

## Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 30 June 2021

### Item 6 – Questions from Public

Question 1 was removed from the agenda.

#### 2. From Mr Perrin to Councillor Maney

Can you tell me the Council's current policy regarding parking of vehicles on pavements and grass verges?

**Mayor**

Councillor Maney

**Councillor Maney**

Thank you for your question it certainly feels like normality is returning when we can receive an answer questions from Mr Perrin and its most welcome. I know that pavement parking and verge parking is an issue of concern to Mr Perrin and indeed it is to many residents in the borough but I think I would be stretching it if I said we had a policy around that per se and the reason I say that is because neither pavement parking or verge parking by themselves are decriminalised or enforceable activities that the Council can take action in relation to pavement parking is a matter for the Police if it causes an obstruction and the Police have the power to intervene. The same applies to verge parking. In terms of what we can do as a Council as I say we cannot directly enforce against that but if somebody's parking on a walkway or grass verge alongside which there are other restrictions such as double yellow lines we can ticket the vehicle. We can introduce physical measures like bollards or tree planting in isolated cases and we can do that but as I say we can't really have a policy around something we don't have direct powers of intervention. So I don't want Mr Perrin to think that his concerns, I know he hasn't expressed the yet, but he has in the past I don't want him to think that his concerns, were deaf to his concerns but unfortunately until the Government does give us more direct powers of intervention we are very limited and as I say we don't therefore have a policy as such. Thank you Madam Mayor.

**Mayor**

Mr Perrin do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

**Mr Perrin**

Thank you Madam Mayor but I'm afraid I didn't hear one word of Councillor Maney's reply so therefore I can only ask a supplementary question which is this is not the first time I have asked the council about the problems created by vehicles being parked on pavements and grass vergers somehow I feel that will not be the last. I understand there may be a special need for vehicles to park on payments but the safety of pedestrians must override the special

needs. With regards to drivers parking their vehicles on grass verges and green spaces the do so simply because they can, the result of this antisocial behaviour is unsightly mud puddles in winter and bare patches in summer. My question is will the Council commit to protecting grass verges and green spaces or does it intend to tarmac them all and turn them into parking spaces. These areas cannot sensible be both grass verges and parking spaces.

## **Mayor**

Councillor Maney

## **Councillor Maney**

What I said in my first answer is that the Council has very limited powers of intervention. The legislation that exists around pavement parking and virtual parking does not allow the Council to directly enforce against that activity. I can assure you that the Council won't be tarmacking over every grass verge because we don't have the money to do it but even if we did you're not preaching to the, I've said it before and I'll say it again I regard verge parking specifically as a form of anti-social behaviour, I simply do, I don't think that I understand that in many roads there are parking pressures and people think they have no alternative but I think if you actually look carefully there are rarely any excuses for verge parking notwithstanding what I've just said that there are not direct powers available to the Council allowing us to intervene. I'd be lying that there had I hadn't been in frank conversations with officers because it's my personal and unprofessional view that although there aren't directly legislative provisions that allow us to enforce against verge parking there are laws out there that could be used to tackle it in certain circumstances and I'm speaking very carefully because as I say sometimes there's been a different of opinion between myself and officers sometimes they've come around to my way of thinking. All I can say to you is because I care so much about it I am looking a I say I'm not a lawyer, I'm not a highways engineer but as a lay person as a councillor I'm looking at that I think is out there in terms of legislative provisions and my personal view is there are things we could do. All I can say is watch this space, it won't be easy because as I say if there are laws we could utilise, they are not specifically in relation to verge parking or pavement parking but they may be able to be used in a way that cover that activity in circumstances, certain circumstances. I hope and pray the Government keeps making noises Madam Mayor that they are going to extend powers to local authorities to actually enable us to directly enforce. If they did I for one would want Thurrock to utilise those. We want Councils to utilise those so you know through fear of speaking too much all I'll say to you again is although we don't have specific powers of intervention there may be things we can do. I personally think we can were looking at it and if we can act in certain circumstances it won't be a blanket approach but if we can act in certain cases I would very very very much encourage and support that kind of intervention as portfolio holder. Thank you Madam Mayor.

## **Item 15 – Questions from Members**

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 2 questions to the Leader had been received and 10 questions to Cabinet Members.

### **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

1. **Question 1 was withdrawn.**
2. **Question 2 was withdrawn.**

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

1. **Question 1 was withdrawn and resubmitted to September Council.**
2. **From Councillor Potheary to Councillor Jefferies**

During the recent strike by refuse crews, what was the total cost of operating seven bring sites, hiring additional agency staff and using private contractors?

