

Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 22 July 2015

Item 6 – Questions from Members of the Public.

1 question was submitted from a member of the public.

1. From Mr Perrin to Councillor J Kent

In his budget speech the Chancellor intimated the Government would devolve power to Local Government to decide issues regarding “Sunday Trading”. It is suggested that the current restriction of 6 hours trading on a Sunday imposed on shopping malls and other large stores be lifted and the hours of trading should be in line with those permitted for small shops and businesses. Should your administration inherit such powers would you give me some idea as to what you would propose?

Councillor J. Kent

Clearly were any powers transferred we would have to look at carefully, and in detail, what was on offer. We would then work with retailers and consult those large and small – like Grays Town Centre and Lakeside Shopping Centre.

I would also want to consult with community groups, churches and shop workers because I’m sure there are some shop workers who would welcome the opportunity to earn some more money at the weekend, where it is perhaps the only time they can work, where there are others who would value the opportunity to not have to work more than 6 hours on a Sunday.

So I think the first thing we would need to do is to have a full wide ranging consultation with everybody who would be affected, incidentally that does include smaller shops who would be disadvantaged if larger retailers are able to open all day long.

Mayor

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

Mr Perrin

Thank you Madam Mayor. My personal preference would be in line with the commandment, six days shalt thy labour and on the 7th shalt thou rest, but then I am old fashioned and have been told I’m 50 years out of date. Having said what you have already said I am concerned about the small shop owner – what affect it has on them. And as you have said yourself about workfare, there are some people who would not want to work on a Sunday but who would be threatened by employers if they wouldn’t work on a Sunday that they would find somebody else who will.

I think I would ask you to bear in mind that situation, which you have already said anyway, I'm quite happy with the answers you have given me, but in my own opinion Sunday should be Sunday and I'd like to go back to it being a day of rest. Thank you Madam Mayor.

Councillor J. Kent

Madam Mayor, I'm not sure about Mr Perrin being 50 years out of date, because we have to remember that Sunday shopping for 6 hours is relatively new, so for instance when Lakeside Shopping Centre first opened it was illegal for any shops there to be open on a Sunday. This is still a relatively new piece of legislation.

My own point of view, opinion I guess, is that keep Sunday special has gone. That went in 1992/1993. That doesn't mean that we should not support keeping Sunday different and keeping the opening hours down. If I had a personal view it would be that.

Item 15 – Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 1 question 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.

Councillor Redsell confirmed that she wished to withdraw her two questions submitted to the Cabinet Member of Communities and Public Protection, in light of Councillor J. Kent's earlier announcement, and that she would resubmit for the following meeting.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE LEADER

1. From Councillor Ojetola

News reports state that a lot of radicalisation takes place in schools, or via social media, leading to recruitment of young people to extremist groups. Please outline what Thurrock Council is doing to prevent the radicalisation of Thurrock young people.

Councillor J. Kent

Madam Mayor, as part of the community safety partnership a cross directorate group has been established leading on the Prevent agenda. This is a national intervention to prevent radicalisation in local communities. It addresses all forms of radicalisation and is part of the government's counter-terrorism strategy – which is to Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare. The Prevent strand is aimed at stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

The PREVENT strategy responds to the ideological challenges we face from terrorism and aspects of extremism, and the threat we face from those who promote their views. It provides practical help to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure they are given appropriate advice and support. It works with a wide range of sectors including education, criminal justice, faith, charities, online and health where there are risks of radicalisation to be dealt with.

There is a new duty as a result of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 for councils to make checks on the use of public buildings, its internet filters and any unregulated out of school settings, including after school clubs and groups, supplementary schools and tuition centres to support home education. Schools are also placed under a new duty of care to their pupils and staff. This includes safeguarding them from the risk of being drawn into terrorism and non-violent extremism.

Recognising the need to ensure schools have an awareness of the issues, Thurrock Council has commissioned training to enable staff to recognise the signs and refer where necessary into the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub –

the MASH. If a referral concerning extremist behaviour is received it is assessed and the appropriate support mechanisms are put in place.

This training has recently taken place and feedback from schools has been positive. We have also trained a number of local authority colleagues who will be training children services staff.

Training is also being offered to local school governing bodies.

Mayor

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

Councillor Ojetola

No thank you, Madam Mayor.

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

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. From Councillor Aker to Councillor Worrall

Can the Portfolio Member for Housing inform the Council how many people in Thurrock are on the Council's Housing Waiting List?

Councillor Worrall

6,530

Councillor Aker

Would the Portfolio Holder be able to tell me, on average, how many council properties become vacant every year?

Councillor Worrall

I would need to check that outside of the meeting and look at that over five years and see if there is a trend. I will provide a written response outside of the meeting.

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