

Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 28 September 2016

Item 6 – Questions from Members of the Public.

Two questions were submitted from members of the public.

1. From Mr Jackson to Councillor Tolson

With an increasing number of Heavy Good Vehicles using Thurrock's road network and a linked decreasing air quality (in recent years illustrated by increasing Air Quality Monitoring in the Borough). Will the Council introduce a Low Emissions Zone for Thurrock, following the lead of many neighbouring London Boroughs? Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Tolson, could you please respond.

Councillor Tolson

Thank you Mr Jackson for your question, and I just wanted to say that it's not normally this warm in here but it seems very warm again this evening. As one of the elected Members of Thurrock Council, we're all concerned with the pollution that comes into our society and we want the area in our Borough to be as clean as we can possibly have it. Just off the top of my head I think we've got two tunnels coming into Thurrock, a bridge going out, two ports, an A13. So, in light of that, Thurrock Council is developing an Integrated Air Quality and Health Strategy for Thurrock outlining our approach to reducing harmful emissions and reducing exposure. There's a document coming to the November Cabinet, sorry not Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny meeting, I think that's chaired by Councillor Barbara Rice. So that's a public meeting that you can go to if you wish, or if you want to put a question forward, because I know that it's something you feel strongly about, you might be interested in that. Regarding the Lower Emissions Zone, there is some work we're doing around that and it's one of the things that we're reviewing to see whether there's going to be impact or advantages for our Borough, so that's something we're going to do as well and we're going to start a feasibility study shortly and the results of that should be ready about January time.

Mayor

Mr Jackson, do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

Mr Jackson

No, I'll leave that there, thank you very much.

Mayor

Thank you. Question number 2, Mr Perrin could you please come to the designated area and read your question out to Councillor Tolson as set out on the Agenda? Sorry I apologise, the question is to Councillor Gledhill not Councillor Tolson. Sorry

2. From Mr Perrin to Councillor Gledhill

Mr Perrin

Thank you, Madam Mayor. My question is Anti-social behaviour is invariably a traumatic experience for the persons being transgressed against, particularly when it appears to be taking an inordinately long time to resolve. Could you tell me how long, on average, a case of anti-social behaviour takes to conclude?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill, would you like to respond to the question please?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you, Madam Mayor and thank you, Mr Perrin, for your question. I couldn't agree more. Anti-social behaviour is blight; it takes far too long and it affects people, not just the one person is affected but also the neighbours and in my opinion does take a little bit too long to deal with. However, the Council's Housing Enforcement Service has three anti-social behaviour categories. They're Category One which represents the most complex cases, Category Two which are medium level and Category Three which are the lower level. Over the past year Category One took an average of 61 days from start to finish to deal with, Category Two took 54 days and Category Three took 37 days.

Mayor

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

Mr Perrin

Thank you, Madam Mayor and thank you, Councillor Gledhill so far. I asked the question because, in my experience and probably the experience of elected Councillors, it seems that most cases involve long, drawn out procedures, which you have outlined there, which all too often cause prolonged distress and frustration to those being transgressed against whilst allowing transgressors – I shouldn't have used all these long words – to continue with their anti-social behaviour. I acknowledge anti-social behaviour can be complicated and evidence is required to justify the complaint which can take time, but there are cases where the evidence is so obvious e.g. the parking of cars in so-called "communal gardens", which could also be

