank you. I hope that it is not a statement, I have tried to make it a question. Councillor Gerrish, I would like to remind you that Thurrock Council's policy on transparency which was certainly not forwarded to the nursery parents at Bonnygate just recently. I would also like to highlight page 13 Section 5, of Thurrock Council's primary admission information for 2013 regarding reserving places. I want you to reassure me and the parents that places are not being reserved as have been mentioned just recently by Thurrock Council for those moving into the new builds opposite Bonnygate School and the 42 nursery children already attending Bonnygate through parental choice will get their rightful placement in reception for 2013 irrelevant of low numbers at other catchment school areas.

Mayor

OK Councillor Gerrish, please respond to the questions.

Councillor Gerrish

While I can say that we cannot automatically guarantee places to pupils that have attended nursery and reception year, I can say that the 60 places available should be more than sufficient for the number of pupils looking to

take up places in the primary school in 2013 and additionally all places are allocated in line with the admissions code, rather than any other policy.

Mrs Lodge

So you are saying to me that none would be reserved as I have asked, for those that are moving into the new build.

Councillor Gerrish

They will all be distributed in line with our admissions policy.

2. From Mr Perrin to Councillor Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Social Care

“Most parents generally want their children to attend good schools. Consequently some schools become more popular than others; and when parents cannot get a place at the school they want for their child, they can be disappointed. In order to satisfy parental preference, the Government has encouraged the expansion of popular schools by giving guidance that the existence of surplus places should not be used to prevent the creation of additional places at popular schools.

Can you assure parents in Thurrock that the Council makes every effort to satisfy parental preference and that no child is denied a place at a preferred school as a consequence of the Council reducing the number of places at a popular school in order to fill places at a less popular school, especially if the parents preference for a particular school is based upon a high OFSTED rating? “

Councillor Gerrish

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Mr Perrin.

The Authority makes every effort to satisfy parental preference. In this academic year, 86% of parents gained their first preference for primary school and 83% their first preference for secondary school.

The Authority does not reduce the number of places at popular schools in order to fill places at less popular schools. I would find such an approach operant and it is a strategy that in any case would not work and would massively counter-productive. We have always strived to meet parental preferences wherever this is possible for all school admissions in accordance with the requirements of the law.

The Authority's school place planning system also supports the expansion of successful and popular schools wherever possible.

Mayor

Mr Perrin do you want to pose a supplementary question.

Mr Perrin

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Gerrish for your answer so far. I would just like to ask would you accept that the Council does have a duty to ensure that all schools under its control offer a very high standard of education and achieve high Ofsted ratings. Rather than reducing the numbers at high achieving schools, the Council should strive to ensure the standard of the under achieving schools are raised, thereby ensuring that parents would be entirely happy to send their children to any council controlled school in the Borough. Would you further accept that imposing any such authority or restrictions will lead schools to believe that they have no alternative other than to seek academy status, leaving the Council with very little, if any authority or control over the schools in Thurrock.

Mayor

Thank you. Councillor Gerrish please.

Councillor Gerrish

Thank you Mr Mayor. First of all I will reiterate the point that there is absolutely no circumstances under which we would seek to lower the admission numbers for popular and successful schools. I think that is something we are not in the business of doing. I do agree entirely with the point about making sure that all of our schools are up to a very high standard, that is why we have put in an extra £250,000 in the budget for school improvement and while we are taking very seriously our responsibilities in terms of making sure both in terms of Ofsted outcomes and KS1 and KS2 performance, that the direction of travel in all of our schools is in a very very healthy direction of travel.

3. From Johanna Allison to Councillor Holloway, Cabinet Member for Environment (Received 15/11/12 @ 20.48)

“As a representative of the Lightship Cafe group of volunteers who have run the Grays beach cafe over the last winter period and who have a vested interest in operating the cafe again over the forthcoming winter season, could I ask the council in light of the recent fire what their intentions are in relation to its repair and restoration in order that it can be returned back into community use?”

