

Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 25 October 2017

Item 6 – Questions from Members of the Public.

8 questions were submitted from members of the public. 1 question was withdrawn by the member of public himself.

1. From Mrs Imamzade to Councillor Halden

Can you tell us how far you have gone with the agreement and plans for the new Integrated Medical Centre in Tilbury. We desperately need this to improve the very poor health outcomes for Tilbury and Chadwell residents?

Mayor

Councillor Halden

Councillor Halden

Thank you Mr Mayor. I'm delighted to say this space will be in the ground next year. I remember several years ago, I think it was 2015, when I was an opposition Member sat on the Health Scrutiny Committee, we took the GP estate plan. I remember writing to the Chair of CCG (Clinical Commission Group) after that saying can we actually speed up and move to implementation. Obviously I was disappointed when I had gone, when the Leader gave me this Cabinet position to find there were no capital plans in place. There were no designs in place, there was literally nothing. There was just a concept but we said we was going to get started, we had. July this year, I took the plan to Cabinet that was approved to a) agree the principle at the Council where I'll just force the issue and take direct control and build it ourselves. And secondly, that we would appoint a design team and we went out to tender that team and we formally appointed them in September this year. So now we have the design team in place. That's also in addition to the extra work we done in the area, that Councillor Coxshall has done with the Tilbury Town master plan to make sure that we're not just plonking a new medical centre in the middle of Tilbury. That we are looking at how that can lend itself to the wider regeneration of the area. Obviously, a slight health warning to this, once we begin the process of building the medical centre, this is still dependent on NHS procurement, NHS England. For all Members who have tried to work with the NHS before, are not the speediest folks in the world. However, we've had lots of preliminary conversations with them, they've been intimately involved in the process and the NHS is very supportive in what we are trying to do in Tilbury, the CCG are fully signed up to the idea, so yes, the space will be in the ground next year and we are chugging forward. I'm very pleased to be able to say that.

Mayor

Thank you. Mrs Imamzade, do you have a supplementary question?

Mrs Imamzade

Thank you Councillor Halden. We know that Jackie Doyle-Price is in favour of closing Orsett Hospital, are you? *(Mayor advises Mrs Imamzade that her supplementary question will not be accepted as it does not relate to the initial question. He leaves it up to the Portfolio Holder to decide whether to answer the question or not).*

Councillor Halden

I'm aware I have a question about Orsett Hospital this evening from the Labour candidate for Stifford Clays. I will come onto Orsett Hospital later. What I would say, is that one of the things that perplexes me, well actually, presses me about Members opposite, I've announced that I will spend between £15 - £20 million in Tilbury building a modern medical centre that will be one of the biggest investments that the people of Tilbury has ever had for their medical services. It breaks years and years of log jam and what's more, it's not just about the quantity of services, it's about the quality. We passed my GP standards plan last year to ensure that the people of Tilbury don't just get new facilities. The existing GP facilities are held to account and forced to improve and if they are not treating the people of Tilbury in the way that they deserve, we have got a clear plan in place to help those GPs improve. It does confuse me that we can announce we're improving quality, we're spending a tremendous amount in Tilbury, we're going to start building these medical centres next year and the Party opposite finds or attempts to find a way to attack me. I do salute the inventiveness that takes because that's quite a stretch in terms of such a good news story for the people of Tilbury into an assault. I admit, I don't have that creativity, if I did, I'd probably be an author.

2. From Mr Jackson to Councillor B Little

Can the Portfolio Holder for Transport provide a high level transport plan that supports 32,000 new homes within the borough of Thurrock that does not add additional burden to the 17 air quality management areas already identified in 2016?

Mayor

Councillor B Little

Councillor B Little

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Mr Jackson for your question. The Council is currently reviewing its Local Plan. As that Plan progresses and preferred locations for new development eventually become identified, infrastructure plans to assist in the proper delivery of that growth will be progressed in parallel that will include transportation needs related to specific locations where growth is agreed, as well as Borough wide transport needs. The Local Plan will be subject to a full environmental impact assessment which will address a wide range of issues, including air quality. We are not at

that stage in the process as yet, but I can assure you that the need to undertake this work is fully recognised.

Mayor

Thank you. Mr Jackson, do you have a supplementary question?