considered a breach of the code of conduct contained within the Tenancy Agreement, meriting immediate action by the Council. Would you meet with officers of the Corporate Complaints Team tasked with handling complaints of anti-social behaviour with a view to adopting a more robust approach, especially where there is an obvious breach of a Tenancy Agreement Clause?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you, Madam Mayor and thank you, Mr Perrin. Again, you're quite right some of these cases do take too long, but you're also quite right that sometimes it does take a long time to get sufficient evidence to be able to move forward with the case. I was only made aware of what you're discussing earlier on today and I've spoken to officers and I'm not particularly happy with perhaps the time it took to respond to that. I'm more than happy to meet with the Director for Housing, indeed I'm meeting with him tomorrow to discuss the way forward on a number of issues of housing and this is one of them. Obviously the Corporate Complaints Team deal with the complaint itself they don't actually deal with the anti-social behaviour, but I shall bring this up with him tomorrow and as soon as I get a level of satisfaction with the outcome I shall certainly let you know in this case, and indeed what we will be doing to reduce the time it takes to process anti-social behaviour claims and indeed breaches of tenancy. It's not right that our tenants continue to breach tenancy rules, they're there for a reason and they need to be adhered to, if they want to stay in social housing they have to abide by the rules.

Item 12 – Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 10 questions 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, 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

1. From Councillor Jones to Councillor Gledhill

In light of the events of the weekend of the 30/31 July, regarding the King Of The Road travellers pony and trap racing on the Manorway public road Corringham, and further to the scrutiny work and recommendations of Cleaner Greener & Safer Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 5 September 2016 can the Leader let me know what measures are now being put in place or considered to prevent such activities being repeated. Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you, Madam Mayor and thank you, Councillor Jones for your question. Madam Mayor, unfortunately I won't be able to keep this brief, there are five parts of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer recommendations that will need to be addressed to answer the question in full. I'm sure the Chamber will agree that they do not want to see a repeat of what happened on 30/31 July. I know Councillor Jones and other Members joined together to show a visible response of how Thurrock Council were against this, I myself spent an excessively large amount of time on the telephone or via email with the Chief Executive and with the Police and Crime Commissioner and various police officers trying to jolly them into action. The Police did have sufficient force on the day to enforce the action that was outlined, unfortunately they didn't, they apologised for that and I will come to there as it forms part of the five-point plan thereafter. Cleaner, Greener and Safer met in September and discussed this event and from that they came up with five recommendations.

Thurrock will implement measures at its disposal to prevent a reoccurrence. The Highways team has worked quickly to put in a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order for the Manorway which effectively makes it illegal for trap racing to take place. The TRO prohibits any horse-drawn carriages from travelling along the Manorway, from Stanford Interchange to Corringham, sorry, Coryton refinery access from Saturday 24 September to Friday 23 December. We have done this in consultation with the Police who are now able to enforce against any breaches. Since then I have asked officers to progress this to a permanent Traffic Order for the Manorway. If this is

possible a period of traffic, sorry, of public consultation will take place in line with the regulations and I would hope residents will see the benefit of this and support that action when and if we can take it.

Recommendation Two; Police and Council work in partnership to prevent the reoccurrence. In light of the above and following the intelligence shared with the Police and the Council, sufficient Police resources were made available to arrest anyone in breach of the order, the TRO, over this weekend. The organisers of this illegal event had been made aware this and they've protested to the Police, have said that the Council were acting unfairly. My response to this is simple; tough. We will not tolerate illegal activity in Thurrock and making threats to disrupt traffic across the Borough until they get their own way will not wash with me, it doesn't wash with the Chief Exec' and I hope it doesn't wash with the Police too.

Recommendation Three; Introduce a possible Public Space Protection Order on the Manorway. As mentioned I've asked officers to look at making the temporary traffic restriction order permanent, and also to look at other stretches of the highway across the Borough where this may be used. If this is not possible we will then look at a Public Space Protection Order to put in place. We've done this and it has worked well in West Thurrock with the boy racers, I cannot see how it should be any less effective against trap racers.

Recommendation to look forward, sorry, to look for road management options to prevent this. We have to remember this is a major route; it helps serve the Port and other businesses. Putting features in the road such as bollards, cattle grids, chicanes etc. will cause traffic to slow permanently on this Arterial route. Regular road traffic should not have to put up with this and more importantly, our tax payers should not have to bear the burden of the cost, so this will only come as a last resort. If this is the case we will make sure everyone is notified in advance in line with road traffic regulations and that they are proportionate.

