
ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING 12 May 2015

Order Paper

Public Question Time

Prior to the meeting of the Council and following prayers the following questions will be asked by members of the public in accordance with Standing Order 16.12.10.

Paul Beard Elmstead Parish Councillor, representing the families of Elmstead

“Could you explain why the reducing of costs through school transport is more important to ECC than the safety our Children? In Elmstead our children have traditionally attended Colne Community School in Brightlingsea through a free travel private bus company. We are now advised that the only way we can achieve free school travel is by attending our nearest School at Colchester Academy. To enable our children to get to this school, at the age of 11 they would need to use public transport where no one has been vetted to be on this bus, get off at a location where an unsolved murder is still ongoing and wait for a second bus to the chosen school. This could all be happening to an 11 year old at times of the year when it is dark. Again I ask the question, why is the ECC willing to put our children at risk to save costs?”

Councillor Kevin Read, Mayor of Wivenhoe

“Please can you justify how low income, hardworking families, earning more than the £16,000 threshold for support but below the national average wage, can be expected to pay to send their children to the school of their choice? Further to this can you explain how this lack of choice meets with the National Policy frameworks assertion that parents should be able to choose their child’s school? Taking into account these low income families can you confirm that the tender process to provide a bus to the Colchester Academy has started and will be completed before the start of this academic year?”

Councillor Andrea Vaughan - representing Broomgrove Junior School parents

“Can you confirm that this divisive policy abandons Essex County Council's determination to see through the 'Safer Routes to School' concept? There is considerable fear amongst affected parents about the safety of pedestrian routes to school and we would be grateful to hear the Cabinet's views on how they would send their children or grandchildren to walk the 6 rural miles between Wivenhoe and Brighthlingsea? As an addendum to this the bus the County has commissioned is nearly twice the price of the public bus fare, and therefore parents will choose a public bus; or worst still, drive themselves creating traffic chaos. Can you promise that funding will be allocated to safety schemes, including a soon to be needed pedestrian crossing outside the Colne School?”

Councillor Asa Aldis - representing Broomgrove Infant School parents

“This Policy infers a change in the relationship between Wivenhoe's feeder schools and the Colne Community School. Currently the feeder schools get an allowance to develop their relationship with the Colne. Can the Cabinet please give assurances that this relationship will continue to be supported and what measures it will take to ensure that the School Transport Policy will be adjusted to allow for the current arrangements?”

Ann Hooks, Chair of Rayne Against School Transport Cuts

“The new school transport policy is flawed in many respects, including:-

- Justification and detail of the financial savings was insufficient to allow any organisation to make an informed decision and is offset only by an increased financial burden on already hard-pressed families.
- there are major contradictions and inconsistencies between the school transport policy document and the Essex transport strategy,
- priority admission schools are no longer taken into account when awarding school transport, hence discriminating against parents who want to do the best by their children.
- a failure to recognise and accept the consequence of the lack of infrastructure to facilitate the consequential increases of volumes of both traffic and pedestrians.
- there is little to no consideration for the health, safety & wellbeing of children walking to school. At the time of the Cabinet decision, no details of the proposed walking routes were available.

The initial consultation process was compromised, with correspondence sent to schools during the summer holidays, which severely restricted the distribution of information to parents. This was a major factor in the fact that only 1500 responses were made across the whole County.

The outcome of the Consultation showed an overwhelming 72% of respondents rejected the removal of the use of priority admission area. On this basis how is it that the recommendation to change the School Transport Policy, and then to approve it was made when the consultation demonstrates that it isn't reflective of public opinion?

The points made here demonstrate clearly how the change of policy is flawed and not reflective of public opinion and I urge you to put the original decision forward for review. An interim consideration might be to postpone the implementation to allow time to reconsider the whole issue fully and properly?

To highlight the depth of reaction to this new School Transport Policy in our area, I would like to submit a petition that is signed by (don't know exact numbers yet) local residents, businesses, friends and family in support to review this ludicrous School Transport Policy."

