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# ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING 13 May 2014 Order Paper

## Agenda Item

### 19(a) Written Questions (standing order 16.12.1)

#### 1. By Councillor A Erskine of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation

'How much of the bad weather gritting budget is being returned to the Highway's overall budget?

Should any underspend over the winter be drawn back into reserves?'

#### 2. By Councillor K Smith of the Leader of the Council

'Eric Pickles MP has recently supported the promotion of the identity of English Counties.

Will Essex County Council set up a forum to enable Leaders/representative of every local authority within the historic boundaries of Essex, including the two unitary authorities and metropolitan Essex (Havering, Barking & Dagenham, Redbridge, Newham and Waltham Forest) to meet on regular basis to discuss issues that affect this historic County such as transport, health, tourism, industry and ideas?'

#### 3. By Councillor K Smith of the Cabinet Member for Transformation

What is the net total cost of gas and electricity for all properties owned by Essex County Council?

**4. By Councillor N Le Gresley of the Leader of the Council**

'Would the Leader of the Council consider Essex County Council taking the lead, in agreement and in co-operation with all Essex local authorities, to act as the principal organisation in determining what housing development is needed to fulfil Government planning 'guidance' and how it can be properly managed across the entire County and in all towns and villages, at a strategic level, rather than in 'silos', as is currently being done?

In particular, would the Leader be prepared to champion the need for one or more 'Garden Cities' in Essex, to attract some of the £2.5 Billion available from the Government for such projects, which will meet much of the housing demand already identified by local councils across the County, combine with the Council's strategic economic plan and which will mitigate the need for endless, hugely unpopular, new estates encircling our communities, usually without the essential infrastructure and services to go with them?'

**5. By Councillor B Aspinell of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation**

'Essex County Council is proposing to save money by making a unilateral decision to remove School Crossing Patrols from crossing points where there is a zebra or light controlled crossing.

- Have each of these sites been individually risk assessed in accordance with the National Guidelines for the School Crossing Patrol Service taking into account each site's current pedestrian and vehicle count, the demographics of the users, and their ability to judge speeds and distances safely?
- Have all other sites been assessed to see if they still meet the national criteria for the provision of a crossing, to ensure we are deploying staff in the most efficient way?
- Has consideration been given to the Council's obligation under the Education Act 1996 to ensure safe routes to school?
- Has Essex County Council considered the extensive research which shows that a zebra crossing without traffic calming measures may be more unsafe than a normal section of road?
- Why is Essex County Council quoting a cost of £5860 per patrol, when other Councils are quoting figures of around £3500?
- In the draft service level agreement Essex County Council will charge £5860 for the provision of a patrol, but if the employee is sick or leaves then Essex County Council is only obliged to give five days "emergency cover" *if possible*, but the school will continue to be paying for a service it does not receive. How can

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this be a sensible contract for a school to sign up to?’

**6. By Councillor B Aspinell of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation**

‘Would the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation please furnish me with the procedure and policy that permits Essex Highways to turn the street lights back on in the event of a report from the Police indicating an increase in crime directly attributable to the lights out status?’

**7. By Councillor D Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation**

‘I understand that the repair of grass verges on the Highway is a County Council responsibility. Would the Cabinet Member please provide answers to the following points:  
(1) What was the County budget for repairing grass verges for the last financial year and how much of it was actually spent?  
(2) What is the County budget for repairing grass verges for the current financial year?’

**8. By Councillor D Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation**

(1) Does the Cabinet Member believe that Brentwood residents have had good value for money from the refurbishment of Brentwood High Street?  
(2) What claims have been made by the County Council against the contractors who refurbished the High Street for any instances of poor workmanship and any problems that have occurred since?  
(3) How many claims have been made against the County Council by residents for injuries suffered by pedestrians in Brentwood High Street since the refurbishment has been completed?

**9. By Councillor M Mackrory of the Leader of the Council**

‘What progress has been made in recovering the £50,689 in expense claims from Lord Hanningfield as was reported to the Audit Committee of June 2013?’

**10. By Councillor G Helm of the Leader of the Council**

‘What progress has been made to recover the money from Lord Hanningfield which he obtained from Essex County Council’

**11. By Councillor N Le Gresley of the Cabinet Member for Waste and Recycling**

‘Would the Cabinet Member agree that less waste is likely to be recycled, more fly tipping occur and more tax payers money spent clearing up the mess, if his suggested closure of local waste amenities goes ahead and Essex residents are required to travel up to 30 miles round trip to a Super Tip?’

**12. By Councillor R Lord of the Leader of the Council**

‘Would the Leader of the Council agree with recent statements by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, that companies trading in Britain should be open and transparent; and that the beneficial owners of companies should be declared?’

Has he taken any steps to identify the beneficial owners of any of the offshore companies that the Council deals with directly, or indirectly, notably in the care home sector and waste industry?’

**13. By Councillor R Lord of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation**

‘Would the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation consider any proposals made to him to lease street lighting, at nominal cost, to those Towns, Parishes or even Districts, where they are willing to undertake the cost of maintenance and electricity?’

