

Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 29 June 2022

Item 6 – QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Mayor informed the Chamber that one question had been received.

1. From Mr Perrin to Councillor Spillman

Mr Perrin

I believe six months have passed since it was announced that the Council was to initiate a report on the problem of damp and mould in Council owned housing. If, or when, such a report has been completed will it be published in the public domain?

Mayor

Councillor Spillman

Councillor Spillman

Thank you for your question, Mr Perrin, the report on damp and mould in the council housing properties was presented already to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 9 November 2021. This report was publicly available on the council's website, a further update report was requested from overview and scrutiny and will be presented in November 2020. I see that you having trouble hearing that, the report was heard, was already heard in November 2021 last year, its published on the council's website and were going to do another report this November and the next November and the next November after that and ongoing as this is a really important issue.

Mayor

Mr Perrin do you wish to ask a supplementary question.

Mr Perrin

Councillor Spillman you may recall that ten or more years ago Ms Diedre Lodge, her late husband Simon and myself robustly campaigned on the issue of damp and mould in council housing. We urged the council to accept that damp and mould was a category 1 hazard endangering the health and wellbeing of people living in infected properties. The Belhus Wood councillors at that time stated that damp and mould was a category 4 hazard and was not a threat to health and wellbeing despite the fact that it had been declared a category 1 hazard by the WHO and acknowledged as such by the then UK Government. Those councillors even accused Ms Lodge of scaremongering. I accept that complete eradication of damp and mould from existing properties is probably not a viable proposition, and that treatment and containment will have to suffice. Therefore, I ask before planning approval is given for future house building will the council insist that they are built so that damp and

mould, hazardous materials such as asbestos, fire risk cladding are dangers of the past.

Mayor

Councillor Spillman

Councillor Spillman

Thank you for that very important question and I can categorically state that yes damp and mould is a very important issue to this council, we will work hand in hand with the committee to work on it. I've got some serious concerns, we're going to get a few more damp and mould reports I think this year for two reasons one because we're actively looking for more and we're actively asking everyone we've written to asking have you got damp and mould and that is going to come up but my concern is the cost of living and people not being able to heat their homes so that's really important. So if we councillors, if you ever get a query about anyone who can't heat their homes properly, the housing support fund, please apply for it that fund is there to help people who are struggling with the cost of living that fund might stop someone getting damp and mould in their property so just don't hesitate, there's a lot of extra funding obviously for people who can't heat their homes coming through and I really do worry about this as a cause of damp and mould so please just make sure that when we do speak to people we don't just report it to council that there's damp and mould we also give advice on the extra welfare benefits of all these residents will have but as a side point I wanted to make because it's very important but just going back to confirm categorically yes to your question. Thank you very much.

Item 16 – QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO CABINET MEMBERS, COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND MEMBERS APPOINTED TO REPRESENT THE COUNCIL ON A JOINT COMMITTEE

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 13 questions had been received.

1. From Councillor Redsell to Councillor Spillman

Councillor Redsell

Would the Portfolio Holder for Housing advise what further steps have been taken since the resident's consultation on the future of Blackshots high rise flats?

Mayor

Councillor Spillman would you respond to Councillor Redsell please.