Councillor Holloway

It is the Council's intention to carry out repairs and restore the café at Grays Beach. An insurance claim has already been made and the site was visited by a loss adjuster on Tuesday 20th of November.

Work has now commenced on clearing the inside of the building in preparation for renovation. A building surveyor has been engaged to put together a brief on the repairs to the café.

I am keen for the repairs to be done as soon as possible, ideally as soon after Christmas as possible and I will of course keep the group updated at each stage.

Mayor

Mrs Allison do you want to pose a question?

Mrs Allison

I would just like to ask if the café is going to continue in the same frame of mind that it was before and that it will be run the same or will the Council be looking to improve what's on offer at Grays Beach Café.

Councillor Holloway

There are no plans at the moment to alter how the café is run or what the café is used for, so if the group does want to continue to use the café, I do not see any reason why they can't continue to do so when it is restored.

Item 19 - Questions from Members to the Leader, Cabinet Members, Chairs of Committees or Members appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee in accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 14) of the Council's Constitution.

There are 3 questions to the Leader and 7 questions to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Member appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE LEADER

1. From Councillor Anderson

“Will the leader commit to setting up a cross party working group to consider changes to the council's procurement and commissioning procedures, to make it easier for local community groups and small businesses to secure council contracts, as suggested at the Cabinet meeting of 14th November.”

Councillor John Kent

This was a suggestion that I made at Cabinet and of course I am happy to give the commitment that Cllr Anderson asks for. The thought however does strike me that the issue of procurement, especially in relation to the third sector is currently being addressed through the joint voluntary sector forum, and is chaired by the assistant Chief Executive and Councillor Anderson is a member of. I would appreciate Councillor Anderson's view as to whether that would be an appropriate forum with which to take this work care forward rather than start and set something new up.

Mayor

Councillor Anderson do you want to have a supplementary question.

Councillor Anderson

Yes, thank you Mr Mayor. Clearly this was an issue that was raised from the floor of the recent Thurrock Business Conference, that small businesses can consider it to be an issue. It was something that was raised at the launch of the compact with the Faith Voluntary & Community Sector; they are recognising that it is still an issue. Certainly, the forum that Councillor Kent mentioned would be one appropriate input into this. It certainly gives the means for bringing in the views of the voluntary community & faith sector. I think we also need to bring in the views of the small business community who aren't represented in that, but clearly we can do some of the ground work in those two forums and then maybe bring it together to decide based on those representations what actions we can take as a council. I am grateful to receive confirmation of a commitment that was made in Cabinet. No further questions.

2. From Councillor Anderson

“How many days per year does the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel expect an elected member in Thurrock will spend performing their ward and council duties?”

Councillor John Kent

The Independent Remuneration Panel suggested that elected members should spend 64 days on these duties with a further 32 days being given voluntarily.

Mayor

Councillor Anderson do you wish to pose a supplementary?

Councillor Anderson

Yes, thank you Mr Mayor. I have immense sympathy and respect for the many elected members in this chamber who work very hard to balance their working life, their family life and their commitments to serving their community in this borough as a Councillor. However, it has become increasingly clear that Councillor Kiely is not making any serious attempt to live up to that kind of commitment. I chaired the working group on the housing policy which he was supposed to be on; he did not attend a single meeting. There has been a pattern of him turning up in this chamber once every six months to avoid the possibility of being struck off as a Councillor and also very little evidence of him working in his ward. Councillor Kent nearly two months ago, promised that an investigation would be held by the Labour Party and both into Councillor Kiely's non attendance at Council meetings as some of the more inflammatory statements that he has been making publically. I would just like to ask, has that investigation reached its conclusion yet and are you able to share with this Chamber any action you intend to take as a result?

