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# ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING 11 February 2014 Order Paper

## Agenda Item

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

#### 1. By Councillor M McEwen of the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning

'It is my belief that most of the parents in Chipping Ongar and surrounding villages whose children are in the lower classes of their primary school (and who will be affected by the Cabinet decision to provide free transport to the nearest school only) were not aware of the consultation when it took place. Hitherto they have had a choice of free transport to at least 3 or 4 schools. I know of at least one primary school that did not pass the consultation information on to the affected parents. Can I please have details of the measures being taken to ensure that the notices sent to the relevant schools are passed on to the parents?'

#### 2. By Councillor D Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation

'The Jet Patcher Pothole Repair System;

Many of the potholes that have been repaired in Brentwood over the last eighteen months using the "Jet Patcher" system have opened up and we now have roads littered with potholes across our Borough awaiting another repair. Would the Cabinet Member please respond to the following points:

- Is the Jet Patcher system fit for purpose to repair potholes across Essex to a high quality standard, or is it time we said 'enough is enough' and consider using another system?
- How many potholes have been repaired using the Jet Patcher system across Essex since it was first used?

- What audit work has been undertaken to measure the success of the Jet Patcher system on repairing the County's potholes and could Members be given a copy of the results for their County Divisions?'

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

'Maintenance Repairs;

Many of my residents are getting very angry and frustrated over the lack of action by the Highways Department on basic maintenance issues in my County Division. When I report casework issues such as footpath repairs and potholes the standard reply is often that the matter has been "robustly risk assessed and was not deemed by the inspector to be hazardous or a safety concern and therefore does not meet our criteria for immediate repair". This response normally draws an incredulous reaction from my residents who, along with other Brentwood residents, paid £33 million of Council Tax to Essex County Council last year and feel they are seeing precious little of it reinvested back in the Borough.

Would you please give me some answers to the following points:

- If a casework issue does not meet the criteria for an immediate repair, how long should I be telling my resident they will have to wait for the repair to be done?
- How many people are the County Council currently employing to undertake maintenance repairs and how have these numbers changed over the last four years?
- Please could all members be sent a copy of the criteria for maintenance repairs?
- How much has the County Council spent over the last four financial years on maintenance repairs and can I have a breakdown for each year?'

**4. By Councillor G Butland of the Leader of the Council**

‘Better Care Fund;

Appearing before the House of Commons Health Select Committee Sir Bruce Keogh, NHS England's Medical Director, expressed concern that the Better Care Fund will be wrongly used by councils for "filling in potholes and other significant things".

Will the Leader of the Council give an assurance that Essex County Council will not allow Better Care Funding to be used in this manner?’

**5. By Councillor G Butland of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation**

‘London Road, Braintree;

In December London Road, Braintree was resurfaced. In January the new surface was twice dug up by contractors on behalf of a utility company.

Was the work undertaken by the utility company emergency repair work or planned work relating to the development taking place on the site of the former William Julien Courtauld Hospital?

If it was not emergency work why, was it not planned to take place before the new road surface was laid?’

**6. By Councillor J Reeves of the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning**

‘The Deanes School;

At the recent meeting held by the Schools Adjudicator to examine the Council's case for closing the Deanes School in my Division disturbing comments about the pressure on facilities at King John School were made by a parent of that school.

In addition I am aware that some parents seeking a school for their children are being directed to schools in Basildon.

Would the Cabinet Member make a statement on the position?’

**7. By Councillor K Smith of the Cabinet Member for Transformation and Corporate Services**

‘Land Assets;

Why is Essex County Council still sitting on land assets in the unitary authorities of Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock?

What is the last known or current value of these land assets?

Between now and May 2017, will Essex County Council sell any of these land assets on the open market?’

**8. By Councillor K Smith of the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning**

‘Woodlands School, Basildon;

Following the recent sad drop in educational standards at Woodlands School, Basildon, what measures are being taken to help turn this school around?’

**9. By Councillor M Mackrory of the Cabinet Member for Transformation and Corporate Services**

‘I first raised the question of the future of the Shire Hall in October 2011; I was told then that options for its future use were being considered.

I asked for an update at the October 2013 Council and was told that the Shire Hall Reference Group would report by the end of December 2013.

As we are now half way through February 2014, and nearly two and a half years since I first asked the question, and it is nearly two years since the Magistrates Courts vacated the building, when will those of us who are greatly concerned about this fine historic building, be told what its future holds?’

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

‘In view of recent publicity concerning members of the public whose

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vehicles have been damaged by pot holes and, in particular, the case where the Judge ordered the County Council to pay damages it had previously refused to pay even though it was liable, what actions have been taken to make sure that:

- i. Residents do not have to resort to Court action to receive due compensation where the County Council is clearly liable?
- ii. Adequate resources are provided to deal with the backlog of cases going back in some cases, many years?’

**11. By Councillor J Deakin of the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning**

‘What 10 schools across Essex have been selected for The Risky Behaviours Pilot?’

What criteria were used for selecting these schools?’

**12. By Councillor T Higgins of the Cabinet Member for Adults Social Care**

‘It was recently necessary for Essex County Council to publicly apologise for its handling of an incident regarding a vulnerable adult.

In addition, there have been other occasions, reported in the press, which suggested a failure by Essex Social Services to react to the needs of vulnerable clients and their families.

Would the Cabinet Member please advise:

- What actions will Essex County Council take to improve procedures for vulnerable adults?
- How will Essex County Council ensure that adequate monitoring of commissioned contracts takes place?’

**13. By Councillor T Higgins of the Leader of the Council**

‘At the last Full Council I asked the Cabinet Member for Adults Social Care if he agreed that all consultations should be produced in ‘Plain

English' and not, as recently, in three different formats.

Would the Leader agree that there is an urgent need to promote the use of 'Plain English' in all its documents, interviews and presentations?'

**14. By Councillor M Danvers of the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Infrastructure**

'Arising from a public meeting in Harlow locally organised by the civic society, over the proposed 7A M11 junction, residents protested that the Essex Council consultation website does not allow a negative answer to supporting the scheme but simply provides a three choices of alternative route. Without answering this bias question the residents cannot submit the questionnaire on line.

Does the Portfolio Holder acknowledge that the consultation process on line is flawed?

Will he take steps to rectify this by starting the process over again so that local opinion can be genuinely projected on this important issue for Harlow's future?'

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

'Street Lights;  
Please supply, broken down by borough, city or district:

- (a) the number of county council operated street-lights in Essex
- (b) the number currently not working
- (c) the number of lamp columns currently cut down and sealed with tape

and provide details of the average time take to replace a cut-down lamp column.'

**16. By Councillor J Whitehouse of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation**

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‘Liaison with Transport for London

Please supply details of the arrangements that the county council has for liaison with Transport for London: in particular arrangements for dealing with parking and other traffic management issues arising from the Central Line and regarding strategic transport planning. When was the last meeting between Transport for London and the county council and what was discussed?’