
ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

9 February 2016

Answers to Written Questions (standing order 16.12.1)

Agenda Item 10 (a)

1. By Councillor Pond of the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Waste and Recycling

‘In respect of the months of November and December 2015,

- what weight of residual waste was received at the Basildon plant from each of the Collection authorities and from Essex RCHWs?
- What was the additional weight of each category of recyclate recovered, which would otherwise have gone to landfill?
- What was the weight of RDF produced, and what was its calorific value?’

Reply

‘During November and December 2015 33,505 tonnes of waste was received by the Tovi Eco Park Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) facility. Table one provides the input tonnage from each of the Waste Collection Authorities and collectively from the Essex Recycling Centres for Household Waste.

Table two provides details of the weight of materials removed from the waste at the plant and sent for recycling during the period as well as the weight of Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) produced and its calorific value.

When looking at the tonnage data provided in tables one and two below-please consider the following:

- Materials separated for recycling are stored within the facility until there is sufficient quantity for onward transport to the reprocessor. The tonnages detailed in tables one and two only detail material that has left the facility for recycling and does not include any estimates on stock material stored within the facility.

- The production of RDF through the facility takes a minimum of 6 weeks. Therefore the material exiting the MBT facility during November and December will not be the same material sent to the facility during that period.
- The facility is currently in its commissioning phase, during this period tonnage inputs will fluctuate. The fluctuation in tonnages combined with the residency time for waste in the facility and RDF stock control is why the RDF output during November and December is high when compared to the input tonnage during the same months.

Table 1: Input Tonnage

MBT INPUT TONNAGES	NOV 2015 AND DEC 2015 (TONNES)
Basildon Borough Council	6204
Braintree District Council	2895
Brentwood Borough Council	2732
Castle Point Borough Council	2944
Chelmsford City Council	4543
Colchester Borough Council	2606
Epping Forest District Council	1819
Harlow District Council	1157
Maldon District Council	1137
Rochford District Council	2094
Tendring District Council	2304
Uttlesford District Council	740
WASTE COLLECTION AUTHORITY TOTAL	31173
Recycling Centres for Household Waste	2332
TOTAL RESIDUAL WASTE INPUTS	33505

Table 2: Output Tonnage

MBT OUTPUT TONNAGES	NOV 2015 AND DEC 2015 (TONNES)
Paper/Card	815
Ferrous Metal	1178
Non Ferrous Metal	110
Mixed Plastics	709
Plastic Film	321
TOTAL RECYCLATE	3133
Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF)	28537
TOTAL OUTPUT TONNAGE	31670
Net Calorific Value of RDF	14454.5 Kj/Kg

2. By Councillor Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Highways Delivery

‘As the County Council has a responsibility to maintain and repair grass verges on the Highway would you please provide the following information:

- What was the budget for maintaining and repairing grass verges last year? How much of it was actually spent and where was it spent?
- What is the budget for maintaining and repairing grass verges for the next financial year?’

Reply

‘We appreciate that verge maintenance is important so we are engaging in proactive conversations with districts and parish councils, so that the cuts meet the needs of the local area.’

3. By Councillor Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Highways Delivery

‘Figures from the briefing paper for the Police and Crime Panel on Part Night Lighting dated 16 November 2015 show that crime in Brentwood has gone up by 13% and anti-social behaviour has gone up by 32% in the year of switch off which will be a concern to many local residents.

Does the Cabinet Member share my concerns about these figures and can he tell me when the Borough of Brentwood will be getting LED lighting?’

Reply

‘Whilst it is always regrettable to hear about any rise in crime, as has been demonstrated by independent studies, such as the LANTERN project, there is no link between part-night lighting and an increase in crime.

We are in the early stages of a project to install LED lights to areas of All Night Lighting across the county, and as such we have yet to identify specific locations.’

4. By Councillor Danvers of the Leader of the Council

‘Is the Leader now aware of the semi-public consultation meeting held on Tuesday 26th January at the ARC Old Harlow over the issue of junction 7A to the M11? Is he now also aware that over 50 people were turned away at this meeting believing the meeting was to be open to all members of the public?’

Does he believe that matters affecting so closely a Member’s Division should be brought to that Member’s attention?’

Reply

‘I thank Councillor Danvers for the question and I am aware that this meeting was actually a private meeting for directly-affected residents and not a public or semi-public meeting, as Councillor Danvers suggests.