Louise Cook

"Have the Conservative led administration abandoned the concept of Parental Choice? Why would any parent choose Colchester Academy that isn't performing well over The Colne which is outstanding and has been the catchment school for Wivenhoe children for decades, I used to go there myself?"

Summary of Procedure:

- The person must be present to ask their question.
- The Chairman will invite the person to speak.
- The person may not speak for more than three minutes in order to ask their question or submit a petition.
- There shall be a reply from the Chairman or other nominated Member.
- Save for the Member replying to the question no other Member shall be permitted to respond.
- There is no opportunity for supplementary questions nor for debate.
- Thirty minutes overall is allocated for public questions.

Agenda Item 23(a)

1. By Councillor J Knapman of the Cabinet Member for Adults and Children

Care Home Management

- “How many Care Homes are there in Essex which are managed by other authorities?”
- What role does ECC have to play in their management and who is accountable for their performance?”

2. By Councillor D Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning

Primary School Places - Brentwood

“I understand that 46 children in Brentwood were unable to get any of their four choices they put down for Primary School places and many parents are now faced with having to take their children to Primary Schools that are well outside their areas.

What steps are being taken by Essex County Council to address this problem in Brentwood and across Essex as a whole in the short and the medium term, and what practical support is being offered to parents who are now having to deal with this very difficult situation?”

3. By Councillor M Mackrory of the Cabinet Member for Transformation and Corporate and Traded Services

Emergency Evacuation Procedure

“On how many occasions has the Emergency Evacuation Procedure in County Hall been activated in the last two years?”

4. By Councillor D Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Small Scheme Delivery

Pothole Repairs – Quality Audits

“What quality control procedures are put in place when a pothole is repaired to ensure that the job is done properly and is fit for purpose?”

Is there ongoing monitoring of any potholes that have been repaired to ensure that the repair lasts for a reasonable period of time?”

5. By Councillor J Deakin of the Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Planning and the Environment

Use of Electric / Dual fuel cars

“What information and help is provided to residents:

- to encourage use of electric / dual fuel cars and how to charge their vehicles at home,
- and what charging facilities are publicly available?”

6. By Councillor K Clempner of the Cabinet Member for Transformation and Corporate and Traded Services

“Following the granting of an interim injunction, preventing unauthorised encampments in Harlow, what remedial works are planned to take place to the car park of the old Passmores School site (which was broken up by County to prevent encampments) which is an eyesore and causing concern for local residents, and what are the longer term plans for the site as a whole?”

7. By Councillor M Danvers of the Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Planning and the Environment

"Given the increasing importance of public access to computers to the poorest in society just to be able to conduct their everyday lives, will the portfolio holder for Libraries review the opening hours of many central libraries and open them six days a week like the central library in Chelmsford? Furthermore will the portfolio holder review the number of computers available in libraries to the general public?"

8. By Councillor J Young of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation

“Wivenhoe residents are very upset by the changes to bus stops in Colchester High Street as a result of the introduction of a dedicated park and ride stop. Would the portfolio holder consider moving the 62 bus back to its original stop? The changes have caused a huge disadvantage to regular bus users.”

9. By Councillor J Young of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation

“Would the portfolio holder explain whether a consultation has been conducted with Colchester Sixth Form College about the removal of the pedestrian crossing at the top of North Hill Colchester and if so what is the result of that consultation?”

10. By Councillor M McGeorge of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Infrastructure, Waste and Recycling

“Regarding the waste plant at Courtauld Road Basildon, could the portfolio holder confirm the amount of movement per day at the plant, which local authorities are involved in using the plant and the size of lorries used to transport waste to the plant?”

11. By Councillor D Harris of the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Small Scheme Delivery

"Given the state of local roads in and around North east Essex where no priority of any sort is allocated until the defect is so bad that it might be more expensive repair as a result of leaving defects to grow, would the portfolio holder consider reviewing the priority system in discussion with Leaders of Local District and Borough Councils?"

Agenda items 14, 15, 16 and 17 are attached with this Order Paper.