Councillor Spillman

We've had a lot of work behind the scenes. The reports are at a very late stage. They would have gone because they were on the old sites list – they would have gone and just ran through, but I thought myself that considering I've been at meetings with Ockendon, two sites. I attended a meeting with Chadwell Councillors about two sites. I unfortunately can't attend, there's a meeting about two sites in Belhus tomorrow and that's all part of the new approach to housebuilding and to consultation that I worked with Councillor Worrall on because we were both unhappy about the waste of time and the lack of proper scrutiny that was going into these sites. So, Ward Councillors had some concerns over the exact footprint that had been proposed and so it just felt, considering this is such a big scheme, it felt ridiculous not to have the same consultation for Ward Members in Blackshots that other Councillors were going to be afforded at smaller schemes. So, as you're aware, I know that this was a question you put in a while ago, so you do – you've had a bit more insight since then, but there will be a Ward consultation with myself and the Chair of Housing just like the other schemes, but no the scheme is in very – it's progressed considerably. Ward Members have some concerns, and they will be consulted upon because as myself and the Chair of Housing at the time agreed, we were getting schemes that weren't viable being put out in the public domain that was just causing alarm and wasting everyone's time more than anything. But also Ward Councillors that weren't on that Committee sometimes weren't finding out about, you know, the whole scheme until it was too late for them to actually put any input in, and so that just can't happen any longer. So, you know, I'm sure that Ward Councillors will add to the project, and we'll get a paper very, very, very soon. We can't mess this up, you know this is such a big project and when plans, you know I was a lowly caseworker at the time, but when plans hit the rails with the Grays town, I think back in 2015 it took so long for us, you know it caused - it took so long for us to come back with plans for tower blocks. I can't mess this up, we have to do this, we have to make it a success and then we can move onto the next set of tower blocks, because this administration, I think everyone in this room realises that those tower blocks need to be replaced. But we have to succeed, we can't mess it up because it's such a big venture that it would be silly just to rush through and make mistakes. We need to have a proper consultation and make sure that community and Ward Councillors are happy with how things are proceeding. So, I hope that gives you some idea.

Mayor

Councillor Redsell do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

Councillor Redsell

Thank you, Mister Mayor. Thank you, Councillor Spillman. Just wanted to know that as the Blackshots flats are the worst in Thurrock – just wanted to know, are you committed to doing your best for the residents of those tower blocks? Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Spillman.

Councillor Spillman

Yeah of course. I mean we're not just going to leave those tower blocks. I mean I don't want to spend any more money on those tower blocks, I'll be honest – no one does. We want to get them down, replace them, build something new, but in the meantime people in those tower blocks are not going to be left in conditions that are not acceptable. We're going to have to spend money for some improvements until we replace like for like. But, no they are the worst tower blocks, that's why they've been identified as the first ones that will come down. But, just as important as the maintenance, and just as important as bringing them down and building the new building, is the decamp. The decamp has got to be done properly. That was one of the issues, I think, in 2015 where decamp options were very limited and we couldn't really – it scared residents to death, whereas we've got to have a plan in place where we can say this is going to happen, then that's going to happen, then if you want to come back, you can come back, or if you don't this is your option. So, yes, I mean there's a lot of work to be done, but I'm really excited about this, officers are really excited about it, and it's a fantastic opportunity for this Council to get its confidence, to build on that scale, back. Because then, once we do that, the sky's the limit and I'm already – I mean there are plans on other estates in an embryonic stage, but moving forward, for much larger estate regeneration to follow this.

Mayor

Thank you, Councillor Spillman. Councillor Redsell. No, thank you very much.

2. Question 2 had been withdrawn prior to the meeting.
3. Question 3 – Due to Councillor Muldowney sending her apologies this evening her question has been resubmitted to July Council.
4. From Councillor Mayes to Councillor Johnson

Councillor Mayes

Can the Portfolio Holder update me on what the plans are for nursery placements for children who are affected by the closure of the Little Pirates and Neptunes Nurseries in Tilbury?

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

Let me start by saying I am really pleased to state that since the decision to close the nurseries was taken, to date we have not experienced any parents having difficulty finding alternative nursery provider for their child. Just a bit of background. I would like to assure everyone in this chamber that every effort was made to find an alternative provider for these nurseries. Sadly, our staff numeration packages including pension costs were simply too high for any provider to run a sustainable business and whilst the closure was a regrettable decision it was the correct decision for the council to take as the model was simply untenable and it was certainly not the fairest way to spend taxpayers' money by propping up a council run nursery when other private nurseries needed to pay their own way. The end of year role in the nurseries saw 160 children across both nurseries. 62 of those 4-year-olds will of course be leaving this nursery and entering school life in September. We've collated a list of vacant nursery places in private day nurseries, school nurseries, pre-schools and local child minders and are sharing these with parents so that they can decide where they would like their child to attend. Parents are also able to identify alternative providers through the family information services website and the local offer. Just to put more context on the numbers, as I said there was 160 across both nurseries, 62 of those will be leaving naturally, currently the local schools have over 90 places available and local pre-schools and day nurseries who have shared their vacancies with the staff at the nurseries, some haven't, they could take up the balance quite easily and I can also confirm, inform you, that Little Pirates and Neptune Nursery staff are on site and are now still currently supporting parents in finding alternative nursery places for September if they so wish. But to end Councillor and I hope this give you all satisfaction this is a statutory duty to ensure each child is offered a nursery place so each child will be. Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Mayes do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Mayes