Mayor

Councillor Kent

Councillor John Kent

Thank you Mr Mayor, I think the first thing to say is that I can completely agree with the first part of Councillor Anderson's question. The vast majority of members across this Chamber, not only today but in all the time I have been an elected Member work far far beyond that kind of 96 days the independent remuneration panel suggested they should. Be that Councillors Palmer & Purkiss as independents, Councillor Ray sitting next to them, or people on that side or this side. I am not going to stand here and try to defend the indefensible. Clearly, Councillor Kiely's attendance and commitment is not what it should be. It is something I have raised with him consistently, not just this year, but towards the back end of last year as well. As far as the specific

question is concerned, the investigation was being carried out independently of me. I don't believe it has as yet been completed and when it is, there is a party every political party has its different processes and that process will have to be gone through independently of the group in Thurrock.

Mayor

Councillor Anderson do you wish to pose a second supplementary question?

Councillor Anderson

Yes, thank you Mr Mayor. I think we all appreciate that the reputation of politicians with the public is not actually flying high at the moment. When some of the blatant disregard for the privileges of office that we have seen is there, sadly enough local residents look at Councillor Kiely's actions or inactions and then they look at me and then they look at you as other elected members and they just say to us all, you are all the same. Will you admit, that what is going on is damaging the credibility of elected politicians here in Thurrock, it harms all of our reputations and it is important to preserve your representation as leader of this council and the labour party that you now make sure some action is taken on this to restore the credibility of politics in Thurrock.

Mayor

Councillor Kent

Councillor John Kent

Clearly, Mr Mayor that is right. When we have members that are not fulfilling their duties, when they are doing the bare minimum, the minimum is laid down by statute it doesn't reflect well upon any of us. I would however, point out to Councillor Anderson, that this is not a one party issue that Councillor Anderson has had members of his group who have also been very poor attendees at various things, full council, overview & scrutiny committees. One member of his group did not attend a single meeting of his Overview & Scrutiny Committee last year, yes, that damages us all, and yes, I am committed to either getting Councillor Kiely to where he is or managing out of the group.

3. From Councillor Pearce

“Can the leader of the council assure me the 106 monies raised in Aveley will be spent in Aveley?”

Councillor John Kent

Mr Mayor under the Planning Obligation Strategy approved by Cabinet back in March, planning gain contributions are deemed to be for use towards delivering the Council’s regeneration agenda. Cabinet resolved on that day, that the Regeneration Board will agree where contributions received should be spent within the terms of the Legal agreement signed. Separately, any contributions received through Section 106 Agreements signed between the developer and the Council must be used for purposes identified within the Agreement. Contributions received are normally there to provide for infrastructure within the locality directly related to the contributing development.

Mayor

Councillor Pearce would you like a supplementary question.

Councillor Pearce

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Kent. I take it that you are giving assurances on 106 monies in Aveley.

Mayor

Is that a question?

Councillor John Kent

Mr Mayor, I can give an assurance that Section 106 monies that accrue to this Council, will be spent by this council and I have to point out that for six years, there was something in the region of £400,000 of Section 106 contributions for Aveley that weren’t spent by the previous administration. That is not something that we are going to allow to happen.

Mayor

Councillor Pearce any other second supplementary?

Councillor Pearce

Yes Mr Mayor. I can’t believe this. I feel like that 106 money in Aveley is being taken away from us. I am getting various reports saying that like Treetops need the money and we have had developers talking to us saying that they are talking to Treetops, and money will be going that way. Now I

think that if developers are developing in Aveley, all 106 monies should go to Aveley to help with health, education, facilities for the young and for this dreaded HGV problems that we are getting now. I am just sick and tired of it, I really am.

Mayor

Do you want to respond Councillor Kent.

Councillor John Kent

Mr Mayor I am really not sure what the question there was, but again, to explain the section 106 process, if and when a planning application is received, there will be associated planning gain, section 106 monies, who will be negotiated by the Council Officers and put to the planning committee alongside the application. That is not something that started happening in 2010, that is the way that these things have always been done. Nothing there has changed.

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

1. From Councillor Roast to Councillor Phil Smith

“How are we maximizing the opportunities Thurrock businesses have in promoting their goods and services by sponsoring roundabouts across the borough and providing revenue through this for the council?”