Finally, a working protocol with Police and Council be prepared to tackle this problem; this has already been done. Indeed, in principal agreement was made on the Monday after the trap racing took place and it has been used a number of times since for reasons not just of the race but of other traveller incursions and it has worked well, even long past midnight on some occasions when I've been still in conversation with the Chief Executive and the Police to make sure that the unauthorised encampments are being moved along across the Borough.

Separately, this issue was raised at the Essex Leaders and Police Crime Commissioner's round table meeting on Monday. The meeting was to discuss the issue of travellers and I am pleased to say that we are now looking at helping to look for a County-wide solution to prevent this popping up elsewhere in the County, not just within the borders of Thurrock. Thank you, Madam Mayor.

Mayor

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

Councillor Jones

Yes please Madam Mayor, thank you, Madam Mayor. Thank you, Leader, for your answers. Now, many residents and local businesses requested that I do ask that question, simply because the travellers have indicated that they do intend to come back for more pony and trap racing. They approached DP security staff as to ask who was responsible for the land that backs onto the burger stall on the Manorway. Fortunately, this land, that is iron-latched, that is DP World's temporary lorry park and fortunately they had moved all of their lorries out of that site and secured the gates. Now, Saturday was a very frustrating, long day and then we find that the travellers want five more races on the Sunday, much against Council's will. Now it was disappointing that the Police went ahead with their meeting minus any Council staff as to put any input in and decided to, shall we say, give the travellers what they wanted and give them five races. Now, I must admit it was made public knowledge about the meeting on 1 August, on Monday, and I was totally disappointed at not being invited. I appreciated all the support I got from the Councillors down there and I had total respect for Stephen Metcalfe for turning up and we had a few discussions down there. But as not to be invited to that meeting on Monday when I was the first Councillor down there at 7:30, I was the first Councillor to raise the alarm, I was the first Councillor that see first-hand the mayhem that was going on, I was the first Councillor that spoke to the Inspector at the time that was organising, shall we say, the convoys backwards and forwards and I was the only Councillor that attained a dispersal order as to point out that on Saturday and Sunday this shouldn't be, because I was told by the Inspector at the time that they was caught out and they expected it to be on the Sunday and I said "no" and I supported...

Mayor

Councillor, sorry, can you make sure you ask a question.

Councillor Jones

Yeah, I'm sorry Madam Mayor but this is important for residents of my area. So, I would like to know why wasn't leaders or deputy leaders invited to that meeting, or local Councillors, on the Monday and who made the decision? Thank you.

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you, Madam Mayor and thank you, Councillor Jones. On the whole I do agree totally with your frustration. The day, it was quite clear the Police had the correct powers and dispersal order, they had sufficient units there to deal with it across the Borough, sorry across the County, all ready to go and they chose not to. Holding a meeting on Saturday where I was told I would be

going along, which took place without my knowledge, indeed my attendance, wasn't particularly happy with that either. They did agree to come and meet the Council, myself and Stephen Metcalfe on the Monday, and that went ahead. It did go ahead without yourself or indeed Members of Labour, it just felt necessary that I was there; I was fully aware of all of the issues and problems, not only from stuff that had come from yourself but also from my Councillors as well and other residents and that took place in that way. I apologise if you do feel put out by this and I can understand your frustration. If it had been Little Thurrock Rectory and I wasn't the Leader, I think I would feel probably a little bit the same. We hope that this will not happen again, we have a Traffic Restriction Order that would hopefully prevent this, and if it doesn't it is solely on the Police to deal with this. If it gets to the point where this does happen again and we do have to have another meeting, I will ensure that you are invited as Deputy Leader of the Opposition, or indeed Councillor Snell as Leader of the Opposition, to make sure that this is a round table discussion in the same way that both John (*Kent*) and Councillor Barbara Rice will also have the extension to them as well.