I've been approached by many residents about the fear of not having a placement for their child because they rely on it for work and is very important for their life and more importantly for that child as well because it is their world at that time. So, what, thank you for all that information it was very helpful, and I understand the council's statutory responsibility, but I can just go that one step further and just push you a little bit on the 2 to 3 year old please. Have their got placements that you are aware of?

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

Certainly, Mister Mayor. Thank you, Councillor Mayes. Yes the 2 to 3 year olds were the biggest worry that we had when the decision was taken because those, put it frankly, they are the places that people don't make enough money out of to be perfectly honest so yes it was a case of cajoling and making sure other providers do look at this properly and as I said we haven't experienced anyone at the moment having a problem in finding alternative nursery providers so at this present moment in time we are looking at 2 to 3 years seemingly as though they are now falling into place and the rest of them can take them onto their roles but obviously we will monitor it closely and say I reiterate it is a statutory duty so we will have to make sure they will get placed.

Mayor

Councillor Mayes do you have a second supplementary question.

Councillor Mayes

Yes please, thank you Mister Mayor and thank you Councillor Johnson for that, I understand there are staff on site to help families which I think is great and that support will be really needed for those families. I'll just go a step further and asked if they are going to parents and asking them if they need help and offering their support rather than expecting parents to come to them, please. Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

Thank you, Mister Mayor, Thank you Councillor. I would like to hope that they are approaching those parents whenever they come into the nursery each morning but as you know we can't force ourselves onto any one so there's probably six of one and half a dozen of the other. They will be waiting for people to ask them but as I said we will go to them and ask them if they need help because it is that statutory duty to do so, so what we don't want is, come September, to suddenly find out that there are 20, 35, 1 I don't know of those who haven't got a place so I will go back to the director and make that suggestion that if they are not doing that they do approach to make sure they approach the parents rather than waiting to be approached. Thank you, Councillor.

5. From Councillor Potheary to Councillor Johnson

Councillor Potheary

What is the Portfolio Holder doing to ensure there are sufficient numbers of childcare places in Grays Riverside?

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

Thank you, Mister Mayor and thank you for your question, Councillor. Let me begin by explaining this work is actually undertaken by the childcare sufficiency officer who assesses the demand and sufficiency of early education and childcare places across the borough on an annual basis. This information is reported to elected members and made public for the use of providers and parents on the Thurrock Council website each year. The officer works closely with prospective providers to identify suitable premises in areas of insufficiency. As a council we encourage providers including schools to participate in the 30-hour entitlement offer to enable more working parents' good access to their full entitlement. We support providers to offer or access wrap-around care for working parents and provide training mentoring and inclusion support for childcare providers to raise standards. The Council will continue to provide business and financial advice to childcare providers to ensure they understand the costs involved in opening and running a new setting and to support the recruitment and retention of staff. We have worked with neighbouring local authorities to develop a recruitment strategy to ensure our providers are able to recruit and retain good quality staff and we work with providers to ensure prices are similar to our geographical neighbours. The Early Years Team also worked to recruit and train childminders in the borough and to ensure overall children sufficiency. We will continue to work with providers to offer sustainable yet affordable childcare. Recruitment is an issue both nationally and locally and is a big factor in ensuring the number of childcare places in Thurrock meets parents demands. This recruitment strategy has actually attracted lots of attention across the region and further afield. The Early Years Team are also working with the Thurrock Adult College to ensure residents have access to high quality childcare and child development courses which will enable them to work in early education and childcare locally. I hope you will agree that there this sufficiency assessment is ensuring we are at least on the right track to be able to see and deal with any areas where more support may be needed. Your question however asked what am I doing to ensure that sufficient numbers of childcare places and whilst the majority of the actual work is very operational, I do sit on many development and improvement boards right across my portfolio on a weekly basis and every person who attends those meeting with me, directors included, will be asking questions on many aspects of placement offerings on a regular basis therefore whilst I agree there is more to be done I do believe that I am at least asking the right questions.

