

Item 16 – Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that two questions had been submitted to the Leader and a further three questions to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Member appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE LEADER

1. From Councillor Ojetola

The menace of cruisers in the Lakeside area has been a nightmare to Chafford Hundred residents and indeed to everyone living in the vicinity and the police need every tool possible to tackle it. Why has the council not renewed the Public Spaces Protection Order which the police require to deal with the racers?

Councillor J. Kent

I agree with Councillor Ojetola. Boy racers in the Lakeside area are a nuisance. The current police thinking is to request an urban clearway in addition to a Public Spaces Protection Order. The Police are due to meet with the Head of Highways shortly to discuss the potential for an urban clearway.

The PSPO application has been lodged with Legal and is currently under consultation.

The Police are currently at the stage of identifying a resource to enforce the order through processing of fixed penalty notices. The Council want to do this but we must make sure that the Police have the resources to enforce it.

Mayor

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

Councillor Ojetola

Boy racers have an impact not only in the Lakeside area but in Aveley, Purfleet and West Thurrock where the noise can be heard. I have been in communication with the Police and they say they have asked for this PSPO.

Councillor J. Kent

We are working closely with the Police on this to examine how we delegate authority to them. Essex Police are currently considering the information they have and whether to add the request for an urban clearway to the Public Spaces Protection Order. I can say Councillor Ojetola that we are determined to complete this process as quickly as possible but we need to ensure that the Police have the resources to enforce it, but I can assure you we are doing all we can.

Mayor

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

Councillor Ojetola

Yes Madam Mayor, I wasn't going to but I will. Thank you for your reassurance Councillor Kent. Residents have heard so many times the Police and Council blame each other for the lack of progress. We want reassurance that this is in order and look forward to having the issue resolved as soon as possible.

Councillor J. Kent

I agree that there is nothing more frustrating with one public body blaming another public body but I assure you we are working together on this.

2. From Councillor Ray

The Leader has in regards to item 10 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 of the agenda to the annual council in May of this year said, 'The continued success of the shared legal service i.e. with the London borough of Barking and Dagenham has created a significant traded income'. Can the Leader give me and fellow members an actual figure of the traded income?

Councillor J. Kent

The shared legal service has been in operation since 2012 and in September 2013 began to take on traded work for other local authorities. Since this time it has generated £750,000 of income. This income has been generated from among its existing staff base and concentrating on specific areas of law such as governance, general litigation and academy transfers to name but a few. The service has also been accredited through inspection by the Law Society and gained the Lexcel accreditation for excellence in legal management and client care.

Mayor

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

Councillor Ray

I welcome the opportunity to increase potential for earnings and extra income but can the total true staff cost be taken into account and that we are not storing up a financial burden in relation to pensions etc?

Councillor J. Kent

The work is being done by existing staff, the service wants to use its income to concentrate on new initiatives that will generate income and to reduce

spend on external lawyers for specialist work. Only a very small number of staff have been paid an honorarium based on additional management responsibilities.

Mayor

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

Councillor Ray

Thanks Madam Mayor. I wasn't going to but with the huge budget cuts I was led to believe by the previous Chief Executive, Graham Farrant that we were taking more people on in order to earn from them. Is that not the case?

Councillor J. Kent

There are two things there, first whether the Council should have its own trading arm and second to be more entrepreneurial as we can by bringing in £750,000 of income. Gloriana is another example. We are not going to be able to simply cut our way out of the budget cuts; we need equal measures of savings and growth.

As apologies had been received from Councillor Brookes, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection, Councillor Redsell confirmed that she wished to withdraw both her questions that had been submitted to him for a response.

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

1. From Councillor Ojetola to Councillor Holloway

There are many working groups currently in operation within the Council which deliver important strategic research work on behalf of Thurrock residents. In the interest of transparency and openness please publish a list of all such working groups, their membership, their terms of reference and lifespan.

Councillor Holloway

As this falls under this remit I have asked Councillor Kent to respond.

Councillor J. Kent

There are a number of working groups involving Councillors. As requested I will ensure that this is circulated to Members and a list placed on the Council's website.

Please note: The document circulated can be found within this pack.

2. From Councillor Redsell to Councillor Brookes

The majority of parking outside schools is done responsibly. Having had many yellow lines placed outside of schools, and parents still park(ing) illegally or irresponsibly inside roads and around the school. How do you envisage the pilot scheme allowing teachers to take on parking enforcement will tackle and solve the problem?

This question was withdrawn at the meeting by Councillor Redsell.

3. From Councillor Redsell to Councillor Brookes

The unlawful grazing of horses on council land including some children's play areas and also in many other parts of Thurrock. Can you inform the chamber what if any revenue this brings to Thurrock Council or if not, what action is taken to stop this?

This question was withdrawn at the meeting by Councillor Redsell.