Mayor

Thank you. Councillor Jones, do you wish to ask a second supplementary?

Councillor Jones

Thank you, Madam Mayor. Thank you, Leader, for your answer and thank you for feeling concerned as to why I wasn't invited. Now, when the Springhouse Road traveller encampment first turned up, they broke in on, they come in on was it Park Road, and basically a convoy turned up, a young lad jumped out of the truck, they broke into the gates and that's how they got in there. They was making the residents...

Mayor

Councillor, sorry, I'm sorry to rush you but we are running out of time. Can you ask a question please?

Councillor Jones

Well, basically there was a lot of anti-social behaviour there on that site. My question, have you changed your opinion on the statement you made that criminalising travellers for their way of life is not the right way to go, after all these events that's gone on in Thurrock? Thank you.

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you, Madam Mayor, and when people have stopped flapping their school books I shall answer it. Yes, there was criminality that allowed the travellers to take occupation of Springfield Park, which was wrong, the Police should have dealt with that, indeed since then they've been using Section 61 very effectively to move travellers on so this does not happen again. That

includes where they've caused criminal damage. My statement in relation to criminalising the traveller way of life remains as is; we cannot criminalise the way of life of a group that is protected under the Discrimination Act, it is simple, we cannot do it. What we can do is to ensure that where criminality does take place, irrespective of whether it's travellers, irrespective of whether it's an elected Member in this Chamber, irrespective of whether it's any other resident of the Borough, whether they're coming into the Borough as visitors or whatever, criminality will not be tolerated and the Police should deal with it as they are entitled to. But we cannot, and I repeat, we cannot criminalise a particular ethnic group for their illegal actions, we can prosecute them for their illegal actions.

Mayor

Thank you. Councillor Duffin, could you please read out your question?

2. From Councillor Duffin to Councillor Gledhill

Councillor Duffin

Does the Leader of the Council believe that the Council has sufficient legal powers to deal with unauthorised traveller sites in Thurrock?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Again, this is a, unfortunately because of the type of question it will be quite a long answer. It is not a simple "yes" or "no" answer question, Councillor Duffin. Local Authorities have a wide range of powers to deal with unauthorised traveller sites and they are outlined in full at the Dealing with Illegal and Unauthorised Encampments paper issued on March 2015 as amended. These include: temporary stop notices, injunctions against unauthorised encampments, licensing of caravan sites, licensing of tent sites, possession orders, interim possession orders, local bye-laws that enable the Council to suppress noise nuisance etc, parts of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act which allows the powers of arrest and seizure of property, such as caravans where these bye-laws are broken, addressing obstructions on the highway, planning contraventions, enforcement notices, and retrospective planning notices, stop notices, breach of condition notices, powers of arrest, sorry powers of entry onto land and there are a number more in relation to accumulation of rubbish and public health.

On top of that the Police have three extra powers to direct unauthorised encampments to leave land and powers to direct trespassers to alternative sites and offending squatters in residential buildings to be arrested. This list obviously includes where travellers purchase land and build without prior planning permission, however it does not include the creative use of Public

Space Protection Orders such as things as no overnight parking of vehicles for the purpose of accommodation in this area where it's been a problem in the past I would use Kevitt's Field as a prime example of that. You will remember that when I asked for Council to look at gaining an injunction similar to that of Harlow to prevent unauthorised encampments, that's now going forward. I also made clear that a large conversation needed to be had across Essex to give the provision of transit sites; this would then allow the Police to use extra powers to move on encampments as small as one vehicle with two occupants. I also said that a wider conversation should happen soon. True to my word, that happened on Monday with other Essex Leaders and I was really pleased to see that other Essex Leaders felt exactly the same as I do, the powers that are there are wide and varied, unfortunately the powers that are there are still up for abuse and they need to be tightened. So yes they are sufficient, but no they're not adequate enough to deal with real life situations as we've seen in Thurrock and indeed right across the whole of Essex and probably the entire Country, and we will be asking Government to change and tighten up these regulations to stop this abuse, and it is wholesale abuse, from the travelling community and make it much easier for both Local Authorities and the Police to do their job, to protect the settled community.