Mr Jackson

Thank you Councillor Little. Just a quick supplementary question. Will the Portfolio Holder for Transport support trams in future transport needs?

Councillor B Little

Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you for your supplementary question. I will look at reviewing the need and support, anything that will help this borough in the future but it needs to be something engineered in a meaningful way.

3. From Ms Blake to Councillor Gledhill

Where does the Leader of the Council propose to build 32,000 new homes in Thurrock?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Ms Blake for your question. You will have to excuse a bit of the pre-waffle but it is important. The future growth of the Borough is a very important issue for all residents and businesses. Housing development is an integral part of that growth not least to provide new houses to meet the considerable needs of demographic growth and change in the Borough. A significant part of that growth is driven by existing residents and businesses. Since the original regional assembly imposed 18,500 homes on us in 2001, Thurrock has been very successful in creating the jobs that were put in at the same time. Unfortunately, we've not been as successful with the new homes. The way that we currently create new homes is to assess it in relation to the amount of the growth that we have through business growth. Now, when we get to the point where we have 32,000 homes, we then need to go through a local plan stage to dictate what type of properties they will be, propose where they will go, go through consultations with residents and through Members of course. We are not quite at that second stage yet.

The location of those new houses will be determined through the Local Plan which will be shaped through several stages of public consultation. The first stage of consultation took place in February 2016. The second stage which is called Issues and Options will be considered by Council soon before going to consultation. There will be a further two consultations before it is submitted in

2019. Now, all three groups have already had one look at the proposals. I've asked for a lot more information, the very second we have that and we're in a position to move to announce that, we will do at Full Council.

Mayor

Thank you. Ms Blake, do you have a supplementary question?

Ms Blake

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Will it be beneficial with the building plan for these houses if the Lower Thames Crossing is approved and opens up the green belt land?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you for your question. It makes absolutely no odds. The requirement for the 32000 homes comes from the growth we already have and already planned irrespective to whether the Lower Thames Crossing, which every single Member in this Chamber still remains in objection to, happens.

The Mayor asks Councillor Gledhill to clarify Group Leaders have had sight of the last consultation for the new homes. Councillor Gledhill believes this was done through each individual party group meeting.

4. From Mr Towlson to Councillor B Little

Further to my question to the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Councillor B Little on the 27 September 2017 and on reading the Thurrock Transport Strategy for the period of 2013 to 2026 what reassurance can the Council supply to disprove my belief that it will fail to deliver on the 'Health and Well-being' and 'Protecting the Green Environment' aspects of the Strategy due to possible further massive road expansions, the requirement of further housing and as it has also been claimed by the Portfolio Holder for Education and Health "that there was only so much the Council could do on their own"?

Mayor

Councillor B Little

Councillor B Little

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Mr Towlson for your question. The council is committed to promoting Health and Wellbeing and Protecting the Green Environment as part of a programme of sustainable managed growth. The forthcoming Issues and Options 2 consultation on the Local Plan will consider all aspects of infrastructure development within the borough and their cumulative impact on the environment and this will inform the proposed adoption draft for consideration by the Planning Inspectorate. With regard to

significant road expansions, the council continues its opposition to a possible Lower Thames Crossing through Thurrock as mentioned previously. As we are all aware this scheme is being developed and promoted by Highways England and that the council is a statutory consultee. The council has established the multi stakeholder Lower Thames Crossing Task Force to ensure full and transparent scrutiny of all environmental impacts associated with this project and will actively engage with the development consent order process to ensure as far as possible that adverse impacts are fully mitigated.

It is true that the council will not have the definitive say on whether Lower Thames Crossing and other infrastructure of national significance is allowed to be delivered in Thurrock. However, by ensuring that council stakeholders are fully sighted on all relevant environmental impact evidence, provide challenge where necessary, and are empowered to fight to ensure that adverse impacts are mitigated in line with global best practice, we will do everything within our power to support the aims set out in the 2013-2026 Thurrock Transport Strategy.

Mayor

Thank you. Mr Towlson, do you have a supplementary question?