Mayor

Councillor Potheary do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Potheary

Yes, please Mister Mayor and thank you Councillor Johnson for that very detailed response outlining the background of the childcare sufficiency survey. So, the report that I am looking at went to the Children's O&S in December, it's now June, in that report it says there's a clear question under Grays Riverside do we have sufficient childcare places in the ward. No. Is there a need to create places and the answer is yes. So, it's been deemed by the council that we need to create those placements. Grays Riverside is either top or second most popularist ward in the borough, it's also a very young ward with lots of young families, second highest in the borough for the number of children eligible for nursery places. So, my question is how many more nursery places have we created since this report was published in December and are we on track in creating any more in the following six months.

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

Thank you, Mister Mayor. Thank you, Councillor. I'd love to response with the actual number but what I'm going to say to you is yes, we have created more spaces, more places, across the borough. As I said and this is something the assessment looks at on a regular basis as I've also said in this report which you do get to see at the overview and scrutiny. I think if you really want to know those numbers then Ok will have to go back to the director and give me those exact numbers, but I am confident that if places are needed, they will be found.

Mayor

Councillor Potheary do you wish to pose a second supplementary question.

Councillor Potheary

Yes, thank you and I would like to thank Councillor Johnson for his answer which was very candid, and I would appreciate if we could get officers to get those figures and give us an idea of how much progress we are making towards full childcare sufficiency. I don't have a supplementary.

6. From Councillor Potheary to Councillor Maney

Councillor Potheary

What action is the council taking to tackle problem parking and littering in Clarence Road, Grays?

Mayor

Councillor Maney

Councillor Maney

Thank you, Mister Mayor. Thank you, Councillor Potheary for your question. Mister Mayor I am aware that concerns have been raised regarding particular parking violations in Clarence Road close to the Grays Food Centre store at the junction with Grange Road. A particular resident of the area has also complained frequently about the accumulation of littering in Clarence Road which she attributes to the presence of the store. Taking the issue of littering first, Councillor Potheary will know that street cleaning and environmental enforcement do not form part of my brief, so I am somewhat limited in my reply however I am advised that Clarence Road is subject to regular street cleaning schedule and our environmental enforcement officers make frequent visits to the area. Indeed, Mister Mayor the store itself is subject to a statutory notice pursuant to section 47 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The notice is still in place and requires the business to comply with specific provisions in respect of the presentation and storage of waste. As stated, officers monitor this closely and to date there have been no identified compliance failure but in the event the notice or any other environmental regulations are found to be contravened an appropriate action will of course be taken and the same applies to any individuals found to be littering in Clarence Road. Turning to the issue of parking Mister Mayor, particularly violations of the waiting restrictions in Clarence Road it is again the case that our Civil Enforcement Officers undertake regular patrols. I hope it pleases Councillor Potheary to know Mister Mayor that between June this year and last year the Council CEOs have carried out no fewer than 5765 visits to Clarence Road issued 1354 penalty charge notices. This averages a little just over 15 patrols a day. Mister Mayor we are nothing if not reactive in Highways and Transport and have thus completed a review of the waiting restrictions in Clarence Road. Previously vehicles were permitted to park in the restricted area near the store up to 20 minutes for the purposes of loading and unloading. I can advise that a loading ban was subject to a statutory process. I approved the implementation of a traffic regulation order in January, the order has been signed and we are presently waiting for our lining contractors to complete the markings. Once this has happened CEOs will have the ability to the enforce against even more vehicles found to be waiting at the Clarence Road, Grange Road junction. Thank you, Mister Mayor.

Mayor

Councillor Potheary do you have a supplementary question.