Councillor Phil Smith

Thank you Councillor Roast. At the moment there are 10 roundabout within Thurrock that are already sponsored by local business. We get quite a number of requests during the year for the take out sponsorship and what we tend to find is that their applications are for the roundabouts which are in a prime location and as you can imagine, they have already been let. We are going to look at this further, and in the new year we are looking at putting forward a communication plan to see whether there is anybody else willing to take up advertising on the roundabouts.

Mayor

Councillor Roast, do you wish to pose a supplementary.

Councillor Roast

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Smith for your response. Leicestershire Council generates in excess of £200,000 every three years. West Berkshire Council, £50,000 over a year. These are the sort of things we

can't afford to ignore I feel and also we must be supporting our local business where we can. I think I will leave it at that. Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Smith would you like to respond.

Councillor Phil Smith

I can't give you specific money of how much is generated from our renting out the roundabouts, but we do maximise the amount of money that we charge for the sponsorship of the roundabouts.

Mayor

Councillor Roast do you wish to pose a second supplementary?

2. From Councillor Redsell to Councillor Barbara Rice

"It is concerning me to hear that the council are not working in harmony with our partners, to the point that our allocations policy doesn't match with theirs. For that reason, we have 2 bed properties at Elizabeth Gardens remaining empty and impossible to let or buy. Can you tell the chamber, with such a high demand for the properties in Elizabeth Gardens, why they are being allowed to remain empty?"

Councillor Barbara Rice

Thank you very much Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor for your question, which I believe is why are these properties being allowed to remain empty. Well the blunt fact of the matter is that they are unfinished so they remain empty.

Mayor

Councillor Redsell.

Councillor Redsell

Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you Councillor Rice. First of all I would like to say what a brilliant place it is at the moment. If anybody gets a chance to go and have a look, it is looking absolutely wonderful. What I would just like to ask is, the local papers at the moment have adverts from Hanover and are saying that it is for 55s and over for retirement homes. I have had a few residents ask me if they can be put forward. When we have put them forward they have been turned down and said they are for special care. I think, could Councillor Rice please assure the Chamber that Members and with Elizabeth Gardens in Long Lane is what it is actually being used for. Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Barbara Rice.

Councillor Barbara Rice

I can explain what extra care housing is and I will do that. Also, it is very important that all the Councillors understand for their residents what this scheme is and to that fall, I have arranged for a visit to the site in February for all Councillors and following on with a little talk afterwards so that everyone can be absolutely clear, but I will give a brief description of extra care housing. Of course, it is different to housing and that is why I am answering this question as the Portfolio for social care.

It is being developed in close partnership with Hanover Housing Association. The Council is represented at the monthly site progress meetings and our occupational therapist have advised on the design requirements for those flats and the common areas. The first residents will be moving in in late April. There are 18 units for sale and reservation deposits have been taken today for 14 of those. 47 units are for rental and successful applicants for these must meet the criteria within the Council's housing allocation policy and have a need for the support element offered by the scheme. That is clearly not understood by a lot of us. The Council have been working closely with Hanover Housing to provide a list of nominees for the rented units, and joint allocations procedure has been agreed. The procedure includes a joint assessment process involving housing and adult social care, and cases are referred to a panel for a final decision. I will be brief because we are running late tonight. To date the panel have assessed 82 cases and identified 26 applicants who meet the criteria, 10 cases are currently undergoing assessment. So that is the current state of play, but I think it is clear that because it is a very new scheme and I have to say a wonderful scheme and the properties there are finished to a very high standard and are very desirable to live in. So we will arrange that for February.

Mayor

Would you like to make a second supplementary question Councillor Redsell.

3. From Councillor Johnson to Councillor Phil Smith

"Would the portfolio holder outline exactly how the council's fair debt policy operates?"

Councillor Phil Smith

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Johnson. I actually read your question a couple of times and you are actually asking me to outline exactly how the debt policy works. Now I could stand here and read all 22 pages which that would bore even me and I don't think you actually want to listen to

me reading this out. Could do, I will actually outline it. Well we have got until 10.30 so we are still ok!