Mr Towlson

Yes I do Mr Mayor. As a Thurrock resident and Chair of a local community forum, I would like to congratulate Thurrock Council on receiving a recent award for an innovative action of fitting cameras to refuse collection vehicles. A simple idea but costly. Can I please request that we now stop undertaking surveys, monitoring, analysing, discussing, meeting etc., which has been going on for many years and just take some action on our well known concerns? Let's show the rest of the UK that Thurrock does act and not be seen as thinking, I quote, 'thinking we may take action at some time Council'. I will consider an answer is not sufficient at this stage.

Councillor B Little

I believe I wasn't asked to answer but I will do. Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Mr Towlson for your supplementary question. What I would like to say is that, as an authority and the reasons that we receive awards for doing things is that we do them in a way which is based on getting information, getting data, presenting a case and getting funding delivered to us sometimes, not from a begging bowl because we're desperate but because we need things to happen in a certain way. We can only do that by progressively putting together information that supports our requests and that information can come from something that has been asked of us to have a look at, like pothole spotting for instance. It can come from us going into the new level from two to three of H Met which is the new highway maintenance efficiency programme. If we don't do these things, we are penalised by government which is right because they're giving us the money to do some repairs and do things in a

professional way. If we don't present the evidence in a professional way, we won't be able to get that money. Not only that, we will start to lose funds.

5. From Mrs Pegley to Councillor Coxshall

At the last public Council meeting it was stated that 32,000 homes were to be built in Thurrock, can the Council tell me please where is the land situated to build these houses?

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall

Councillor Coxshall

As the answer was just given, the future growth of the Borough is a very important issue to all of us here who live, work, including people who run businesses in Thurrock. The next stage is called Issues and Options 2 which you've just heard and will be presented to Council very shortly ahead of the consultation. I hope that this plan receives cross party endorsement as just for the purpose of the consultation to make sure we hear from residents across the Borough. Throughout this wide consultation, which will underpin the local plan, in its broad locations for where the new housing growth can be located will be brought forward at that time.

Mayor

Thank you. Mrs Pegley, do you have a supplementary question?

Mrs Pegley

Can the Council provide guarantees that these properties are intended for the people of Thurrock and not just to meet the demand of the overspill from London?

Councillor Coxshall

If the 32000 house document has been out there for a little while now, just before the summer. In that, it breaks down where this number is coming from and how we've arrived at the 32000 houses and how many houses, 1300 or so per year for the 20 years. That comes out from really, 75% of that is houses in this Borough. There's 11% really for inward because we've had 70,000 jobs, predicted growth in jobs, people are going to get inward migration to this Borough. That's a positive, that 11%, because it's really important to us. We've done such a good job that people want to come and live in Thurrock. Now, I'm not going to stop people doing that because I'm proud of this Borough and want to make sure this Borough is and now it's been a beacon of growth. So we can't stop job growth, I don't want to stop job growth. And then there's another interesting fact that I heard today. We're the last big housing expansion that built Ockendon in the 50s from when Harold

Mcmillan was a Housing Minister then he went on to the Prime Minister, we're now building hundreds , thousands of houses per year. This is a big undertaking to take across the country and Thurrock's got to play its part in this next big housing expansion. But 60 years ago when that was built, 2.5% of people lived on their own. Now, the current people, that is now at 12.5%, live in separate lives. That's a massive strain as well of that 75% on our living circle. We live separate lives now, that means there's a 15 – 20% extra houses we're going to need, just to support the new way people live. So, we can't just stop and get off, we've got to think about this and that is why the consultation is critical. We've got to move forward and actually got to have a sensible conversation on where we want these.

Councillor Gledhill requested that the order of the last two questions were adjusted to wait for Councillor Watkins arrival.

6. From Mrs Watson to Councillor Halden

Can the Portfolio Holder confirm from his correspondence with health partners what the process and timetable will be for consultations on the future of Orsett Hospital?