Councillor Potheary

Yes, thank you, Mister Mayor. Thank you, Councillor Maney for your very detailed response and appreciate the littering response, I did notice after I had sent the question in that I had put littering in there as well so thank you for that response. Yes, this has been an ongoing issue for a long time, it isn't just one business in that area there's a lot that goes on in that area, there's a dentist, there's lots of shops. It is a Victorian street, it has that kind of parking, it is also one of the major thoroughfares into and out of Grays town centre so there are real problems with parking in that area. You mentioned the no waiting ban which I think residents will really welcome. What we have found with one of the stalls along Clarence Road is that although it is an ostensibly a convenience store it actually also operates on a bit of a wholesale basis as well which is obviously quite different in terms of how parking, people would normally walk to a convenience store most likely but for a wholesale store people will actually have to take a vehicle and load. So really appreciate that, would you be able to give me a time for this, residents have been waiting a lot of this, any indication of a deadline or a time when we can expect for that lining to be done.

Mayor

Councillor Maney

Councillor Maney

Thank you, Mister Mayor. I do agree that it's been quite await between the order being agreed and the lines actually being put in place. I don't have a specify date, but I have been assured by officers that they will speak to our contractors and ask for them to make this a priority. It might help if I explained that we tend to do, we normally batch these works together so the contractors come in and complete a number of jobs at once rather than coming in on an ad hoc basis, that just makes economic sense but I do know you've been waiting and residents have been waiting for a long time for this to come into play so I will speak to officers and give a nudge again, as I say this is a priority and can we have it in place. Thank you, Mister Mayor.

Mayor

Councillor Potheary would you like to pose a second supplementary question.

Councillor Potheary

No thank you Councillor Maney I would appreciate that.

7. From Councillor Byrne to Councillor Huelin

Councillor Byrne

The previous Portfolio Holder said he was happy with all things related the Corringham IMC, do you share that view?

Mayor

Councillor Huelin

Councillor Huelin

Thank you, Mister Mayor. Thank you, Councillor, for your question. Not a very specific question so I'm guessing your next one will be better,

Councillor Byrne

Are you happy with it, that's the question?

Councillor Huelin

I don't know what the previous portfolio holder, when he spoke to you, about what he was happy about or happy with as I may or may not share that view. I'm happy with reassurances I've been given with the with what I wasn't happy with but let's see where your questions go as I don't know how to answer this one specifically.

Mayor

Councillor Byrne do you have a supplementary question.

Councillor Byrne

Well can your answer these questions, the 10 GPs aren't actually GPs, are they? Have they got any experiences of going into a practice and are you not disappointed, we all thought that there was going to be an actual GP practice in these IMCs, but we know there will be an empty space and you can't sign on for a doctor there, it is 10 people who are barely qualified?

Mayor

Councillor Huelin

Councillor Huelin

Thank you. It's not 10 its 12. 12 fellowship GPs that means they are 100% qualified GPs, fully qualified.

Councillor Byrne

Have they worked in a surgery before?

Councillor Huelin

I don't know. I'm not on the interview panel Councillor Byrne so I don't know. But they are fully qualified GPs, fellowship, the fellowship means that they will be assigned to practices, they will spend half their time for GP appointments for residents in Thurrock, with a minimum of 500 new appointments per week. The rest of it they are training to be consultants as they want to be specialists in a particular subject so we gain that, they complete their GP stuff around those subjects that they are specialising in so if you come to Corringham IMC with diabetes you will see a qualified doctor that can help you with your ailments as well as your diabetes and he's going to specialise and be better in diabetes, it's that kind of this. What we were going to be getting was two GPs from down the road moving into the new premises we weren't gaining any new GPs. Now what we're getting is those two GPs in a refurbished new environment and better for everybody plus 12 new fully qualified GPs. 50 years ago, we all had a different attitude, we wanted jobs for life, and you had a GP and the GP practice went to his son and then it went to his grandson and so on. Things have moved on, life has changed, GPs want to have a career, they want a progression, they want to progress in specialised areas. We keep losing GPs and we live off locum GPs because we can't offer that and now, we can with 12 new qualified GPs giving 500 appointments a week whether a new or already been registered to a practice, you phone that practice and like other areas now if you can't get an appointment within that practice there will be 500, 500 new appointments that you can tap into.

Mayor

Councillor Byrne do you have a second supplementary question.