Mayor

Councillor Duffin, do you wish to pose a supplementary?

Councillor Duffin

It's interesting that you've said you're going to ask Government to do something because Councillor Piccolo wrote online "it's not a priority of any major political party", and you yourself earlier were saying with regards to these changes, and the changes we're asking for is when on Council land it takes seven days to move on, the Council is left with the clean up costs that is the law change we're after, and your comments "I don't think criminalising someone's way of life is the best way to go about it" – do you honestly think that someone's way of life is to unauthorised break onto sites and set up caravan sites? Because if that's what you think is their way of life then you don't understand what these people are doing. We're not talking about criminalising all traveller sites, we're talking about the unauthorised ones, so why is your position still that you don't want to criminalise it because these changes, as when I spoke to a Council Officer confirmed they would allow for much quicker moving on of unauthorised sites is not your idea. You seem to be welcoming that it takes seven days and the Council pays for the clean up. Is that still your position that you want the Council to pay for clean up of these sites?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you, Madam Mayor. As someone just heckled, it is the law as it is, hence I'm asking for it to be changed. No, I do not agree that travellers should have, or anybody should have, the right to go onto public land and leave it an absolute state where it costs us £6,000 to clean up on average on every incursion. But not every incursion leaves that kind of rubbish, not every incursion is on public land, there are horrible ways to get around this, parking on verges for instance doesn't mean we can use those kinds of acts is another part of the regulations that usually takes even longer but since we've had this meeting with the Police following the incident with the trap racing we now have Essex Police using Section 61 powers to move travellers on in matters of hours, not days, not weeks, but hours. It's sometimes even less than an hour and we've got to have credit to the Police for actually thinking outside of the box, working with the Council and actually taking the bull by the horns on this and making it very unpalatable for certain members of the travelling community to make our place a mess. You're right, unauthorised traveller encampments need to be moved on, there is the law already there, it just needs to be tightened. I know you're not happy with that, and anyone can see the frustration of both you and myself when I'm standing in front of a bunch of travellers that said "I've just left this place nice and clean and tidy" and I'm looking at a pile of rubbish about a foot high and about three foot wide, you know I've got to wear glasses but I'm not blind. I've been to some of these sites where, quite frankly, the sum of the human waste left is disgusting. This kind of action cannot be tolerated, but we've got laws to deal with that we just need to make sure they're tighter and they're enforced and that will stop this from happening. On the flip side of that we need to make sure travellers have somewhere to go. As Councillor Aker has suggested, and I've suggested in the past, we need these transit sites. We need to have a grown up conversation and need to be non-parochial about this; we need one in Thurrock, they need one in Southend to comply with Section 62 of the Police and Criminal Justice Act, Essex need however many Essex will need. That needs to take place. When that takes place it will make it so much easier to stop this from happening. This is no different to the HGV problem that again you experience in Aveley, we can't move them on...

Mayor

Councillor, please.

Councillor Gledhill

Sorry, Madam Mayor.

Mayor

No Councillor, Councillor please. It's 8:21 – we've got half an hour, you've had over twenty minutes already, we've only done two questions. Please can I ask you all too just ask your questions and to just answer the questions that

are asked and not carry on with lots of waffle. Do you have a second supplementary Councillor?

Councillor Duffin

It's obvious to see that now your view has changed from the moment you gave the comment to the Gazette where you said you didn't want a law change now you're saying you do want one, so can you confirm at what point you changed your mind from "no law change" to "law change"? Because I think residents deserve to know.