#### **Mayor**

Councillor Jefferies

#### **Councillor Jefferies**

Thank you Madam Mayor, thank you Councillor for your question.

So the total cost for waste collection was approximately £109k. This included the cost of all seven bring sites, hiring of agency staff, private contractors, euro bins, trade waste and the additional assisted collections that we put on.

#### **Mayor**

Councillor Potheary, do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

#### **Councillor Potheary**

Yes please Madam Mayor and I'd just like to take the opportunity to welcome Councillor Jefferies to his position because I don't think I've quite had that chance yet. So we've had a cost of over £109,000, it's obviously a lot of money, could have paid for a lot of services. But my second supplementary question is going to focus on a freedom of information request published on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July that suggests that the controversial changes to paying conditions would have saved around £800,000. Why in that case did the Council claim repeatedly during the strike period that it wasn't a cost saving

measure and would not deliver savings? I'm referring to press releases and briefings.

**Councillor Jefferies**

Thank you Councillor. So the changes to pay and conditions and the negotiations that took place were instigated by this group and what we wanted was to see some changes in working practices. But one thing that we were adamant about was that there would be no loss of pay for any of our staff so they would not come out of the negotiations on the other side with a loss in pay. So it wasn't a cost cutting measure. It was about bringing working practices up to date to provide a better service for the residents of Thurrock.

**Mayor**

Councillor Potheary, do you wish to pose a second supplementary question?

**Councillor Potheary**

Yes thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Jefferies for your response. So at this point we have – sorry it's really difficult not being able to actually see you as I talk to you. And so we have contradictory statements being made across the piece. One minute there aren't any cost savings, next minute we find out it's £800,000. This is either a case of the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing. Or you know there's been something that's been deliberately misleading for the residents of this borough. Let's be honest, the Council – this strike arose because of the Council's mismanagement of this this proposal who made a complete hash of it. You've mismanaged the communications and actually put out misleading communications on occasion. Residents had to spend five weeks lugging their rubbish around the borough and you're still struggling to catch up and get bin collections back to normal. And other services in cleaner greener are still trying to recover. Is it any wonder that residents and staff are losing faith in this administration's ability to deliver a functioning refuse service?

**Councillor Jefferies**

Thank you Councillor Potheary. Let's be honest, this strike was politically motivated by the unions and the Labour party in Thurrock to try and influence the votes. At the local elections it failed. It failed and I look around at all of the Members from the Conservative Party. In particular, I can't see him because of these screens, Councillor Adam Carter, first Conservative Councillor elected in Chadwell, during a bin strike. People ignored the politicising of our services. We, I repeat, we as a group said no one should lose any money. That's what's happened. We've had a change in working practices, bringing us up to date, bringing us a modern service, a modern bin collection service. That's what we've got at the end of this strike.

**3. Question 3 was withdrawn**

#### **4. From Councillor Worrall to Councillor Spillman**

Thank you Madam Mayor. Let's hope that we go back to a bit of normality and not rudeness.

Following recent local elections where all political parties pledged to provide more social homes for Thurrock residents could the Cabinet Member for Housing provide the chamber with his plans for tackling this election pledge?

**Mayor**

Councillor Spillman

**Councillor Spillman**

Yes I've never been rude to Councillors and I'm not going to start now. So it's obvious that we need to build homes not just something in this borough. It's something across the country. I've spoken to the officers involved, I've asked them to come back with some seriously ambitious plans. I'm very much in favour of bringing Thurrock Regeneration Limited forward. I'm in favour of building homes with secure tenancies. I'm also in favour of building houses to sell on right to buy schemes as well because there are too many people living in their parents' house working full-time who deserve to be able to get on the housing ladder and that's also going to be one of the key parts of the programme I'd like to bring forward. I also want to see some more partnership working with private sector looking for some more work with housing associations, looking into different kinds of builds as well modular builds as well. We've got a very exciting bid for some modular builds which I hope to be able to bring September Council some information on that. So yeah there are a lot of plans. It is as I said, that my main priority was temporary accommodation outside the borough. This is a very, very close second we sat there equally frustrated with some of the things that have been brought before us because of the limited scope that authorities have had. It's not just Thurrock, it's all around the country the limited scope we've had.

Now is - we've got extra room to manoeuvre and if we're not going to build houses now, well when are we going to? And I would say, to add to that, the committee and especially the Chair of the committee, yourself, will be involved right at the centre of these plans because we need to get buy-in across the chamber otherwise it just goes. We spend lots and lots of time wasting lots and lots of time having silly political arguments when really we all want the same thing. And that's houses. Secure tenancies for families and houses that people can afford to buy.