Mayor

Councillor Halden

Councillor Halden

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Mrs Watson for your question. The consultation will launch this year. As I've said in answer to the previous question, NHS England are good at many things, speediness is not one of them. They've decided they want to roll several consultations across the country, all into one period. The stipulations we demand as a council is we want a clear 12 week consultation period. We don't want a short consultation, we want a good consultation where people can respond. We also want a very clear dedicated Orsett consultation so people don't have to wade through all other things to find the Orsett section and unless my directives correct me, these are the stipulations. Now the process itself, Basildon and Thurrock University Hospital own Orsett Hospital so they are, essentially, the people who are asking to consult. The consultation is prepared in conjunction with the Clinical Commissioning Groups because obviously they are the people who commission the services out of Orsett hospital. From there, it goes to a third stage still, once a consultation has been written, NHS England have to sign off that they believe is sufficient and robust conversation and the clinical centre get involved to satisfy themselves that clinical issues are actually easily being explained to the public. And in the fourth stage still, HealthWatch which is an independent third party advocacy body and our Health & Wellbeing Overview Scrutiny Committee, are both statutory consultees, totally independent from the process. They will both get their opportunity to comment both on what is being proposed but also they will be able to comment on the robustness of the consultation itself. So, it's really a very full process as I have

said many times in the past as Portfolio Holder for Health. We work very hard with Basildon Hospital and with all partners, NFELT, EPUT, whoever the new mental health arm used to be called, SEPT, CCG and other partners to solicit the assurances that no clinical services will leave Thurrock. If changes were to take place at Orsett, no services will leave Orsett Hospital until brand new modern facilities are built for those services to go into. Those are the assurance that we've been given and those are the assurances that we are still working to. Of course, I'm happy to answer any supplementary you may have.

Mayor

Thank you. Mrs Watson, do you have a supplementary question?

Mrs Watson

We know the MPs are in favour of closing Orsett Hospital but Orsett at the moment is working full capacity with the consultants at Basildon and with clinics holding their surgeries there. How confident are you that following the closure of Orsett Hospital that the three walk-in hubs that you are proposing will meet the needs of the Thurrock residents?

Councillor Halden

Thank you Mr Mayor. First of all, it's going to be four brand new medical centres, not three for a start. Secondly, as I've already said, that, as I've said in the past, what you need to remember about Orsett Hospital is that there are no overnight beds. The last tour I had around Orsett Hospital, they showed me all the empty rooms, they showed me the huge amount of space that was used for storage. I might be wrong but I've got a figure off the top of my head which is about 46% of Orsett Hospital is not used for anything clinical. So when people talk about Orsett Hospital, it's misnomer, there are no overnight beds, vast majority of the site is not even used. To bring the site up to modern standards would be in the region of £10 million so I'm not in favour of constantly protecting a building that is out of date. What I'm in favour of is protecting the clinical offer in this Borough and I'm very clear in the Cabinet Holder responsible for health. We have got a deal, it is signed. No Thurrock clinical services will leave Thurrock. Nothing will change at Orsett until new facilities are built. So literally, the consultation, we are talking about consulting over a building. I am confident that all the health partners, not the Council, all the health partners, the CCG, the mental health hub, NFELT, they are signed up to the same principle that I signed in May of this year. All clinical services staying in the Borough, no changes happening until brand new modern buildings are fit and ready to accommodate those services. This is a good new story for the Borough and what I would finally say, and this is an important point, that I've already answered one question this evening when supplementary automatically set wage into a Member of Parliament for Thurrock. Your supplementary did the same thing. I'm aware you're the Labour candidate for Stifford Clays, I don't wish you luck but I do wish you well. I know it's a stressful experience standing for election for the first time.

What I would say is, and I caution my Labour colleagues opposite, before you launch your 'Save Orsett Hospital' campaign, no clinical services are under threat. Tens of millions of pounds we used to build new buildings for those services to go in so before you launch a campaign that is based on lies, I would just remind you that lies are very, very easily beaten by the truth. And I do caution you all.

7. From Mrs Parker to Councillor Watkins

Can I ask the Council, if they will be tagging bins again which for whatever reason were not collected? It appears this is currently not happening, and it can help residents understand why bins were not collected.

Councillor Gledhill provided a response on behalf of Councillor Watkins.

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Mrs Parker for your question. I apologise that refuse collection isn't my strongest point. I get it done every week, it's not magic it happens and I'm grateful we are doing exceptionally well in doing so. The short answer is yes. It will take some time to get these tags organised. Councillor Watkins can talk at length about the education process we need to put in place, certainly for recycling residents know what we can and can't recycle, what needs to go in each bin. I think it's for every 11kg each household saves; we end up with £35,000 worth of savings. So getting that right every single time is important. Every contaminated load costs the council tax payer money, it costs us time and of course means we don't start reaching our targets for recycling. So as I say, yes is the short answer. It will take a number of months to get these organised to make sure unlike the last time, they remain stuck to bins and not wash off in the rain. And those are tagged on a weekly basis to identify why they are wrong and why their bins haven't been collected. It's very clear and a record is kept so if there are repeat offenders, they can be contacted direct by the waste department to explain what they should and shouldn't be doing in relation to their waste.

