
Essex County Council

14 July 2020

Order Paper

Agenda item 4

Public Questions

The following questions are to be asked by members of the public in accordance with Standing Order 16.12.8.

Question 1: from Mr Andrew Ansell, a resident of Basildon. He asks:

'The proposal to deliver two new waste incinerators in Pitsea will damage the health of local residents. Do the lives of people in Pitsea matter?'

Question 2: from Mr Ian Fuller, a resident of Boreham. He asks:

'I am sure that councillors would agree that delay to promised road improvements is very frustrating to residents, particularly when they could have been avoided. In North Springfield we have had to wait for years to have the improvements to Colchester Road completed and we are still waiting for the promised improvements to the Lawn Lane roundabout and the Rectory Lane junction. Now we are facing delays to the new roads around Beaulieu.

Countryside Properties received planning permission in 2014 to build up to 3,600 homes in what is now the Beaulieu development in North East Chelmsford. As part of the s.106 agreement a radial distributor road (RDR) is to be built to connect Essex Regiment Way to the Boreham interchange. The agreement states that this has to be completed by the 1000th occupation.

The completion of the RDR is essential to move traffic away from White Hart Lane and other roads in an increasingly congested North Springfield. It is also needed for Chelmsford's NE bypass which has its southern end at a roundabout on the RDR. It was disappointing news to hear that the bypass would not be a dual carriageway to the Boreham interchange but matters will be aggravated further if the completion of the RDR is delayed.

To complete the RDR the existing Generals Lane bridge over the railway near to the interchange has to be demolished. This will necessitate the closure of the railway so, practically speaking, the demolition can take place only during the Christmas – New Year period.

Since this is a critical part of the process, forming a bottleneck for the whole development you might have thought that plans would have been in place well in advance to advise Network Rail of the need to close the railway as there are so few opportunities to do the work.

It was my understanding that the demolition was to take place this year over the Christmas – New Year period. But now it seems that the work cannot go ahead because an agreement with Network Rail was not sorted out in time. This surely cannot have anything to do with the current crisis as this is purely an administrative process and there has been plenty of time for this essential matter to have been concluded well before this year's lockdown. The delay of at least one year is going to have a significant negative impact on the residents of North Springfield and beyond as well as the ongoing housing development in NE Chelmsford.

Can the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure explain why the agreement to allow for the demolition of the Generals Lane bridge at Boreham during the 2020 Christmas week was not signed off when it should have been which has resulted in a significant delay which means that the Radial Distributer Road will now not be open until September 2022 at the earliest?'

Agenda Item 10 Written Questions

1. By Councillor Beavis of the Leader of the Council

'Does the Leader have a process to fully understand the extent of the ongoing job losses in Essex due to the Corona Virus and what plans does he have in place to support employers and employees during and following the Pandemic.

I am concerned particularly with the aviation and hospitality sectors in Essex.'

2. By Councillor Beavis of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

'The Essex Health profile demonstrates a peak in the number of the deaths due to speeding vehicles on rural roads, particularly in the north of the Braintree District.

Can the Cabinet Member assure me that every opportunity is being taken to work with Essex Police to reduce speed on rural roads in the north of the Braintree District?

Could a fresh approach be taken to promote the significance of Speed Watch,

carried out by volunteers, to reduce speed on rural roads?’

3. By Councillor Reid of the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care and the Cabinet Member for Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate

‘The pandemic has highlighted how many lonely and isolated people we have in Essex, this ranges from the elderly to the young. There will be many who have been shielding or isolating through this time who will find it extremely difficult to open the front door and go outside, there will be many more who have no one close to them who understands their isolation and fear.

What measures are we putting in place as the lockdown eases and for the future to help and encourage our residents to feel part of our community again? With libraries, community centres and our youth facilities closed we must ensure that these places all have the help needed to re-open again for the mental health and wellbeing of Essex residents.’

4. By Councillor Henderson of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action

‘There are many residents within my Harwich Division who are angry and concerned that the Dovercourt Waste and Recycling Centre remains closed when others within Essex are open.

Will the Portfolio Holder please confirm that this is a temporary measure and the date that it is anticipated to reopen, and please include where the staff who usually work there are presently working? Has the closure caused additional fly-tipping in the area, and is ECC making a financial contribution to TDC in regard to this and if so, how much, and is there any consideration to provide a temporary caged vehicle facility for waste disposal on adjacent or alternative TDC owned land?’

5. By Councillor Harris of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

‘Some existing footpaths / cycle ways are very narrow, and do not allow social distancing, due to past design (Beside Monkwick Junior School) and due to inability to maintain widths over the years from vegetation growing into path/ cycle way limits. (Berechurch Hall Road to Gurdon Road)

With the Government indication to support cycling, which has laudable aims to get people out of buses and cars, is there any way that the maintenance of existing cycle ways be improved, widened and made more user friendly.