**Mayor**

Councillor Worrall, do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

## **Councillor Worrall**

Of course Madam Mayor and Luke, can I just ask that you contact me over the summer break so that we can get started on that plan? It's been a couple of months since I see that written down that me and you would be working together and we've still not done that so if we could make sure that happens before the next scrutiny meeting?

So my second question. There's not been one planning application agreed for new social homes anywhere in Thurrock since 2016. I think we've agreed on that. Homes built since 2016 were agreed under the Labour administration. We've now got that housing development list, it's dead in the water. Six of the sites removed and then I didn't know that the Chadwell one was being sold off until I see the asset list and the rest of them are basically paused or removed or on hold and they're just not happening Luke.

So after six years of administration and that's not you personally obviously because you wasn't a Conservative then, you was on the other side of the chamber with us. You couldn't get away with it all night Luke. You talk about these serious ambitious plans and you said it in Cabinet last week as well to kick-start the housing development list. When will we be getting realistic sites brought forward? You know how soon can we realistically expect that list has some movement? We have dithered and dithered and dithered for years and argued and argued. Please build people these 500 homes that we're promising them we've missed every government target set and we're going to have them imposed on us if we don't hurry up.

*(Inaudible – mics not on)*

## **Councillor Spillman**

Thank you Councillors. 500 is not the limit of my ambition to put it mildly and it shouldn't be the limit of anyone's ambition now and we've got a lot we can borrow through the HRA. We've got the rent income if you keep voting for it that comes in increased revenue that we didn't have before. We've got options with TRL. That is the bare minimum of what my ambition is and all parties in the chamber will be involved at the centre of this decision making.

## **Mayor**

Councillor Worrall, do you wish to pose a second supplementary question?

## **Councillor Worrall**

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Luke, that's a breath of fresh air to hear that you have a plan because we've not had that for years. But what we do need is we need to build homes on the right land. Not on parks, green spaces, well used car parks, and community facilities and I hope you agree. Argent Street and Dell Road, which are both prime pieces of building land have just been sold off. Had we built on this land ourselves, we would have

been some way to building those council homes that we desperately need. Can you assure residents that selling the family silver will stop and prime land will be retained for building homes for our residents and not lining the pockets of the greedy land banking developers that we have here in Thurrock?

### **Councillor Spillman**

So regarding the Argent Street site, that is not fit for development and that was the advice that came from officers. But also it went through committee yeah. It went for a committee and who was the Chair of that committee then? It was Oliver Gerrish. It went through committee and there was no objection at that stage yeah. So go back and look at the minutes yeah and you'll realize that at no stage did you oppose this until the point it was up for sale you know you didn't do your due diligence if you're against this sale. It all went to committee. Your own members are in committee but if they don't do their job then it's not anyone else's fault apart from them.

But in terms of in terms of bringing sites forward we need, I want to bring sites that will deliver the most houses and give the most people in this borough secure tenancies and homes that they own. And that will be my number one priority.

**5. Question 5 was withdrawn.**

**6. From Councillor Muldowney to Councillor Jefferies**

The play equipment in Chadwell St Mary's parks and green spaces is inadequate, old and deteriorating. When will the council commit to investing in new equipment for Chadwell?

### **Mayor**

Councillor Jefferies

### **Councillor Jefferies**

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor for your question. The parks in Chadwell St Mary are being prioritised through the work of a steering group which councillor I believe you are a member of along with the Community Forum, Thurrock Play Network and Active Parks Team. The steering group recently agreed that using responses from public consultations establishing what residents wanted from the work they would apply for a CEDF. This would be supported by spending of monies from Section 106, the development at the former Greyhound Public House, which had been allocated for spending in line with the Active Place Strategy. I know that the council has been in regular contact with the active parks teams regarding the future finding for Chadwell rec and I would encourage any community group to make contact with officers from the recreation and leisure services who would be able to support them attract external funding work to work together to improve our parks.

**Mayor**

Councillor Muldowney do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

**Councillor Muldowney**

Yes thank you Madam Mayor. I originally asked this question in June 2019 and at that time I was promised that investment would be made in the playground in Orsett Health in that municipal year. That didn't happen although money was found to invest in 14 other parks in other parts of the boroughs. Why did Chadwell miss out on that promised investment and will the new portfolio holder now make good on this predecessor's promise and ensure investment is made in Chadwell Parks by the end of this municipal year.