Mayor

Thank you. Mrs Parker, do you have a supplementary question?

Mrs Parker

Thank you Mr Gledhill. I would like as well to ask a question. Is it possible that there could be more street bins made available in every ward, some as well in Stifford Road near the schools? Which I hope will keep the area looking cleaner.

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Mrs Parker for your supplementary question. Yes we are currently going through a bin review. We are installing a number of trial, different types of bins and as I have cracked the same joke before, I'll crack it again, we are using big belly bins which I have absolutely nothing to do with. It is a style of bin from a company, nothing to do with me. This is a bin that will compress rubbish up to three times smaller than what we currently get. It's smart enough to actually let the Council know when it's ready to collect. Putting these bins obviously around the street in the Borough will help to collect more waste and spend less time in picking it up. That will free up the current bins we have to put in strategic places where we do see the accumulation of rubbish. This will obviously be tied in with further enforcement as I have said, 2800 tickets issued so far since December last year. It's a carrot stick approach, we'll put the bins there, if you don't use them, you'll get a ticket. But yes, it is part of the bin review.

Item 14 – Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 4 questions had been received to the Leader of the Council and 2 questions had been received to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Member appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee had been received.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

1. From Councillor Gerrish to Councillor Gledhill

Will the Leader be apologising to all residents affected by the confusion and chaos surrounding the 'Grass Tax' implementation?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor, I will try to keep this short Councillor Gerrish. I apologise my answer may answer some of the supplementary so I do apologise in advance. The short answer is no. I made the position perfectly clear at the last full Council, the Grounds Maintenance service charge has been temporarily suspended and all tenants affected have been written to explaining this. Housing Scrutiny Committee will be overseeing a fundamental review on both the principle of a charge and how it might be fairly implemented. I understand Scrutiny had a useful discussion on the matter at its meeting on 17th October. The review will report back to the next Housing Scrutiny meeting in December and I look forward to hearing their recommendations.

Mayor

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

Councillor Gerrish

Thank you Mr Mayor. Yes. The particular element of confusion and chaos that I was referring to was around the fact that some residents seem to have still been billed. It's obviously a concern to me that many residents having been told that they wouldn't need to pay and those that payments would be suspended but none the less, they see some money coming out of their account. Could I ask what questions did the Leader ask Officers about the ability of the Council to adequately halt the payments including direct debit payments and what advice was he given? Thank you.

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Gerrish for your questions. As you eluded to those effected were mainly on the BACs system including those on direct debits. I was fully aware both professionally and advisable Officers that you require ten days in which to cancel a request of payment from anyone under the system. Which meant that those on those payment methods for the 1st and 7th following month would be charged and their accounts accordingly adjusted for their next instalment whenever that would be. That still remains the case. If that isn't the case, I would like residents or indeed yourself, to contact me to take this up with Officers. There is a scheme within the direct debit authority that should the person that takes the money via that system has done it incorrectly, I believe they can claim a £10 compensation accordingly.

Mayor

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

Councillor Gerrish

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor Gledhill. If he is, in that case, or if he was in full awareness of the fact surrounding the inability to cancel that charge, does he think that perhaps on reflection if you've made that clear to residents when you gave your statement last month?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor Gerrish. If I did admit it, I do apologise for that specifically. I would apologise individually to any resident who has had that money and weren't fully aware that that was the case. Also, my understanding was that part of the letters would have outlined this. Again, if that wasn't the case, I profusely apologise again on that particular part.

2. From Councillor Jones to Councillor Gledhill

Would the Leader insist that members of Grays police station attend this year's remembrance service at Grays memorial and stop the traffic for the minutes silence out of respect for all service personnel that have served and lost their lives fighting for Great Britain in many conflicts over the years.