What I will give you, we have a principle course of recovery action, which is taken from our fair debt policy. Its written demands are produced and dispatched in accordance with legal requirements. Every effort is made to address benefit entitlements; there are clear written guidelines, roles and responsibilities for all staff involved in recovery action. Also, information for debtors and advice surgeries. Advice and information are available for debtors at any stage of the recovery process. I then go to what is 3 pages of very brief notes which is the process that the Council follows, I noted that the mayor was getting really twitchy there!

What I will actually do is, we have a process and it is very clear, we send a bill out, then we send a reminder, then we send another reminder and then we send another reminder. With each one of those reminders there is a direct debit form for the person to repay the debt. They are then issued with a notification of summons and there is another series of steps there and at all times we are asking the resident to contact us.

Now I know some people have spoken about the business rates and how we collect them. They are collected by exactly the same form. We send these notes out. We ask the resident or the person concerned to contact us to discuss what the issue is. It is not until we have gone through that page, then this page that we actually go to the Bailiffs. So I think you will find there is an extensive process there.

I am quite happy to circulate these pages after the meeting and also as members don't seem to have the debt management policy, I am happy for that to be circulated.

Mayor

Councillor Johnson do you wish to pose of supplementary?

Councillor Johnson

It might surprise Councillor Smith to know that I have actually read it. I just really wanted him to outline how he worked it. Thank you for your reply, but I can't hide my surprise that it says that it never mentions in the Fair Debt Policy of when they do contact us or listening to the individual customer needs. It also makes no reference at all to our local businesses. Now the council leader himself champions the importance of maintaining and growing links between the business community and the council, a sentiment I whole heartedly agree with. I have to share with you an actual case of a small business with a rateable value of just £3,500 falling into arrears. Receiving a visit from the enforcement team demanding payment in full of the then balance of £2,976 which included liability order costs. The business could not find that but actually found £2,000 cash immediately which is more than 2/3 of the debt and requested that they pay the balance over the remainder of the financial year.

Not only did your officers not listen, they returned the debt to the bailiffs adding even further costs, which I do not think is actually fair. My question is, do you believe that the administration's failure to eradicate a late payments culture to local businesses is not only adding to their woes, but your continued cavalier attitude to enforcing in our business community is a complete contradiction to a fair debt policy and is why we are in receipt of so many complaints in your department.

Mayor

Councillor Phil Smith would you like to respond

Councillor Phil Smith

I will just respond to the last item on there where you say that the complaints are going up. I think if you go back to my report earlier on, I am quite happy to go back to it, I think page 152/155 where the number of complaints have actually gone down, so I think that makes a lie to what you have just said.

Mayor

Supplementary question.

Councillor Johnson

Of yes please. I think you will find that I asked you a question on your report that said why did you only report the complaints over one year and not specifically about Council Tax. Now, I am not going to bother with another question, because it is obviously quite clear what the complaints number are in your department, so obviously you are just going to say you will put it in writing again as my supplementary would be about the number of complaints in your department, so I will leave it there. Thank you Mr Mayor.

4. From Councillor Revell to Councillor Gerrish

Would the portfolio holder explain why the Grangewater Centre has lost over £200,000.00 over a 3 year period

Mayor

Let's move onto question 4 now. Councillor Gerrish please respond to the question submitted by Councillor Revell as set out on page 176 of the agenda.

Councillor Gerrish

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Revell for your question. The first point I would make here is that Grangewaters is a service and like any

service it costs money to operate. It only generates a loss in the sense that schools or our social care services generate a loss. However, the mix of revenue streams for the centre has changed over the past years from relying heavily on local authority funding, to a situation where it is largely self sufficient.

Grangewaters now relies on bookings from schools and other institutions to cover the expenditure for the activities provided rather than on funding from the local authority. The income it generates from these settings will fluctuate from year to year and is influenced by the economic climate that means that less money is available in schools and elsewhere to fund outdoor education.

Grangewater staffing and activity levels are carefully managed to reduce expenditure if bookings reduced through the use of seasonal rather than just permanent staff, for example.