**Councillor Jefferies**

Thank you Madam Mayor. Thank you Councillor. Again we refer to what Councillor Spillman just said the moneys that were spent, that the Council's referring into all went to committee all were debated, all were discussed with members from the chamber including the Labour Party. It was then decided which parks this money should be spent on. Obviously it was decided not to spend in Chadwell but to spend elsewhere so again as what Councillor Spillman said you've got this information it's there, it's in committee and you were part of that decision as to where that money should be spent.

**Mayor**

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

**Councillor Muldowney**

Yes thank Madam Mayor, first of all to correct you the money referring to the Section 106 money was not found by the council I had to fight for it alongside the Chadwell forum so the Chadwell forum could bring forward its own play project. This is going to cost the council nothing we are using this section 106 monies to go for match funding this is all being done by local residents and by the Chadwell forum. We've had road block after road block placed in our way. The latest being that the council now plans to charge the Chadwell community forum £2500 a year for maintaining any 10 piece play area. So will the new portfolio holder work with myself and my colleague, Councillor Chukwu, to remove the road blocks preventing this project from moving forward as a matter of a priority and will he make good on his predecessor's promise by your administration in June 2019 to invest in Chadwell's parks.

**Councillor Jefferies**

Thank you very much. Thank you councillor, I mean I would say the councillors says that no council monies forthcoming the CDF grant that's



council money and that's what the groups applying for. So I do find it a bit strange that the councillor brings up this question because recently she put out a leaflet on council headed paper to all of her residents basically congratulating herself on obtaining funding for this park and I was puzzled why did she put this question out and then I realised she up for election next year in Chadwell St Mary, Chadwell St Mary which is where Councillor Adam Carter just got elected, the first conservative councillor to be elected in Chadwell, she's clearly worried that she is going to go exactly the same way as Labour candidates when in this election and I'm sure if Councillor Carter has anything to do with the campaign we will be welcoming another conservative councillor in Chadwell St Mary.

7. **Question 7 was withdrawn and resubmitted to September Council.**
8. **Question 8 was withdrawn.**
9. **From Councillor Byrne to Councillor Mayes**

Does the Portfolio Holder for Health agree with the comments made by the Chair of HOSC last week that the proposed plans for the IMCs were rubbish?

**Mayor**

Councillor Mayes

**Councillor Mayes**

Thank you Madam Mayor. I just wanted to start off by looking at what was actually said at that meeting which you will see from the draft minutes that it states on page 8 that Rahul Chaudhari stated that in response to the Corringham integrated medical centre there would be existing doctor surgeries from Stanford le Hope that would be taking up these spaces, the consultation was being undertaken with GP partners in Corringham and that there was two interested surgeries that would be interested in moving into the new integrated medical centre. Councillor Ralph stated that was rubbish and that there was not an additional 2000 extra appointments that Corringham critically needed. Extra spaces for doctor's appointments and would not be fit for purpose in Corringham and nor in Purfleet if those were the plans. So actually he wasn't saying the IMC plan wasn't fit for purpose he was just upset with the fact that there was not additional 2000 spaces. Thank you.

**Mayor**

Councillor Byrne do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

**Councillor Byrne**

Yes with the hubs I'm comparing the Corringham hub with a doctor's surgery in Stanford. The one in Stanford has a larger car park, it's got an onsite

pharmacy, performing minor operations, phlebotomy etc. Can you explain the difference a quite-not-a-hospital-hub and an actual doctor's surgery please.

**Councillor Mayes**

Thank you councillor. The IMCs will be a transformative way of dealing with primary care and although you said a few things there's a lot more than the IMC will do when it brings in phlebotomy and another host of primary care needs. So the idea is that it won't just be a situation for a space for GP appointments, it is just not another surgery, it is a transformation of the way that primary care is delivered because there isn't a magic GP tree we can't just grow more GPs or just pop down the shop and get some more so what we need to do and this isn't just in Thurrock this is a national issue. So what we need to do is look at the capacity that we have got and think outside the box and look at all the things we can do to actually make sure that our residents get the best primary care they can do with what we have got. Thank you.

**Mayor**

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

**Councillor Byrne**

Yes please. The question how will these new hubs provide more than the doctor surgeries we have already got in Stanford and Hassengate which are performing and some, so will it provide more services than our doctor surgeries in Corringham.

**Councillor Mayes**

Yes and simply because of the fact that well I know you like a yes or no answer so yes. Thank you.

**10. Question 10 was withdrawn.**