Councillor Byrne

So apart from the staff there, where are hot desks and we've 90 cars going there but I have been told that none of the staff are allowed to park in the car park. There is no parking for staff, and they will have to use the town centre car park which is a shoppers car park so is that going to affect the footfall and we've all got these lanyards tonight so we can park two minutes away these people have got to fight through yellow double lines. So, is it true that staff are not allowed to park at the IMC?

Mayor

Councillor Huelin

Councillor Huelin

Thank you, Councillor Byrne. We were on the same briefing Councillor Byrne when we took this up and it's a conundrum, I must admit, it's a conundrum for the NHS but they are working with us, and they are working with their staff to actively sort this issue out. There are parking spaces, we've highlighted that there needs to be some prioritisation for patients and for some staff, but it is not desking but it's not just NHS staff it's our own council workers, there's a lot of people. People do car share, people do use other forms of transport, they do, your right and we all said this you cannot eliminate staff parking they will need staff parking and so they have started looking at that and they have taken on board what we have said about the local car parks so I think it's on Monday there's another meeting and it is really about parking issues and they have assured me that they will involve myself and I have asked for a visit for local ward councillors so we can all re-discuss all of this when we've got more information but they have heard us and have taken it on board and they are working on it.

8. From Councillor Polley to Councillor Huelin

Councillor Polley

Would the Portfolio Holder please inform members what measures are being taken by council to ensure Thurrock residents are discharged in a timely, and as important, safe manner. Given the immense pressure M&SE hospital trust is experiencing.

Mayor

Councillor Huelin

Councillor Huelin

Thank you, Mister Mayor. Thank you, Councillor Polley, for your question. Unlike many other local authorities, Thurrock has retained a dedicated Adult Social Care Hospital Team, working on site at the hospital and I got the privilege during social care week to actually visit and see that service in action and was so impressed, it was so vital. The teamwork in close partnership with clinical staff within the hospital and other council teams such as our Adult Social Care Brokerage Team that organises social care packages from externally providers, front line social care staff, Collins House, caring for Thurrock Team which is our internal home and Extra Care service and also housing colleagues together they put the hospital discharge arrangements in place at the earliest opportunity that are safe and effective. We also work closely with community and voluntary sector services, and I know sometimes the social workers within the office will make sure that this food in the fridge and those practical things and go and do a bit of shopping and make sure the beds are clean and stuff as well as the medical side. The services include commissioning 'By Your Side' that provides practical support for residents, just as I was saying there, who are discharged home making sure there is

food in the fridge. We're trying to help get the community and voluntary service to help with that because it is something that people can volunteer for, and it is worthwhile, and it is very rewarding to be able to help like that. The 'Thurrock model' is highly effective and unlike other areas, has ensured extremely low numbers of delayed hospital discharges. So, to put that into perspective there have only been 17 delayed discharges in three months in Thurrock compared to over 200 in one month in another local authority. So, I am really proud of the team that we have and the work that we do with the NHS as ultimately it is the NHS responsibility.

Mayor

Councillor Polley do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Polley

Yes, please Mister Mayor. Thank you very much for that answer, Councillor Huelin. Obviously with the NHS advocating early discharge what action is this council taking to recoup any additional costs that are incurred.

Mayor

Councillor Huelin

Councillor Huelin

Thank you, Mister Mayor. Let's be clear we do this work, but it is in partnership with the NHS, and it is the NHS responsibility to effectively or more importantly safely discharging their patients and the service we've been providing by working with the NHS it is their ultimate decision on how and what they will fund so they help fund that by funding part of the service we do for them. But by us delivering this Thurrock model and ensuring residents are safely discharged with the correct level of care we can help prevent residents being returned to hospital and their health deteriorating and that's also preventing their care costs from escalating and in this way that helps us control our budgets and keeps our spend down and allows us to help more residents. The measure of quality being our incredibly low-rate failed discharges compared to other authorities like I have said, it is vital that we deliver high quality preventative care to stop people being escalated into more intrusive measures because ultimately, we all want to keep the people of Thurrock healthier for longer.

Mayor

Councillor Polley do you wish to pose a second supplementary question.

Councillor Polley

No thank you.

