

Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 23 March 2016

Item 6 – Questions from Members of the Public.

Two questions were submitted from members of the public.

1. From Mr Field to Councillor Kent

We, Aveley Village Community Forum, understand that Thurrock Council intends to sell un-needed community and council assets. I would like to ask the leader if it is the council's intention to use some of the money realised from these sales to support community projects and assets or to keep it all in house.

Councillor Kent

Madam Mayor if by the phrase in house we mean keeping the money to spend within the council rather than in the community then I think we just have to look at what a council actually does and what a council has to do to balance the books. This council has seen its budget reduced by 29 million pounds since 2011; we expect to see all of our direct government funding through revenue support grant be removed entirely over the next few years. Frankly, we don't spend money in house; we spend public money on public services. Usually when we have sold assets over the past few years we have used that money to support our capital programme and what that means is providing amongst other things extra school places, maintaining or upgrading parks and leisure facilities or for instance improving older people's accommodation. More recently some of this money has been used to create the community environmental and development fund which community groups are now able to access. Where we can use capital receipts of this sort rather than borrowing money we also avoid debt repayment to free up more cash to support front line services.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Kent

Mayor

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

Mr Field

Yes please, Madam Mayor, Thank you for that answer Councillor Kent. As you may know, Aveley Village Community Forum is working in partnership with the Council to build a new community building as the home for the Aveley Community Hub. The more sustainable the building becomes, the less likely it is to need financial support from the Council. I would like to ask the leader if some of the money raised from assets sold in Aveley or other external grants and funding to the Council (such as the 3.3 million New Homes Bonus

recently talked about) can be allocated for the benefit of this project and the residents of Aveley. Thus increasing the service and facilities offered for the new Hub, reducing demand for council services and lowering the cost implications to the council in the future.

Councillor Kent

Madam Mayor, as Mr Field says we have been working with the Aveley Community Forum to develop proposals for a new centre using just over the 1 million pounds of Section 106 monies that have been raised in the Aveley area. The scheme which would be phased will provide a new youth facility, a new separate community hall including a new kitchen and toilet as a first phase. The intention is to relocate Aveley library into that centre which would of course mean the library would be surplus to requirements and although we could not be specific about the future of the existing library site if it would be kept, whether it would be used for something else or whether it would be sold it would clearly be surplus to its current requirement and it could more conceivable that some of that could be put to other uses or some of the money raised that could be sold be used for the type of scheme Mr Field is talking about, all of that I have to say though is for another day.