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Jones for your question. Firstly, I have to make clear that Essex Police have been in attendance to lay wreaths every remembrance service. I've attended since being elected and did indeed before. I have spoken to Essex Police on this matter and can confirm that the Deputy Chief Constable BJ Harrington and the District Commander Richard Baxter, will both be in attendance and will lay wreaths at this service. In addition there will be a representative from Thurrock Community Policing Team laying wreaths across all services in Thurrock. You must remember that Essex Police lost 76 of their officers during the wars and of course, it is close to their heart. Now moving onto the traffic control, I'm told Essex Police wrote to the Council in 2015 outlining they will no longer be supplying officers with road closures and it will be the event organisers to deal with this. As such, our Parking Services Team will be on standby for this service. Attendance in the service appears to be increasing, something to be pulled year on year so we have to make sure our residents are safe at all times. That's without, obviously, showing the due respect that everyone should be showing on that special day and special time. I can confirm that following last year's service, I've asked the Council to cordon off the loading bays, the parking bays on the southside carriageway going from the memorial itself on Orsett Road to Cart Lane. This will better allow the Mayor to take the salute from the parade as it leads off Thameside complex. I'm please to say that officers will be there from 8 o' clock onwards and would ask the shops that they tell their customers not to park up. Equally, the barriers on the High Street will be closed and there will be a minimum of three enforcement officers on site to deal with the process. Hopefully, that will ensure a peaceful and adequate parade.

Mayor

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

Councillor Jones

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Leader. I wasn't having a go at the police, I know that they've got lots to do with the restrictive number they've got, I know they've got lots to do. Basically, I attended a memorial on the 17th of

September this year, with the Mayor. I was very embarrassed with the going ons there. There were no police, once again, the road wasn't stopped. We had many distinguished guests there that day, veterans, we had three lots of air cadets – Basildon, Grays, Stanford, and at times, I felt it was embarrassing. I didn't think this was the way that Thurrock should portray itself. So thank you, that you know, someone's going to be closing it.

Councillor Gledhill

Just very quickly. Councillor Jones, just to be fair, I know you wasn't having a go either at not having the police attending or not laying a wreath, you know they do it every year. I wasn't at that particular service, I was out of the Borough on that day, I've heard some of the horror stories and yes, that's not the standard that I would hope to happen at Thurrock whenever. Obviously, I'll be dealing with the highways team to ensure that they co-ordinate with all the exterior groups within the Borough that deal with these types of parades to ensure this doesn't happen in the future. As an aside, we're also going to make sure the trees are properly cropped this year so our Union flag doesn't get tied up as it's lowered at the memorial.

Mayor

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

Councillor Jones

No, Mr Mayor.

Members agreed to suspend standing orders to 10pm to finish the meeting.

3. From Councillor B Rice to Councillor Gledhill

Does the Portfolio Holder for Housing agree with me that it is only with the go ahead for the New Thames Crossing that he will uphold his commitment to 32000 new homes in Thurrock?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Rice for your question. To be honest, I read the first nine words and thought the answer was going to be no anyway. Surprising enough, I was right. No, I do not agree with you that the 32000 homes is dependent on the Lower Thames Crossing. I believe this has already been answered once this evening from a very insightful question from a member of the public and I don't intend to take up too much of Members' time reiterating what I've just said.

Mayor

Thank you. Councillor B Rice, do you have a supplementary question?

Councillor B Rice

I do and I'm really pleased about the Portfolio Holder's answer which is he doesn't agree and I think that's absolutely great and so will the residents of Thurrock who don't want another crossing in Thurrock. We will look forward to the plan coming forward to this Council with no reference points to junctions on or off the proposed new crossing and no settlements based on this premise. So thank you very much Mr Mayor.

Councillor Gledhill

It's a statement and I'm not going to take up time so thank you very much Mr Mayor. But there is an agreement there Councillor Rice.

Mayor

Thank you. Councillor B Rice, do you have second supplementary question?

Councillor B Rice

No.