This would enable them to make local decisions, where the lack of street lighting is either unpopular or having an adverse effect on specific areas.’

**14. By Councillor J Abbott of the Cabinet Member for Highways and**

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## **Transportation**

‘To improve efficiency and highway safety, will the authority introduce a dedicated Highway Defects Reporting system such that elected County Members can report defects, accompanied with evidence on size and location, which will then be programmed for permanent repair in a reasonable time frame?’

**15. By Councillor J Abbott of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation**

‘Given that the authority states that it has switched priorities and for some rural roads will do no work in the foreseeable future, has ECC effectively abandoned these roads ? If ECC is declining to do any work despite extensive defects and local communities take matters into their own hands and attempt their own repairs for reasons of safety and to avoid damage to vehicles, what is the position of the authority?’

**16. By Councillor D Harris of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation**

‘Would the Portfolio holder confirm whether any county funding has been devolved for kerb repair in the Maypole division, Colchester?’

**17. By Councillor I Henderson of the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Infrastructure**

‘Would the portfolio holder confirm whether SELEP is covered under any Local Authority statute or legislation regarding proper use of public funds?’

Furthermore, given recent sign off of EPfE and SEP which includes substantial financial contribution by the council, does he believe the governance arrangements of SELEP ensure satisfactory accountability?’

**18. By Councillor A Durcan of the Cabinet Member for Economic**

**Growth and Infrastructure**

‘Would the portfolio holder clarify how many Apprenticeships were supported in 2013/14 along with the total funding for 2013/14? Finally, would the portfolio holder provide the budget for apprenticeships in 2014/15 and how many new apprenticeship opportunities it is estimated to create?’

**19. By Councillor I Henderson of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation**

‘It is noted that the Cabinet decision tabled in 2011 to invest £6.3m in a Central Management System to deliver county-wide savings was agreed before a consultation was carried out to verify the suitability of areas in the county to be moved to part night lighting.

Would the portfolio holder confirm when the county-wide consultation was carried out with the public on the principle of moving toward part-night lighting?’

**20. By Councillor D Harris of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation**

‘Would the portfolio holder clarify whether street lights make any contribution to the prevention of crime and disorder in the county? Would he clarify the implications of part night lighting on Section 17 Crime and Disorder?’

**21. By Councillor M Danvers of the Cabinet Member for Adults Social Care**

‘The reprehensible conduct uncovered at the Old Deanery care home in Braintree raises serious questions about the role of local authorities and the crucial role that they need to play not only in monitoring care but also in continually improving the standards of care.

Whilst it has been stated that the kind of behaviour exposed does not reflect the vast majority of care workers in Essex, would the portfolio holder consider that the Council adopt a carers’ charter to ensure a common drive towards excellent standards of practice from commissioners/providers right through to care workers and recipients of care in the County?’

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**22. By Councillor M Danvers of the Cabinet Member for Adults Social Care**

‘Given the verbal assurances to look into the matter at the last Council meeting, would the portfolio holder provide an update on any progress in looking at tendering documents to make sure carers are paid a living wage?’

Furthermore could the portfolio holder clarify whether providers pay carers for travel time and not just time spent at a client’s house and whether they ensure that if there is a zero hours contract it is not exclusive to the carer for lack of alternative employment opportunities?’

**23. By Councillor J Young of the Leader of the Council**

‘Would the Leader of the Council acknowledge that at the time of the Budget in February, there were just 151 employees of the council earning below a living wage costing a modest £160k to bring up to the threshold. Whilst our amendment to the budget was rejected by the Administration, would the Leader agree that in joining other fair minded authorities, we would lead by example, demonstrating fairness to our staff by paying a decent salary?’

Would the Leader clarify his position on becoming a living wage authority?’

**24. By Councillor K Bobbin of the Cabinet Member for Waste and Recycling**

‘Would the portfolio holder provide a statement regarding the long term future of recycling centres in the County? Would he in particular clarify the future of Pitsea centres and the potential of an unpopular new site which was earmarked?’

**25. By Councillor M McGeorge of the Cabinet Member for Highways**

**and Transportation**

'Would the portfolio holder give assurances that scrutiny will be carried out on school patrol crossings before the decision is made allowing sufficient time for this unpopular proposal to be properly considered?

**26. By Councillor K Clempner of the Cabinet Member for Libraries, Communities and Planning**

'There has been a significant contingent of Travellers circling Harlow for a considerable period. When the travellers have settled on Harlow District Council land, they are quickly moved on. The Travellers are aware of this and deliberately settle on Essex County Council land in Harlow.

Why does it take significantly longer for Essex County Council to exercise the legal proceedings in Harlow as compared to Harlow Council?

What steps have been taken to explore options to specify a 'no return' time period or to prohibit relocation to other areas in the near vicinity as part of legal proceedings?

What contribution does ECC make to clearing up the after effect of Traveller occupation on ECC land?

**27 By Councillor J Deakin of the Cabinet Member for Transformation**

Are there any plans to sell off any of the art, in any of its forms, currently owned by this council?

Has any such art been sold in the last 18 months?