Grangewaters offers a wide range of activities that enables children and young people to take part in experiences that they may not otherwise have access to, and should elected members like to visit to find out more about the centre and promote its unique offer, officers will be very happy to arrange this.

Mayor

Councillor Revell do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

Councillor Revell

Can I have a moment to read my question again? It says why did Grangewaters Centre lose £200,000 over a three year period. In fact, it was more than that, it was £230,000. In fact it was even more than that because the support services from the local authority was not included. That was my question, but it's been evaded, but so can I just ask you and I refer. I started asking this question a year ago, through the Overview & Scrutiny. Can I refer, could you just comment on this? This is an e-mail I had from the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny, the relevant one. You had a copy and it says that the Grangewater in previous years was a cost to the Council, but is now cost neutral. Now that refers to the year that has just gone 11/12 – cost neutral – it's weasely word that's used too often very loosely.

Cost neutral meant in this case, in that particular year and it's in the accounts you gave me in a very [inaudible] way at the last full council of £27,683, that is what you are calling cost neutral. Now you've said to me in the past, you accept assurances from your officers. In view of this, do you still accept assurances from your officers?

Mayor

Councillor Gerrish, would you like to respond?

Councillor Gerrish

Mr Mayor, as the budget is set out, I think Councillor Revell will find very clearly that cost neutral in this sense and actually funding I think should be the term rather than cost neutral, is set to an assumption of nil from the local authority.

Obviously, if the revenue generated by Grangewaters isn't able to get to the level where it's self-sufficient, the authority has to step in to make up that shortfall. But certainly, it's our ambition to make sure that we are getting to the point where it is self-sufficient.

Now Mr Mayor, naturally I was very keen to explore this issue in as much detail as possible, and have looked back at all of the accounts logged on Oracle which went back to about 2006/7. Now the total loss in Grangewaters last year as Councillor Revell says was in the region of £27,000. That actually works out as the least spent by the local authority on Grangewaters in any of the last six financial years. In fact the most was under the last administration and in 2006/7 the figure was over £174,000. Maybe Councillor Revell can remind us who the lead member was for Children's Services back in 2006/7.

Mayor

Do you wish to come back Councillor Revell.

Councillor Revell

Well I think I would of course because I'm honest with the account. You're not. This is play and you've just said to me that it will soon be back and self-sufficient. When is that day going to be?

Mayor

Do you want to come back.

Councillor Gerrish

Yes Mr Mayor, so that's right, Councillor Revell was the lead member for Children's Services in 2006/7. No wonder he only wants to look at the last three financial years. In 2006/7 he and his administration spent a massive 527% more than has been spent under me in the last year. Now, Mr Mayor, in terms of future plans for Grangewaters, there are a number of financial and operating opportunities being explored for Grangewaters in preparation for a report to cabinet on the recommendations for the centre for the future.

These include the exploration of charitable status through the development of a trust, or community interest company, just as an example. The main benefits we are aiming for in any recommendation is to change the financial status or ownership of the centre are to enable the centre to apply for external funding for example "Big Lottery Funding", to support them as a traded unit without the restraints of a local authority, to embed ownership in the local community, to

protect the assets and the unique site for community use both now and in the future, to explore new markets such as corporate events, adult training activity breaks, and team building, and to develop things for partner sites to expand the range of opportunities on offer.

So, Mr Mayor, not only have we drastically reduced local authority spend on Grangewaters, we are now looking at a sustainable position for the future, and we are developing a paper to cabinet shortly.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gerrish.

5. From Councillor Coxshall to Councillor Barbara Rice

Would the portfolio holder please update me on the CQC recent visit to Basildon Hospital?

Councillor B Rice

Thank you very much Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor Coxshall. CQC is in close contact with BTUH to fulfil their monitoring role. Two recent cases in the paediatric department triggered an inspection; concerns were identified, and shared with the Chief Executive who immediately responded. A risk summit was convened by the SHA attended by Officers of the Council.

CQC is currently satisfied that the action taken by the Chief Executive are a proportionate and appropriate response to the issues identified. Officers, including the Director and Heads of Service are appropriately involved.