It is common practice that residents who are directly affected by a particular scheme are consulted directly so there was nothing unusual

about this in that respect.

It is clearly regrettable that 50 members of the public were turned away. I understand that the confusion arose as a result of a letter sent in error by our consultants and I apologise for the confusion this caused.

I can assure you, as indeed our Cabinet Member for Infrastructure has also done, that there will be a full public consultation and that interested parties, including Members, will have ample time to comment on plans.'

5. By Councillor Le Gresley of the Cabinet Member for Highways Delivery

'There are literally dozens of street lamps in my division of Wickford and Crouch that have been reported as non-operational and are evident on the ECC Street Lighting Website as faulty and 'under investigation'. A considerable number have been extinguished for many months. Would the Cabinet Member look into this to ensure that these defects are rectified as quickly as possible and, where the defect lies with the electric company, to ensure that they are providing the service they are being paid for?'

Reply

'Our target is to keep streetlight fault levels under 2% of the total lighting stock and I already publish these performance figures on a quarterly basis.

Our average performance target over the year for those lights that can be repaired, within the budget available, is seven days from fault reported to fault repaired.

We will also continue to work with the electricity companies where action is required on their part.'

6. By Councillor Smith of the Leader of the Council

'The first year's cost of keeping Syrian refugees in Essex will be met by the Government (via the Foreign Aid Budget). The recently passed motion (presented by the Conservative Group) called on the Government to carry on using the Foreign Aid Budget to pay for the upkeep of the Syrian refugees, for up to five years. Has this motion been successful and if it has failed, how much will it cost the taxpayer

of Essex to keep the Syrian refugees for the 2016/17 financial year?’

Reply

‘I would like to thank Councillor Smith for his question. I am sure that he, and indeed the entire Chamber, will be very pleased to hear that we were successful in securing funding from the Treasury for all five years so that we can welcome vulnerable refugees in our great county.

This funding includes support for integration, such as additional English language training as well as social care. The Government also intends to provide a special cases fund to provide additional support for the most vulnerable people and will work with local government on how the fund will be administered.

In respect to the families who arrived before Christmas we have submitted the relevant financial paperwork back to the Home Office and are expecting the appropriate funding by the end of February.’

7. By Councillor Smith of the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning

‘At a recent meeting of Basildon Borough Council (Full Council), a motion was successfully passed to call for a new grammar school for Basildon. This motion was presented by Councillor Amanda Arnold (Conservative, Pitsea South East Ward) and this was supported by a majority of councillors.

Will Councillor Gooding take up the baton of helping to create a new grammar school for Basildon?’

Reply

‘Essex County Council welcomes the diversity we have within the Essex school system including the four grammar schools we have in the county and the access that Essex young people have to the four grammar schools within the Southend District. We strive for the highest quality of education provision in our county for the children and young people of Essex and welcome the contribution that the existing grammar schools, alongside the maintained schools and academies in Essex make to realising this ambition.

I have looked into the matter of opening up new grammar provision

following the expansion on the Weald of Kent grammar school in Kent earlier this year. Technically legislation prevents the opening of any new schools which select their pupils on the basis of academic ability. However, the DfE does support the right of existing good schools to expand, including grammar schools. All of the grammar schools in Essex and Southend are academies and local authorities cannot propose the expansion of an academy so this question is not something that either Essex County Council or Basildon Borough Council has any influence over. If an academy trust wishes to expand they must submit proposals for change by following the specified DfE guidance on the matter and the relevant regional Schools Commissioner makes the final decision as appropriate.

If a proposal was put forward from an academy trust then we would expect the Regional Schools Commissioner and the academy trust to take into account the impact that a proposed expansion would have on the surrounding schools in the Basildon locality.'

8. By Councillor Harris and Councillor Higgins of the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning

'We note with concern the lack of a school crossing Patrol in recent weeks at the Mersea Road pedestrian crossing next to The Grapes public house. This crossing serves the St Georges School, Colchester (and links the two Divisions that we represent). Could we be assured that this school crossing attendant will be restored as soon as possible in the interests of children's safety traveling across a very busy Mersea Road.'

Reply

'I can confirm that the crossing in question at Mersea Road is a Priority 4 site situated on a zebra crossing.