4. From Councillor Pothecary to Councillor Gledhill

Would the Portfolio Holder for Housing commit to reviewing the new caretaking arrangements for the six High Rise blocks in Grays as residents remain unhappy with the level of service provided?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and I do apologise, this answer is actually going to be a long one for a good reason. No is the short answer. This is the long one, this week, both the Assistant Director and I made one of our regular estate visits across the whole of Seabrook Rise. We visited every high rise block selecting floors at random and checked the stairwells and open spaces surrounding them as well. During the visits, we spoke to a number of residents including a former member of the caretaker staff, all who said they were happy with the caretaking service they paid for. I'm not saying the blocks were completely litter free but what little litter etc., that we did find was clearly no more than about 24 hours old. On checking the housing records, there have only been two complaints about the caretaking service from residents, none from elected

Members and nothing flagged up as a cause for concern by the Housing Management Team. I would like to make clear, there's been no reductions in the service provided following the recent changes to include the echoes following Councillor Allen's petition. But what we did find from our inspections and speaking to residents was that they were not happy with some of the stairwells being used for smoking, drinking alcohol, toilets or indeed drug taking. This, we will be reviewing.

We will also be writing to remind all tenants that they cannot store anything outside in the communal areas or leave large bags of rubbish for the caretakers to remove. These are clear recommendations from the fire service for their own safety but equally, it does not help the view of the neighbours and visitors when they themselves visit the hallways or indeed, our council staff operating to keep the areas clear. I would like to take this opportunity to pass on my personal thanks to the caretakers who work on six high rise blocks – Samantha, Michael, Martin and Scott and to their previous and current Team Leaders – Rob and Paul, who were absolutely great on our inspection. They are doing really great work and are not backwards and coming forward with suggestions on how they work, how their work could be made easier and where problems exist, how they could actively encourage people to make that change. So, instead of keeping these issues bottled up and waiting until Full Council to bring them, perhaps take a leaf out of their book, speak to me, speak to the Officers and don't delay in these things. Because the longer they delay, the more that it festers. Thank you Mr Mayor.

Mayor

Thank you. Councillor Potheary, do you have a supplementary question?

Councillor Potheary

Yes. Ok, so I have been in contact with Members Enquiries several times over lots of different issues so I don't know how Councillor Gledhill, you can make that claim but, never mind. Ok, so we've had blocked bin chutes, we've had blood left unwashed, we've had piles of cigarette butts in the car parks and these are things we've had photographic evidence of in some of these cases. Residents, there are still some residents who feel there is not a gold service being delivered here. And there is a discrepancy between what council office records are showing and how some residents are feeling. To what my question is, to try and move this forward in a constructive manner, is how is caretaking work evaluated, assessed and supervised and how could residents be involved more in this process?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Potheary. If our gold service, which residents pay for, isn't being delivered, then they should contact the service immediately. They shouldn't hang about and wait for next time they see a Councillor on the street, that includes myself, they shouldn't sit there and fester at home thinking nothing will ever get done. I don't like the idea of

seeing pools of blood anywhere. I don't like the cigarette butts building up. I don't like rubbish accumulating, nobody does. However, this stuff doesn't come from anywhere, some of it does come from residents, some of it from tenants. So, they need to take that active role themselves, to make sure they're putting their rubbish in the bin rather than just throwing them out and reporting to us, the anti-social behaviour that is happening in the stairwells, that is happening in the car parks and in some of the lower landings. There is a number they can contact on all of the noticeboards, there are a number of numbers they can contact immediately and I suggest that they do so. And in that way, we can take immediate action. As to how it's evaluated each day, the operators that clean the flats, have a long checklist to tick to show that's what they've done. They've seen we've just gone round to check that at random, as we've seen this week, both the Assistant Director and I will go round to see as well. But as I say, if residents are not happy with the gold service they are paying for, they must contact us straight away so we can then start taking the action. Building up a body of evidence, all that's doing is leaving a problem there that will fester and fester. Just get on and clear with the problem straight away, it will improve the service no end.

Mayor

Thank you. Councillor Potheary, do you have second supplementary question?

Councillor Potheary

I wasn't going to but yes. Ok, so I think this is part of the problem, is that residents are reporting these things. And I think also they are feeling that if there is a caretaking service there that they are paying for, that the caretaker doesn't necessarily have to be alerted to the fact that there is a problem that should just be part of their, sort of, ongoing work. What I would ask, is I'd ask you to reconsider the question I just asked, which is how residents can be more involved. Short of reporting things because they're already doing that, but how can residents be more involved in how that service is kind of put together, how that service is assessed on a kind of broad level?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Potheary. My apologies, I kind of see a bit more of where you're coming from there. One of the best things any tenants can do is start a tenants group. It doesn't have to be a mass tenants group covering the entire estate, it can easily be for the block or a group of landings. This is the kind of thing where they can get together, discuss the issues, come to us as a tenants section panel that they can apply to join, bring these issues forward. And again, collectively, they can see where the problems lie, collectively, they bring them to our attention and we will correct them where we possibly can. We do believe that tenant participation is the one best way to change tenant perception in any council accommodation so I strongly suggest that. I can certainly get one of our Officers to draft

something up to put on the boards and indeed, deliver to each property if necessary to show how that can be facilitated.