9. Question 9 – Due to Councillor Duffin sending his apologies this evening, a written response will be provided.
10. Question 10 – Due to Councillor Collins sending his apologies this evening his question has been resubmitted to July Council.
11. From Councillor Raper to Councillor Johnson

Councillor Raper

What advice, guidance and support are being provided for those parents and families affected by the imminent closure of the Little Pirates and Neptune nurseries in Tilbury?

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

Thank you, Mister Mayor. Councillor Raper, can I point you to my responses to questions 4 and 5 which I think explained exactly what support were offering now and exactly what we're going to ensure now and ensure sufficient places on offer going forward. So maybe you would just like to go to your supplementary.

Mayor

Councillor Raper do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Raper

Yes, I would please Mister Mayor. How many of the Tilbury children currently attending the closing nurseries do you expect to find new places in their hometown.

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

Thank you, Councillor. Thank you, Mister Mayor. As I reiterate this is a statutory duty, everybody will be offered a place, that's our statutory duty.

Mayor

Councillor Raper do you wish to pose a second supplementary question.

Councillor Raper

No. I would like that question answered because I want to know specifically about the families in Tilbury.

Councillor Johnson

I have no other answer other than we have a statutory duty and they will be offered places.

Councillor Raper

Now that we are losing our council staff how can we guarantee other providers will be able to give children access to the standard of experience and quality that they have had in the two nurseries that are closing.

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

Thank you, Councillor. Thank you, Mister Mayor. All staff will be checked as our own staff are, we wouldn't let anybody just go working in places. All staff have to be checked by DBS and we will ensure that the correct level of experience is within those private nurseries. I mentioned earlier in about the way we have the child care sufficiency officer assesses this demand insufficiency you know I have said in there what this council does we work with prospective providers to identify suitable premises, we work with them to encourage to participate in the 30 hours, support them to offer our access around care for working parents, we continue to provide business and finance advise to child care providers to ensure they understand the costs involved in opening and running these settings. We are on top of it, we will ensure as I said that we do have a statutory duty and those children will be offered places in respectable areas.

12. From Councillor Kerin to Councillor Johnson

Councillor Kerin

Can the Portfolio Holder please outline what the Council is doing to support the families affected by the imminent closure of the Little Pirates and Neptune Nurseries in Tilbury?

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Kerin perhaps I would say to you my responses to questions 4 and 5 explain exactly what support we are offering now and what support we are offering in the future perhaps you would like to go straight to your supplementary.

Mayor

Councillor Kerin to you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Kerin

Yes thank you Mister Mayor, I'm sure the portfolio holder will be aware that back in November when the Children's Overview and Scrutiny held an extraordinary meeting it was put to the meeting that currently Tilbury Riverside and Tilbury St Chads do not have sufficient childcare places and there is a need to create more in both wards so my question is how does the close of these two nurseries help with the aim of providing more child care places in Tilbury.

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

I gave a specific answer about the closure of these two particular nurseries, they were untenable, we could not run them, we were haemorrhaging I think around £200,000 every year just on these nurseries alone. It was untenable. Regrettable decision, but the correct decision to make. The statutory duty says we have to offer places, we will offer places. I don't know how else to answer this. I just feel I am saying the same thing over and over again. I wish I had different answers for you but you're asking the same question I don't see how I can give different answers.

Mayor

Councillor Kerin to you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Kerin

Yes, please Mister Mayor. Now. With regards to those places, we've heard tonight in reports about how important it is to encourage people to walk to school, to not drive, all those sorts of things to try and help with the air quality and things like that. So, with all the current placements the children are going to nurseries in Tilbury how many of the children that currently going there will still be able to walk to their childcare provider once these closures have happened.

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

Thank you, Mister Mayor. Thank you, Councillor. Through our statutory duty we will ensure that these children are given places within a sufficient distance from where they are, Now, yes, we have been encouraging people to walk, we are trying to do it with schools right across the borough, let alone nurseries. But you know as well as I know it's not easy to make parents to do it but we are trying to so all those kind of things will be taken into consideration when places are offered but as I said they will be offered places, we have no choice, it's not that we don't want to, we will anyway.

