

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16 October 2012

Order Paper

Agenda Item

13(b) Written Questions (Standing Order 16.11.3)

1. **By Councillor D Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Environment and Culture.**

‘How much has Essex County Council received as a ‘subsidy’ from when they first started using 0845 telephone numbers up to now?’

2. **By Councillor B Aspinell of the Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Environment and Culture.**

‘Following the Government’s requirement to list heritage assets, and recent reports in the press regarding Essex County Council’s ownership of valuable artwork and maps, estimated some years ago at approximately £14.3 million, would the Cabinet Member please advise:

- When the artwork was last valued?
- Is it now prudent to have another valuation?
- Should a cross party committee be convened to discuss the possible exhibiting, storage and, where appropriate, disposal of some works of art?’

3. By Councillor M Fisher of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation

'Would it be better use of resources if there were fewer inspections to prioritise highways work and more crews going round area by area and actually fixing the potholes properly? It is ludicrous to have two-thirds of the potholes in one street mended and leaving the remainder because they do not (at that point) meet the criterion for being filled.

Would the portfolio holder please tell me how many members of staff are manning Enquiries and how many pothole inspectors there are?'

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

'Brentwood's Local Highways Panel budget for potential schemes in 2012 is £449,876, which is the third lowest allocation in Essex. This low figure means it is impossible for us to fund the two major junction improvements that are needed in Brentwood at the Devil's Head crossroads in Warley and at Sandpit Lane / Ongar Road in Pilgrims Hatch, as their projected cost of £1,500,000 is well over our allocation. Brentwood residents have been told that the County has no money available to pay for these road safety schemes, but at the same time they have seen £11 million miraculously appear from nowhere for the emergency pothole repair programme. Would the Cabinet Member tell me:

- (1) How many personal injury accidents have to take place at these dangerous junctions before the County Council allocates the funding to improve them?
- (2) Which budget was used to pay for the £11 million pothole repair programme?
- (3) Did the £11 million found for pothole repairs mean that the budget allocated to local Highway Panels across Essex for locally determined schemes was reduced?'

5. By Councillor T Higgins of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation

‘Whilst fully supporting initiatives for safer driving, would the Cabinet Member agree with me that the positioning of ‘No Excuse for Poor Driving’ [and similar] signs, should not distract or obstruct drivers’ vision?’

There seems to me to be a plethora of street clutter – shouldn’t signs be consolidated where possible?

Would the Cabinet Member let me know the cost of putting up such a sign?’

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

‘How many times in the past two and a half years [April 2010-April 2011 and April 2011-September 2012] have contractors had to return to redo a highways job because it was not done satisfactorily or correctly the first time? What was the shortest, longest and median time for this second repair to be done? How many of these unsatisfactory repairs were reported? ’

7. By Councillor M Fisher of the Cabinet Member for Education, Lifelong Learning & the 2012 Games.

‘It has come to my attention that a survey on attitudes to the Olympic Legacy was conducted on behalf of ECC after the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games were finished.

The survey was a random one, with no socio-economic questions, i.e. age of resident, any children, working, etc. The questions that were asked were unnecessarily repetitive.

I would like to ask who commissioned this survey and was he/she aware of the sampling method, i.e. random? A better method is to take every 10th name on the electoral register to interview and although this is more expensive than random surveys, the results would have been better. I wonder what effect the cost of this survey will have on the portfolio holder’s budget.

Would that money not have been better spent giving grants to sports clubs, many of which are having to close, or for the hire of sports halls and playing fields?’

8. By Councillor J Deakin of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Planning.

‘As highlighted by some of my recent casework, I was astonished to find that the public are unable to access Essex County Council Planning Applications on the Council’s own website in order to view plans in detail, read attached reports, and see comments submitted.

It appears that the majority of other County Councils in England already have this facility. When will this public service be available to the residents of Essex?’

9. By Councillor T Higgins of the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services.

‘In view of the fact that from 2013 nursery places are to be available for 2 year olds who meet the “free school meal” criteria, would the Portfolio Holder tell me how Essex is planning to cater for these children? Is further accommodation to be built at current nurseries, many of which already have waiting lists, or are they to be looked after in different / new accommodation?’

The fact that there is an underspend in this budget heading does not, I think, indicate that there is no demand for nursery places, but merely that parents would prefer places in Nursery departments of Infant Schools, not the provision in the private sector, hence the waiting list.

Would the Portfolio Holder please tell me the number of children currently on the waiting lists of ECC nursery classes?’

10. By Councillor M Mackrory of The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Transformation Programme.

‘In answer to my question at the October 2011 Council, I was told by the [then] Cabinet Member that proposals were being drawn up for the future use of the Shire Hall.

One year on, will the Cabinet Member update me on what progress has been made, and will he ensure that serious consideration be given for the display of public art?’

11. By M Mackrory of The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Transformation Programme.

‘Further to the Freedom of Information request, reference ECC 0124611– 12 dated 27 September 2012, would the Cabinet Member state what action has been taken to recover the 90 reported lost or stolen mobile phones during the period March 2011- August 2012?’

12. By Councillor J Whitehouse of the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care.

‘The changeover of providers of Meals on Wheels to Sodexo was poor and caused anxiety to many residents, particularly those with diabetic conditions, and their families. It also brought adverse publicity to the County Council.

What sanctions are being applied to Sodexo, and what compensation or refund is being offered to those whose meals were late?

Are you satisfied with the Meals on Wheels service delivery now? Are all the meals being delivered in the specified time band?’