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall, do you want to make a supplementary question?

Councillor Coxshall

Thank you Councillor Rice for that answer. It's nice to see someone on that side of the chamber finally admitting to the issues that have been there for three years now, and I quote just one comment from the last time we discussed this on 6 June 2010 in this chamber and it's from our side, it's a great tragedy this side, the Conservatives, keep bashing the reputation of this hospital.

Right, Councillor Diana Hale, why are you not standing up for that wonderful hospital, Councillor Diana Hale. Now both of them comments in the light of what's happened now are just unreasonable.

Mayor

Okay Councillor Coxshall, do you want to comment?

Councillor B Rice

I am responding, it was a supplementary, I therefore have the right to respond. Thank you Councillor.

Since 2009 you must remember of course; I was only elected in 2010. Thank you. Since 2009, the health and social care regulator, the Care Quality Commission, has raised a series of concerns about the hospital and the Trust not meeting care standards or parts of those care standards.

Over the years, improvement action has been taken and the majority of concerns successfully dealt with, but on the 3 November a CQC inspection prompted by incidents relating to the death of a child and a potential near miss by a drug error took place. It found a number of serious concerns prompting CQC to insist the hospital must carry out independently led investigations into its paediatric services.

CQC and South Essex Primary Care Trust were at the meeting and outlined their expectations of the hospital trust, including BTUH, commissioning an independent review which will report back to CQC and PCT before 13 January. The regulator and the PCT have quite rightly expected action, but I want more than that. We know that since 2009, BTUH have been constantly in the headlines for the wrong reasons. It seems our problems with the regulator sort it out but then another set of problems engulf them.

I know it's not easy running a big hospital and I've done it myself but, the many concerns raised over the past three or more years do nothing to inspire confidence and I want Thurrock people to be able to feel confident in their main health provider.

The Shadow Health and Well-being board invited the hospital trust to our next meeting. I not only want to tell them, I want them to tell us about the latest concerns and put measures in place to stop it happening again, but I then want them to assure me and residents of Thurrock that their systems are robust enough to support excellent care for our residents.

I want to be in no doubt that Basildon Hospital will provide the best possible care to each and every one of their patients and I want the people I represent as portfolio holder for health and social care to feel the same way.

So further to your press release last week, where you stated that Thurrock Council are not doing enough, I am now going to tell you exactly what Thurrock Council are doing under my leadership, so I have been an elected member for two and a half years. I took this portfolio up this year, and I have made great inroads into the deficit you never did, so further to your press release, further to your press release Councillor, I am speaking, the Council must do more to hold the hospital to account.

I suggest you ask the people that know about health and social care in this council before you make such statements. I confirm to you that we have consulted South Essex PCT, CQC, and this is their response to us at a meeting

Councillor Anderson

Point of order Mr Mayor if I may?

Councillor B Rice

At a meeting of 23 November, would you like me to carry on or?

Mayor

Councillor Rice, please, sit down now. I think we are answering questions actually.

Councillor B Rice

I will put in writing to the rest of all members, excuse me.

Mayor

Okay, so point of order.

Councillor B Rice

Okay, please supplementary.

Councillor Anderson

I think the constitution says that the purpose is to answer the supplementary question not discuss press releases.

Mayor

No, I think we accept that. I think the important thing is now that the time for questioning is over now.

Councillor Coxshall

No I've got to finish (barely audible)

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall, please. Then I'm going to stay here for all night you see. I think

Councillor Coxshall

I haven't finished my bit (Inaudible words)

Mayor

Could you - please? You can sort it out another time now you see. Okay, let's just move on. So those questions which are left is

As the time limit for this item had been reached, the following questions were withdrawn by the Members who submitted them.

6. From Councillor Little to Councillor Holloway

Why was the change in the collection of the brown waste bin collections made with such little notice in the Orsett area?

7. From Councillor Revell to Councillor Holloway

How many loads of collected recycling waste have been rejected as contaminated in the last year. Please give the answer in numbers and percentages.