

Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 24 June 2015

Item 6 – Questions from Members of the Public.

2 questions were submitted from members of the public.

1. From Mr Watts to Councillor J Kent

Is the Council aware of the distress caused to vulnerable and disabled Thurrock residents brought about by the reduction in transport services provided by Trans-Vol due to the reduction in the services support grant.

As a temporary measure would the Leader move an amendment to the Council's budget that reduces the basic allowance for all Councillors by £500.00 and for the sum so raised to be added to the Trans-Vol grant for the current year?

Councillor J. Kent

Thank you Mr Watts for your question, of course we are aware of concerns of residents but when government reduced our own grant Council officers have had to work with Trans Vol to support them in developing alternative funding models. For the current year, Trans Vol have successfully tendered for the 265 bus service contract, and looking to tender for other services.

We are pleased that this year we have found £50,000 of funding for Trans Vol to help them tender for such service and to support continuity of service whilst other viable options can be secured by Transvol.

Mayor

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

Mr Watts

Thank you Madam Mayor. I have listened carefully to what has been said. Would the Leader agree that it is unacceptable for vulnerable or disabled people to scramble around for transport and wait a week to do their food shopping? It is unacceptable as far as I am concerned; people with disabilities have to think a week in advance, Councillors here would not have had to do that to get here this evening. This is totally unacceptable and I think if Members gave £500 from their generous basic allowance it would show solidarity.

Councillor J. Kent

Trans Vol's experiences mirror those of Community Transport Services up and down the country who are being forced to change the way they operate to reflect changes in the way which government supports vulnerable people.

I have considered your request and frankly feel that it is not one I can agree to. Councillors here support charities locally, regionally and nationally and it is not for me or anyone else to say which individual charities people should be supporting.

2. From Mr Perrin to Councillor J Kent

I believe it is current practice that when a child in Council care reaches the age of 16 they are classed as young adults and are required to leave the protection of child care and make their own way in adult society. I am sure that most Councillors will agree that 16 is still a very young age and is a time fraught with danger for young adults when they are most vulnerable. So I ask, does the Council continue to monitor the well-being and safety of young adults when they leave the care system and are you and your colleagues satisfied no young adult leaving care is abandoned and left to fend for themselves?

Councillor J. Kent

Other than where there is a plan for young people to return to their families, the Council encourages and supports all looked after 16 year olds to remain in care until the age of 18. Prior to their 18th birthday we work with all young people in care and where it is in keeping with the young person's needs and wishes, the council supports young people to remain in foster carer beyond 18, under 'Staying Put' arrangements.

Young People are consulted regarding plans for them and have access to independent advocacy and Independent Reviewing Officers, to ensure that plans reflect their needs, wishes and feelings.

The Council continues to offer support and assistance to care leavers up to the age of 25, in keeping with the Council's statutory responsibilities.

Not in every case does policy go smoothly, some young people leave care against our advice but in these cases we work harder than ever to continue to be there to help when needed, acting as a parent to help teenagers plan for the future.

Mayor

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

Mr Perrin

Firstly Madam Mayor can I congratulate you in your appointment as Mayor of Thurrock and as Thurrock's favourite nanny. I would like to ask a supplementary question, if Councillors can be provided with a list of names so that they can be sure no teenagers are left abandoned to fend for themselves and rather they have chosen to leave the care system.

Councillor J. Kent

I do not know if that is practical, I'm not sure names can be disclosed to Members as this information is confidential and we need to protect the identities of our young people in care. I can however assure you that we do take this issue very seriously and I can ask the Corporate Parenting Committee to look at the practicalities of your question. Every Member here is a Corporate Parent and we take our responsibility seriously.