Councillor Gledhill

Sorry, Madam Mayor I did not turn my mic off. I'm going to have to make it very clear and very short again. I have not said there should not be a law change, I've said the law it needs to be tightened. (*heckling in background*) If you're going to interrupt this it is going to take longer, Councillor Duffin. It's going to need to be tightened, not changed. It's going to need to be improved, not thrown out with the bathwater and started again, and criminalising everything as your party wish to do. Thank you, Madam Mayor.

Mayor

Thank you. Councillor Kent, would you like to read out your question please?

3. From Councillor John Kent to Councillor Gledhill

Will the Leader of the Council explain the process for agreeing Thurrock Council's submission to the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission?

Councillor Gledhill

I will keep it much shorter than the answer that I got previously, Madam Mayor. In the budget of 2016 the then Chancellor announced the Thames Estuary Commission would be created. On 7 July myself and Councillor Hague attended, with other Commissioners, a river trip along the Borough. On 14 July the Commission launched its growth plans and a call for ideas which were heard first hand at the Olympic Park and that had to be submitted by the deadline of 9 September. During the summer we worked closely with Partners, I will not list them there are a number of them, and on 7 September the draft report was presented to members of the Governance Group, which is the three Group Leaders, for that to be finalised and submitted on 9 September.

Mayor

Thank you. Councillor Kent, do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

Councillor Kent

Yeah thank you, Madam Mayor. The Governance Group I didn't attend as I wasn't in the Borough, do you really think that that is an appropriate forum for signing off and getting agreement for a document this important? And I'll just give, if I can, one specific: this document says, agreed as I understand by the Group Leaders who were at the Governance Group so that's Councillor Snell and Councillor Gledhill, that Thurrock Council believes that Thurrock has the physical capacity to deliver 20-30,000 new homes by 2036. Can I just ask where Councillor Gledhill believes that we can put 30,000 new homes?

Councillor Gledhill

Well, obviously some people must have been asleep when we covered this point earlier in Councillor Coxshall's report. We have not got specific sites at this time, and indeed this is an idea paper that was presented to Lord Heseltine, not one of those that's Policy, not one of those that's going to be a way that the Council's going to do and certainly not one of those that's site specific, that's very clear obviously reading the entire document, Councillor Kent. Indeed, perhaps if you had been there at the meeting you could have asked that question and it could have been answered or indeed amended to make it a little bit clearer to anyone reading it. Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Kent, do you wish to pose a second supplementary?

Councillor Kent

So we are told a statement that says "the Council believes that Thurrock has the physical capacity to deliver 20-30,000 new homes by 2036" is nothing more than an idea or a fancy. I'll move on. We're told that the Council recommends a review of Local Government boundaries across South Essex to create greater scale and influence, better Policy integration, decision making agility and delivery capacity. It says Thurrock Council would support a Government and business led review of Local Government boundaries in South Essex that review must have at its heart the purpose of creating a form of Local Government that effectively unites the interests of communities and businesses across South Essex. It has to be agile and nimble enough to drive and respond to growth...

Mayor

Councillor, could we have the question please?

Councillor Kent

...which can be put in place and deliver a single vision and plan for one of the most important economic growth areas in the UK. Madam Mayor, I have to ask is that nothing more than the idea of creating a single Unitary Authority for

South Essex that would stretch from Thurrock to Southend? And if so, how do we then deliver on what we all want to see, decisions on housing numbers and other things for Thurrock taken in Thurrock by Thurrock people, not people from Rochford, Castle Point or anywhere else?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you, Madam Mayor and as I put earlier, these are ideas and things that are being put forward to deliver better across all of the Local Authorities in the Thames Estuary area. We will need to be working much, much closer. Should that be larger Unitary Authorities, plural? Maybe. Should that be one larger Local Authority, Unitary Authority? Maybe. Should that be a kind of second tier working, like we have in London? Again, maybe. I can't reiterate this enough, these are ideas and plans to see how well they will go. We cannot make that decision on our own; there are other Local Authorities that are involved in this. Southend are of a slightly different view, from their point of view, obviously we have a few districts in there that would need to break away from the Essex County Council to do so. This is a whole thing, it's 2050 this will be delivered, we can sit here arguing about my new shy and sit here arguing saying "well how is Thurrock going to be better off than somebody else?" It's not about Thurrock being better off; it's about the Thames Estuary, the whole of the Thames Estuary being better off. We have taken the brunt so far of a lot of the housing, some of which has not been high quality, and some of the industry, some of which is obviously causing health problems in later life. We need to make sure that is spread right across the Thames Estuary. We need to make sure that people in Rochford take their fair share in the same way that we would be taking our fair share of improvements in highways infrastructure and improvements in housing and improvements in health. If someone is against that then maybe they should step down and let someone else take the role of Councillor who really wants to make something better for not just Thurrock, but the whole of Essex and the Thames Estuary.