13. From Councillor Polley to Councillor Johnson

Councillor Polley

Following the recent Care Review of Children's Social Care and the National Safeguarding Panel review of child protection can the Portfolio Holder tell us about any preventative whole family work that children's services are currently engaged with?

Mayor

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson

Children's Social Care implemented a Think Family approach as our new operating model in April this year, building on the effective and long established 'whole family' approach used by our Early Help services. This is in line with findings from the National Review and Safeguarding Review with practitioners assessing the needs of all family members and co-ordinating multi-agency interventions and intensive support at the earliest possible stage. Feedback from parents and partners is helping shape this way of working which is strengths and relationship-based which in turn complements existing practice models. Regular Family Network Meetings starting from the initial assessment will help families to problem solve and develop safe family plans. There is a continued focus on engaging with fathers or significant adult males, children on the edge of care, and families before they enter care proceedings. The aim is to increase the number of children who can remain living safely within their connected family networks diverting children from becoming looked after or entering court proceedings which is obviously a last result. In addition, in April 2022 Thurrock was one of 75 local authorities eligible to join what is known as the Family Hub and Start for Life programme. This programme reflects our strong Think Family ambitions, and we are currently reviewing our Early Help offer alongside partners to determine how best to deliver the funded elements of the Family Hub programme. We are

also mapping existing provision for young people and speaking with parents, young people and partners including voluntary services to ensure we are able to provide a comprehensive and relevant offer for them. Something I might add which was found to be very interest to other parties from a recent peer review. In short councillor we are putting our services to the test in attempting to engage with the families in need at the earliest possible stage which we are convinced with help Thurrock be at the forefront of children's social care and in particular that of social care in particular that of safeguarding.

Mayor

Councillor Polley would you like pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Polley

No thank you.

Mayor

No, thank you very much.

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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 were no questions to the Leader and 13 questions to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Member appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee.

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

1. From Councillor Redsell to Councillor Spillman

Would the Portfolio Holder for Housing advise what further steps have been taken since the resident's consultation on the future of Blackshots high rise flats?

2. From Councillor Little to Councillor Duffin

Can the Portfolio Holder explain the reasons the Council has chosen not to engage with Nub News please?

3. From Councillor Muldowney to Councillor Coxshall

Can the Portfolio Holder tell the Chamber what this administration intends to do with the land known as Flat Irons Field opposite Cole Avenue?

4. From Councillor Mayes to Councillor Johnson

Can the Portfolio Holder update me on what the plans are for nursery placements for children who are affected by the closure of the Little Pirates and Neptunes Nurseries in Tilbury?

5. From Councillor Pothecary to Councillor Johnson

What is the Portfolio Holder doing to ensure there are sufficient numbers of childcare places in Grays Riverside?

6. From Councillor Pothecary to Councillor Maney

What action is the Council taking to tackle problem parking and littering in Clarence Road, Grays?

7. From Councillor Byrne to Councillor Huelin

The previous Portfolio Holder said he was happy with all things related the Corringham IMC, do you share that view?

8. From Councillor Polley to Councillor Huelin

Would the Portfolio Holder please inform members what measures are being taken by Council to ensure Thurrock residents are discharged in a timely, and as important, safe manner. Given the immense pressure M&SE hospital trust is experiencing.

9. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Duffin

When does the Portfolio Holder expect the external auditor to sign off the Council's accounts for the year 2020 - 2021?

10. From Councillor Collins to Councillor Hebb

Can the Portfolio Holder advise what the administration's position is in regard to the Civic Offices being occupied in post-COVID context?

11. From Councillor Raper to Councillor Johnson

What advice, guidance and support are being provided for those parents and families affected by the imminent closure of the Little Pirates and Neptune Nurseries in Tilbury?

12. From Councillor Kerin to Councillor Johnson

Can the Portfolio Holder please outline what the Council is doing to support the families affected by the imminent closure of the Little Pirates and Neptune Nurseries in Tilbury?

13. From Councillor Polley to Councillor Johnson

Following the recent Care Review of Children's Social Care and the National Safeguarding Panel review of child protection can the Portfolio Holder tell us about any preventative whole family work that children's services are currently engaged with?