St George's School has 3 Crossing Sites, prioritised according to National Guidelines. Mersea Road as noted above is sited on a Zebra Crossing and therefore rated Priority 4. Due to the unfortunate death of the School Crossing Patrol Officer (SCPO) on the Canterbury Road site (Priority 2), a decision was made to redeploy the available resources to cover the higher priority sites.

It should be noted that the other site at Bourne Road is Priority 3 and Canterbury Road is Priority 2.

Whilst we are aware that local members have been approached by parents, Officers of the Council have received no comments from

either the school or the parents regarding this change which took place during October 2015. This site has been vacant since October 2015.

Given the difficulty in recruiting SCPOs we would welcome proposals from the school, parents or the local community to assist ECC in reviewing ways that lower priority crossings can be manned whilst ensuring the best use of our available resources.'

9. By Councillor Whitehouse of the Cabinet Member for Highways Delivery

'Please give details of the service standards relating to repair and maintenance of broken street lights and lamp columns and current performance against these standards. In particular, how soon after being reported should non-working streetlights be inspected and repaired and what is the average time taken between a non-working streetlight being reported and it working again?'

Reply

'Our target is to keep streetlight fault levels under 2% of the total lighting stock and I already publish these performance figures on a quarterly basis.

Our average performance target over the year for those lights that can be repaired, within the budget available, is seven days from fault reported to fault repaired.'

10. By Councillor Whitehouse of the Leader of the Council

'What costs were incurred in relation to:

- the former Epping Junior School and Centrepoint sites in St John's Road Epping since the land was vacated by Epping Primary School and
- the former St Peter's School, including:
 - (a) Security
 - (b) Non-domestic rates
 - (c) Legal and other professional fees
 - (d) Other costs?'

Reply

'The costs incurred in relation to:

- the former Epping Junior School and Centre point sites in St John's Road Epping since the land was vacated by Epping Primary School in April 2010 are in the order of:

(a) Security:	£76,800 pa (2015/16)
(b) Non-domestic rates:	
i. Epping Centre:	£41,040.65
ii. Epping Junior School:	£60,459.42
(c) Legal and other professional fees:	£71,385.75
(d) Other costs:	£10,000 pa (approx.)

- the former St Peter's School, Chelmsford since 31 August 2011 are in the order of:

(a) Security:	£133,440 pa 2015/16
(b) Non-domestic rates:	£ 66,404.55
(c) Legal and other professional fees:	£ 53,430.86
(d) Other revenue costs:	£ 20,000 pa

11. By Councillor Bayley of the Leader of the Council

'Considering that Members Enquiries is put in place to Fast Track complaints/ grievances to County Hall, Could there be a system put in place whereby members receive an acknowledgement, and the name of the person/department/ date/time to which the problem has been passed. Members can then contact the complainant informing them that their problem is receiving the full and proper ECC attention. This will save a lot of earache from disgruntled residents.'

Reply

'I thank the Councillor for his question and for his suggestion. I always welcome new ideas, from wherever they may come. On this occasion, I am sorry to say I have been informed that this particular idea may not be feasible.

This is because sharing contact details of the team members dealing with a particular enquiry would, in all likelihood, result in residents understandably trying to contact the team directly. This would significantly increase the workload of the team, either resulting in an increased cost to the service or a reduction in the response time to enquiries, both equally unacceptable options as I am sure you will

agree.

The Member Enquiries service has a service level agreement (SLA) response time of 10 working days. The team received over 8,000 enquiries last year of which 86.9% were replied to within the SLA, which we are constantly striving to improve.

Councillor Bayley may be aware that we used to provide automatic acknowledgements, though as a result of many complaints from members, who told us it clogged up their inboxes, we have stopped doing so.

There is also a Corporate Scrutiny Task and Finish group being established to look into Members Enquiries, so I would recommend that Councillor Bayley further raise his concerns there.'

12. By Councillor Le Gresley of the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning

'Despite years of campaigns and requests for parents to behave responsibly, a small but determined minority are continuing to engage in increasingly dangerous parking practices outside of schools across our County. This puts the lives of children at risk on a daily basis, severely inconveniences local residents and obstructs other road users, including emergency services.

Given all the problems created by these inconsiderate and antisocial parents, would the Cabinet Member consider adopting the various practices being put in place by Havering Borough Council to tackle this problem under their 'Safer Schools Transport Initiative', including, where appropriate, the use of 'Public Space Protection Orders' under the Crime and Policing Act 2014?'