Mayor

Right, I will now take questions that have been submitted to Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs. Councillor Duffin, can you please read your question?

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

- 1. From Councillor Duffin to Councillor B Little**
(Answered by Councillor Gledhill in place of Councillor Little)

Is the Portfolio Holder aware that residents including parents with buggies are forced to walk in the road, around the blind corner on Silvertown Avenue and Thors Oak because people are parking on pavements and may I ask what, if any, action is the Council planning to take to stop this?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill, can you answer the question please?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you, Councillor Duffin and I can sympathise with your residents and indeed yourself, we have a similar problem in Little Thurrock Rectory with inappropriate parking forcing a number of disabled and elderly residents to have no alternative but to walk or be pushed along through the road both day and night on a very bad lit corner. However, the Council does not have a Traffic Regulation Order in place at this site at the moment; consequently the enforcement of obstruction of the highway falls to the Police. This matter has now been flagged with Officers at the Council's Traffic Team, I understand you did this very early on in your term of office, and they will now go back to investigate whether further parking restrictions are appropriate. But in the meantime, I'm sure you'll join me in urging all users of the road to think pedestrian and park considerately. A good acid test for all of them would be "could my most elderly relative be able to negotiate the road now I've parked where I've parked?" If the answer is no, they need to get back in their car and park somewhere sensible. So let's make a big request out to the people that are parking inappropriately, not just here but across the Borough, think pedestrian and make it safe for everybody not just convenient for you. Thank you, Madam Mayor.

Mayor

Thank you, Councillor Duffin do you have a supplementary?

Councillor Duffin

Yeah, thank you very much for your answer. Could I just ask that the Council look at the process, the way of doing it because it was one of the first three bits of casework I put in and I was told it takes six months to review whether it's safe for a parent to walk in the road with a buggy, which I just think is a bit silly really. So, is there any way to just speed up the process in future to make it easier for everyone else?

Mayor

Councillor?

Councillor Gledhill

Obviously I can't speak for Councillor Brian Little on this but I really share your frustration. You know, it's going to be the point where somebody is seriously injured or killed and that is wrong, especially when the Local Authority is aware of this. It makes the liability a little bit more on us and that is wrong, so yes I will be speaking to Councillor Little to make sure that this is on the agenda for further action.

Mayor

Councillor Stone, would you like to read your question please?

2. From Councillor Stone to Councillor Coxshall

Thank you, Madam Mayor. How many days was the cafe open at Grays beach during the last 3 months?

Councillor Coxshall

I'm going to make this short, zero.

Mayor

Councillor Stone, do you have a supplementary question?

Councillor Stone

No.

Mayor

Okay, Councillor Watkins?

3. From Councillor Watkins to Councillor Halden

Thank you, Madam Mayor. Could the portfolio holder for education, please inform me what steps are being taken for sports at all schools in Thurrock?

Mayor

Councillor Halden?