Some cycle ways have lost 2ft of path in my division due to overgrown vegetation,

and if the priority can be turned toward these routes, this would, I am sure you would agree, get more people cycling and using the urban cycle way routes from South Colchester to Central Colchester.'

6. By Councillor Harris of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action

'The staff at Shrub End recycling centre should be thanked for all the work they have done in trying to maintain opening times to access the tip, under difficult social distancing circumstances.

Would the Portfolio Holder consider changes to the entrance to Shrub End recycle centre, that would benefit workers, my constituents in Shrub end (Gladiator Way, Temple Road, off Cunobelin Way who are disadvantaged by queues outside their housing estate) and benefit users who want to recycle items in the new Covid way of working.

Would a change to the design of Cunobelin Way, with an extra lane for Shrub End tip be supported by the Portfolio Holder to aid good management of the centre, by improving queues and not disadvantaging my local constituents.'

7. By Councillor Reid of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families

'It has been widely reported that school closures will trigger a mental health crisis for children in the UK. Many of these children will need 'urgent support' when lock-down eases.

What measures are we putting in place to deal with this crisis? Children cannot wait 6 months to 1 year to receive help from a child psychologist or other departments necessary.

We know the Government has given extra money to councils, can the Cabinet Member guarantee that some of this funding will be put towards combating the impact this virus has had on these children.'

8. By Councillor Davies of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

'The government is now encouraging people to walk and cycle more however I am led to believe that Public Rights of Way are only maintained once a year with trimming and cutting. Could this be upgraded to a more regular trim in order to keep these walks pleasant for the general public?'

9. By Councillor Abbott of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development

‘In his Judgment of 18th June, the Honourable Mr Justice Pepperall found that the Basildon MBT plant had "serious design errors" including that the "biohalls were seriously undersized and incapable of processing the guaranteed tonnage of waste".

Whilst the Judgment was in favour of Essex County Council in terms of the dispute with the operators, and in terms of ECC acting as the waste authority, what implications does the Judgment have for ECC as the planning authority that gave planning permission for a plant now found to have serious design and capacity problems and which was promoted by ECC as a plant being developed to take all of the municipal waste arising in the ECC area of Essex?’

10. By Councillor Abbott of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

‘The focus of recovery planning in terms of safer access has to date been understandably in the first place for town centres in Essex, as shops and other outlets re-open. For the medium to longer term, what plans are there for safer and more sustainable modes to be developed in our rural areas, such as Braintree District where approx. 50% of residents do not live in the towns?’

Would ECC support measures such as dedicated cycling routes which could link the larger villages to the towns and railway stations, and which could unlock significant modal shift as well as helping to maintain distancing?’

11. By Councillor Scordis of the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

‘What action has been taken by our public health team to prepare for local lockdowns in Essex and coping with a possible second outbreak of Covid19?’

12. By Councillor Young of the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

‘Sadly, the predictions of Professor Marmot’s review “Fair Society, Healthy Lives” prepared 10 years ago warning that policies of public austerity after the 2008 financial crash would lead to a chasm in life expectancy between rich and poor has become true. The more deprived the area the lower the life expectancy due to the wider determinants of health. Austerity according to Marmot is a killer. The most deprived ward of Greenstead sits within my County Council division, within that ward I have 4 Local Super Output Areas, the highest amount of any Colchester Borough ward. The circumstances of my division are not alone, in Tendring, Canvey Island, Harlow and Basildon we find a similar story where life expectancy between the richest and poorest areas of both men and women has widened.

My question to the Cabinet Member responsible for public health is this:

Can you make a commitment to steer this authorities' policies towards addressing the growing inequity in life expectancy between rich and poor by restricting cuts and targeting resources to those areas that have the worse socio-economic conditions?'

13. By Councillor Young of the Cabinet Member for Customer, Corporate, Culture and Communities

'We know that people have found the isolation of the Coronavirus pandemic detrimental to their mental health and wellbeing, we also know how much our libraries are valued as local centres where people can come together to access books, information and computer access. We therefore need all our libraries to be reopened.

Can the portfolio holder confirm that all Essex Libraries will be reopened and when that will be? Can they also confirm that the reopening will not be dependent on whether or not there are volunteers to staff them?'

14. By Councillor Davies of the Cabinet Member for Customer, Corporate, Culture and Communities

'Many local Laindon residents including pensioners rely upon a post office. Since the demolition of Laindon Centre, it has been agreed to place a Post Office in Laindon Library. This is an eagerly awaited, much needed service amongst residents.

Please could you provide an up to date progress report and reassure the public that a post office will be in place once the library opens in July?'

15. By Councillor Buckley of the Cabinet Member for Finance

'Given that the quarter day has now passed and apparently less than 20% of rents due on retail properties were paid on time and taking into account the significant number of retailers and investors such as Intu seeking CVA's or other insolvency actions, can the Cabinet Member confirm:

1. What percentage of ECC's anticipated rent has been received in the current quarter?
2. What are the forecast income figures for the full year compared with the original projections made by the Councils advisers?
3. Given the reduction of income what is the estimated reduction in capital values?
4. What mitigation measures are being taken to minimise the medium and long term

impact on capital and income?’