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

1. From Councillor Liddiard to Councillor Coxshall

Can the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration please explain why Tilbury was excluded from the grant funded scheme to improve shop fronts?

Councillor Coxshall

Yes. Some of my colleagues asked did I plant this question for you. You are correct. It is excluded from the fund and I'm sorry to say that it was excluded by the Labour administration in 2013. Shame yes. It was deemed, not warranted to be part of the scheme and it was approved by Cabinet later in that year to exclude Tilbury. Both Tilbury wards. I must say, if I may ask as well, did you actually make any representation to your colleagues or the Cabinet Members at the time to actually include that? But not to worry, I noticed this and we've actually made, we've asked, we're making good on Labour's mistake again in Tilbury. And we've put a bid together and submitted it to the community led local development project to cover Tilbury riverside and Tilbury St Chads. We expect to know the answer later this month or next month at the latest. And if approved on the bid, we'll add in to the Tilbury fund and they will be able to get the shop fronts done. I have to say again, from 2010, we been saying for the Members of Parliament and all the Councillors at any level, that Tilbury needs some love and the Conservatives are going to deliver that. My answer is, any Tilbury Councillor, if they want to come over, we're the ones delivering for Tilbury for no political gain, not every day, every entire week, not just at election times.

Mayor

Thank you. Councillor Liddiard, do you have a supplementary question?

Councillor Liddiard

Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you Councillor Coxshall. So we can expect all 60 shops in Tilbury to get your support for shop front funding then, can we?

Councillor Coxshall

Absolutely. The same way as the same they can apply in Grays, Stanford, we're going to make it to Tilbury. I have no earthly idea why Tilbury was taken out of the campaign when it was under Labour administration. As I've said, I've got no idea why it wasn't, it's crazy, that one high street was excluded and that Tilbury was. I can only think it's because no one cares about Tilbury. The Conservatives love Tilbury and we're going to give some love to Tilbury.

Mayor

Thank you. Councillor Liddiard, do you have second supplementary question?

Councillor Liddiard

No, thank you Mr Mayor.

2. From Councillor Okunade to Councillor B Little

The ASDA roundabout in Tilbury is becoming very congested, particularly between 4.30pm and 6.00pm. Does the Portfolio Holder for Transport have any plans to tackle this?

Councillor B Little

Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you Councillor Okunade for your question. The asset in question falls within the Highways England's remit, and is currently undergoing detailed scrutiny in relation to proposals for Tilbury 2 port expansion. The Council will continue to work closely with Highways England to monitor the capacity at this location.

Mayor

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

Councillor Okunade

Thank you very much for that response. My supplementary question is that the Tilbury Masterplan has been widely circulated on social media and the potential increase in road traffic has given rise to deepen concerns regarding air quality. What assurances can the cabinet member for Transport give that the air quality will be measured and what action taken if results show dangerous levels.

Councillor B Little

Thank you Councillor Okunade. Thank you Mr Mayor. Yes you mentioned the Tilbury Masterplan which is obviously the proposal going ahead but Tilbury 2 is within consultation period it is a development consent a national strategic area and will have consultations going on and environmental analysis being done on that as it is going forward.

Mayor

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

Councillor Okunade

I know that Part 6 of the new Masterplan for Tilbury is reconstruction. With the current issue that I mentioned I know you did say that it is Highways England but with the current issues with congestion on the roundabout. The envisaged traffic from Tilbury 2 and the slip road from the tunnel. So I am wondering what additional road building will be considered to deal with additional traffic.

Councillor B Little

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Okunade for your second supplementary. Environmental Impact Assessments will be carried out with Tilbury 2 and with other things that are going around on the area, or possibly others stuff that is going on around in the area, and I believe that will start to generate mitigations for issues that are around and any of these potential developments that are going ahead.