Councillor Halden

Thank you, Madam Mayor. The Council actually supports the Daily Mile which is a terrific scheme that the vast majority of our primary schools are now undertaking. We're continuing to support schools in that vein. Councillor Watkins has lobbied me very successfully over the last few months in regards to healthy living choices within schools. A paper will be coming to the Cabinet in October outlining how all of our smoking cessation, weight management and other contracts will be streamlined into a new service that will be predominantly targeted at school-age children and the tender will be built around the need to engage with schools to help young people make positive changes to their lives to make sure we break generational issues of health inequality and sports are a key part of that.

Mayor

Thank you, Councillor Watkins do you have a supplementary?

Councillor Watkins

I do, thank you Madam Mayor. I'm glad you mentioned the Daily Mile, obviously it's an important and very clever initiative that's actually been actioned across the Country. Can I ask the Portfolio Holder please to ensure that going forward obviously that we have all of our schools in some capacity doing the Daily Mile? I know that some of our schools currently do, but obviously if we could try just try and branch it out to all our schools it is a great way for not only improving the health of the children in our schools but also helps in their concentration, in their mood and their behaviour as well.

Mayor

Councillor Halden?

Councillor Halden

Thank you, Madam Mayor. I will certainly continue to push that and one of the things that I'm proud that this Administration is doing as part of my lobby group, myself and the Director of Service met with the Regional School's Commissioner today where we discussed the Council's support for Free School bids which included a number of our excellent Academies like William Edwards, a specialist Sports Institution. Making sure there's more great sports provision linked with education in the Borough is a top priority of this Administration.

Mayor

Councillor Watkins, do you have a second supplementary?

Councillor Watkins

I do, thank you Madam Mayor. I'd like to thank you as well, as you mentioned in your first statement, for obviously listening to some of my ideas and making sure they get actioned into Policy as well. I'd like to comment on the fact that I believe we have got a fantastic number of sporting groups across the Borough. They range from a variety of different activities, we have American Football, we have football, we have golf, we have rugby, we have cricket. I do believe though there's a great way to introduce greater participation across the Borough...

Mayor

Councillor, can we have a question please?

Councillor Watkins

Yes, okay. Would the Portfolio Holder please, I request that he sits with me and discusses with me potentially introducing an interactive map whereby we are requesting and allowing those communities and sports groups to come to us and discuss what actually they are doing? We can put those into an interactive map, on the website whereby residents can go forward and find out what sports are taking place.

Mayor

Councillor Halden?

Councillor Halden

Thank you, Councillor Watkins, for your question. I believe he has made that request of me in the past and I believe that is something that we are already actively working on as part of our SEND agenda to ensure that sports is available for all children, including those living with disabilities. That is in addition to a meeting that Councillor Watkins joined me at today with one of our larger multi-Academy Trust Sponsors as we are considering how sports education can be further incorporated into schools to help deal with Mental Health issues amongst young people and self-esteem issues.

Mayor

Thank you. Right, I'm afraid we've run out of time, so the other questions answers will be in writing to Councillors. Councillor Spillman?

Councillor Spillman

I'd like to ask an important question about the Citizen's Advice Bureau, to be honest.

Mayor

No, I'm afraid we're out of time. Sorry Councillor, I did ask you to be brief with your answers and questions because of the time constraints.

Councillor Gledhill

Sorry, Madam Mayor just as a quick Point of Order, some Members may not know that they can withdraw their questions now to re-submit them rather than just receive a written answer so perhaps that might need to be pointed out to them.

Mayor

Okay.

Councillor Spillman

Yeah, I'd like to withdraw my question and resubmit then.

Mayor

Okay, Councillor Stewart?

Councillor Stewart

Thank you, Madam Mayor. Councillor Spillman, if you want to talk to me just outside I'll be happy to talk to you about it.

Mayor

Councillor Smith?

Councillor Smith

Yeah, I'd like to withdraw question 9, please.

Mayor

Okay. Councillor Cherry?

Councillor Cherry

If I can withdraw my question and re-submit it? Thank you

Mayor

Okay, are there any other Councillors that want to withdraw their questions? No? Okay, so we will withdraw those, the other questions will receive written answers.