16. By Councillor Scordis of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

‘Essex County Council bid for £1.9 million for its walking and cycling programme and only received 50% of this funding, due to weaknesses in our application and proposals.

Can the portfolio holder confirm what weaknesses were highlighted by the government in our bid?’

17. By Councillor Aspinell of the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

‘Why does the Cabinet Member repeatedly present ridiculous designs and plans for modular schools to the Planning Committee for permission to erect? These plans were questioned quite vigorously by all members at the last D&R Committee and I am reliably informed that that has been the case whenever similar designs have been put forward.

This clearly goes against County’s own policies regarding reduction in carbon emissions and green renewable energy initiatives, and as a retired firefighter, the thought of placing children in a flat roofed, wood cladded box fills me with dread.’

18. By Councillor Mackrory of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

‘The successful introduction of 20mph speed limits in our urban centres to facilitate safer walking and cycling is welcomed. Will the cabinet member therefore review the current policy for 20mph speed limits in residential areas so that there is a presumption in favour of their introduction which will enable safer walking and cycling in those areas too?’

19. By Councillor Mackrory of the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

‘Can the cabinet member supply the following for the period 20 March to 30 June:

- How many people were transferred from hospital to Care Homes in Essex
- How many of those people had been tested Covid-19 positive on discharge
- How many of people in Essex Care Homes died of Covid-19
- What is the number of deaths in Essex during this period as compared to the five year average ie. the excess deaths’

20. By Councillor Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families

‘What action is Essex County Council taking to address the serious problem of domestic violence? What funding is the County Council providing this financial year and going forward for investment in early intervention, prevention programmes and community-based support to tackle this issue?’

21. By Councillor Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action

‘What detailed plans does Essex County Council have in place to create more green jobs across Essex?’

22. By Councillor Turrell of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

‘I have found out that Essex, along with other Highways Authorities. has not had its full allocation of the Active Travel Funding from the Government. Is Essex actively chasing the £1 million they are short?’

23. By Councillor Wood of the Cabinet Member for Finance

‘Could the portfolio holder please advise the council with Covid-19 affecting the country and the fact that we have been in lockdown, how has this affected the shopping units we have in Leeds and elsewhere, with regard to the council’s investments.’

24. By Councillor Wood of the Leader of the Council

‘Will the Leader end this Council’s relationship with China immediately in the light of the appalling abuse of human rights perpetrated by the security forces on the people of Hong Kong, now compounded by the passing of the new security law which is a clear and serious violation of the Sino-British joint declaration which protects the freedoms of Hong Kong citizens until 2047.’

25. By Councillor Deakin of the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

‘With the potential increased home to school transport costs if social distancing is still in place in September, what are the financial implications for this council?’

In addition, if parents aren't able to return to work full time by September, there will be added bus pass applications which the child then remains entitled to until the end of school, even when the parents have returned to work. Has this council looked at the potential forward cost that could arise from Covid19 if this is the case? What is the anticipated financial impact?

26. By Councillor Buckley of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

'The Cabinet Member is aware of the long-standing wish of myself and Cllr Ball for the closure of Wickford High Street on Saturdays to accommodate the expansion of the market.

Given that Basildon Council has temporarily closed the market for an indefinite period 'to accommodate social distancing', will the Cabinet Member set out a robust timetable for the relevant order to be made in order that plans can be made to ensure the continuation of over 120 years of market trading in Wickford?'

27. By Councillor Robinson of the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

'In order to help Essex reduce its carbon emissions, and for hard-pressed school budgets to save money, will the Cabinet Member for Education propose that all new school buildings should have renewable energy (such as solar panels and ground source heat pumps) included in their design?

Will he encourage existing schools to follow that example and indeed help them to via the ECC bulk-buying scheme for solar panels?'

28. By Councillor Smith of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

'A further accident and this time a tragic incident took place on Staneway on Saturday 4 July. This location shares a boundary with Orsett Ward of Thurrock close to the beauty spot of Westley Heights, the highest point in Essex which is used by scores of people every day.

Last year, I made a request to the Basildon Local Highways Panel to reduce the speed limit on Staneway/High Road from 50 to 40 MPH which was rejected as it didn't meet the criteria and therefore was given a red RAG rating.

Will the Cabinet Member please meet with me and the elected members for the Wards of Langdon Hills and Orsett Ward onsite to discuss safety measures such as reducing the speed limit on Staneway/High Road from 50 MPH to 40 MPH?'

29. By Councillor Smith of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action

‘As Essex County Council has now chosen to embrace the cult of “man-made climate change”, how does an incinerator in Basildon burning up to 150,000 tonnes of rubbish a year in Basildon fit in with this newly found concern? Will the Cabinet Member stand by the people of Basildon and whole heartedly object to this proposed incinerator?’