Reply

'Parking at schools raises difficult questions and it is the role of the County to ensure sufficiency of schools places and investment in the infrastructure that supports them. It is unfortunate that some parents choose to engage in dangerous parking practices. The Council works with schools to ensure adequate travel plans are in place.

The London Borough of Havering is investigating a number of methods. However 'public spaces protection orders' are a district council function and parking enforcement is the responsibility of the

parking partnerships. Officers are happy to work with relevant district councils, the parking partnerships and schools if schools raise particular issues.'

13. By Councillor Robinson of the Leader of the Council

'Which ECC properties have been vacant for more than six months? Are there any plans to work more closely with the City, Borough and District Councils to make the best use of all publicly-owned property, e.g. to facilitate more affordable housing?'

Reply

'I thank Councillor Robinson for his important question, which allows me to inform the Council of the ground-breaking work Essex County Council is doing with public sector partners to make the best use of all publicly-owned property here in Essex to start building new homes for our residents.

We have recently established Essex Housing, which is a new function at Essex County Council for the use of all partners to identify and build out surplus land to help meet local needs for specialist and affordable housing, the costs of which will be offset by building open-market units.

This highly innovative approach will see the first sites coming forward for planning in the next few months and this is only the start. Essex Housing is continuing to identify sites in order to build up a substantive programme of work to help address housing need in the County.

The number of Council properties which have been vacant for more than six months is 32. We are continuously looking at the best option for these properties to secure the best value for money for the Essex taxpayer, whether that is re-using, leasing, selling, or developing them.'

14. By Councillor Danvers of the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

'Many Harlow residents were excluded from a meeting about the M11 junction 7A recently organised by the Council's consultants. The comment from many local residents is that this project is a "done deal". What would the Portfolio Holder say to alleviate these fears before any formal public consultation has taken place?'

Reply

'The meetings referred to by Councillor Danvers were private meetings for a small selection of residents whose houses have direct access onto key roads of the proposed scheme (such as Gilden Way) and were to discuss technical issues like access arrangements or even land take and environmental mitigation in the event of a particular route or route alignment.

Private meetings such as these are standard practice on scheme preparation and development and often take the form of one to one meetings with residents. In this instance, the meetings for sections of road were grouped together as a practical way of having several discussions at the same time. So they were not public meetings as such.

As the issue of M11 Junction 7a is still subject to a full public consultation in the summer, there is plenty of time for the residents of Harlow Councillor Danvers represents (and indeed residents and businesses further afield too) to contribute their views to the proposed scheme which should in no way be viewed as a "done deal". I shall also, of course, be interested to learn the views of elected representatives, for example, of Epping Forest DC, Uttlesford DC and Harlow DC as well as those of the County Councils of Essex, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire to name just a few.'

15. By Councillor Harris of the Cabinet Member for Adults and Children

'In light of the budget being finalised for 2016/17, can the portfolio holder reiterate his assurance from last full council that there will be no cuts to non-emergency home to hospital transport and outline any further cuts to the community transport budget?'

Reply

'I understand that home to hospital transport largely remains the remit of the NHS, that is, Clinical Commissioning Groups commission these services locally.

Therefore, any concerns about changes to local transport arrangements may be brought to these CCGs.

On Community transport, I am advised by my colleague, Councillor

Roger Hirst, Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning and Environment – that we can confirm that there are no plans to cut the budget for next year.’

16. By Councillor Young of the Cabinet Member for Finance

‘I’d like to note my concern that Council is being asked to approve £43 million for a housing plan that has yet to be released. Can the portfolio holder inform Council when the plan will be made available to members, and what arrangements are being made to ensure that it is properly scrutinised?’

Reply

‘The interest of Essex County Council on Housing is to enable and facilitate the delivery of housing by District, Borough and City Council partners to address the need for more houses across the county. The County Council also coordinates work on achieving best value from the disposal of public sector land. We also have the primary responsibility for driving provision of sufficient homes to enable older and vulnerable people to live independently.

At this stage, we have created a capital allocation, but draw down is subject to individual business cases for each project. Our overall approach document is being created which will be fully discussed with local authority and other partners. In due course, I shall be happy to bring all this work to the relevant scrutiny committee and have already proposed for a member development session to be arranged in due course.’