
Essex County Council

11 February 2020

Order Paper

Agenda item 4 **Public Question Time**

The following question is to be asked by a member of the public in accordance with Standing Order 16.12.9.

Question 1: from Mr Peter Fowler, representing the Chelmsford, Brentwood and South Woodham Ferrers Green Party, to ask a question concerning the Essex Climate Change Commission. He asks:

'At the last full council meeting, 8th October, in his surprise speech on the climate and ecological crisis, the leader of Essex County Council emphasised the importance of actions over words. So Cllr David Finch announced the setting up an Essex Climate Change Commission to look at what Essex CC could do to mitigate the effects of climate and global change in Essex and a sum of £250,000 to fund initiatives to achieve this.

Bearing in mind the £250000 is Essex rate payers contribution to the running of Essex services by the county council, and the need for residents to hold Essex CC to account for what it says and does (it's actions and words): what are the terms of reference for this committee?

(The concept of 'terms of reference' is a complex one and is better answered by looking at its components, which could include:

What precisely is its function? At what intervals of time should this committee meet? Exactly how long has the committee to procure it's outcomes? What is and isn't included in the remit of the committee? What will be the outcome of the committee? Will the committee truly be cross-party? And who are the experts the committee will consult?)'

Agenda item 7 The Budget 2020/2021

The report and recommendations as shown in the agenda were published prior to the financial settlement being received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The financial settlement having since been received a document revising the budget recommendations has been circulated to all Members. The changes do not affect the recommended level of council tax

Agenda Item 10 Written Questions

1. By Councillor Beavis of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families

'I am concerned about the waiting times of our young children seeking mental health services. There is a national growing trend of young people requiring mental health services and I fear that a backlog is/or could be building up.

Could the Cabinet Member please provide an update so that we may understand the position in Essex.'

2. By Councillor Young of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action

'What actions has the council put in place to reduce the amount of waste being sent abroad that is detrimental to the environment and how are we going to hold ourselves accountable?'

3. By Councillor Harris of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action

'I am prompted to ask this question over the Colchester Shrub End recycling centre, after residents have raised with me plastic recycling arrangements at Shrub End. I have been told by staff on site to throw plastic recycling into household rubbish containers.

Can the contract at Shrub End be revised to ensure plastic recycling is not thrown in "general waste" bins, but recycled instead?

A lot of plastic ends up being taken in by Colchester residents, and it is a great source of frustration to see Colchester Council doing its bit to reuse, and recycle, when the Essex County recycling centre is not geared up for climate change in this way.'

4. By Councillor Aspinell of the Leader of the Council

'In 2019 I met with both Cllr Barker and Cllr Mohindra, with Cllr McKinlay also being in attendance, to discuss the future of the Shenfield library site. I was told by Cllr Mohindra that ECC does not need to seek planning permission from Brentwood Borough Council (BBC), as they have the right over their own property to give permission, and that they only needed to advise BBC of their intentions as statutory consultees.

I questioned this information at the time but was assured that this was the position. However, after speaking to planning officers and the Chief Executive at Brentwood they assure me that this is certainly not the case, and that ECC would have to submit a planning application to BBC in the normal fashion.

Please could you confirm what the correct position is?'

5. By Councillor Pratt of the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

'Can the Cabinet Member please explain what actions were undertaken following the recent liquidation of Dial-a-Carer and what implications this has for the wider system?'

6. By Councillor Deakin of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

'With this council rightly putting a lot of emphasis on health and well-being, by encouraging walking and cycling amongst other things. Could the Cabinet Member explain how residents, particularly the more elderly, are expected to participate on very poorly maintained footpaths and incomplete, unsafe cycleways across the county?'

Real improvements, would encourage more use of cycleways and footpaths, increase health and well-being and in turn save significant sums of money for the NHS, social care and other services.

When will he ensure real investment and real improvements in these areas?'

7. By Councillor Mackrory of the Cabinet Member for Customer, Corporate, Culture and Communities

‘What is the current position regarding the proposed Community-run Libraries scheme? In particular, how many libraries subject to this proposal are involved in detailed discussions?

Are there any other Libraries where there has been no or few genuine expressions of interest?

What progress has been made with the investment programme as referred to in the July 2019 Cabinet report and when is the further report to cabinet also referred to expected?’

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

‘Will the Cabinet Member give the background as to why Essex County Council is owed £11.9m in deferred payments, the second highest in the country, and what safeguards are in place for the future of the scheme given the Prime Minister’s pledge that no one should have to sell their home to pay for their care?’

9. By Councillor Davies of the Leader of the Council

‘Now that the UK has left the European Union, we will no longer receive billions in EU structural funding which was used to support businesses, employment and agriculture.

The Conservative Government has pledged to set up a Shared Prosperity Fund, in order to replace this funding.

Can the Cabinet Member give an update on the Prosperity Fund and how Essex will benefit?’

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

‘When was the last time the County Council’s criteria for repairing potholes was formally reviewed with input from members? Will the Cabinet Member for Highways support a full review into the criteria for repairing potholes being undertaken by the relevant scrutiny committee?’

11. By Councillor Kendall of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

‘What action is the Council taking to secure Government funding to ensure that research is undertaken into re-opening railway lines and stations across Essex that were closed under the Beeching review?’

12. By Councillor Robinson of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

‘What is the Essex Highways policy for cutting back vegetation overhanging the highway (in particular, blocking footways) from adjacent, non-highway land?’

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

‘Over the last 12 months how many press releases have been issued by Essex County Council about the Army and Navy roundabout in Chelmsford and also of the threat of a congestion charge/clean air charging zone on the A127 in Basildon?’

14. By Councillor Smith of the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

‘Has the Council got any plans to create a new secondary school between now and 2035 within the Divisions of either Westley Heights or the Laindon Park & Fryerns Divisions?’

If not, where will be the nearest secondary schools that can take the extra pupils that will come as a result of the new Local Plan once approved by the Government for Basildon Borough Council?’

15. By Councillor Reid of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

‘With budgets being squeezed, do we as a County Council need to re-evaluate how and what materials we use to repair our road surfaces and our potholes? We have had a mild winter with hardly any hard frost and yet potholes which were repaired last year have reappeared and are as deep as they were previously.’

It cannot be cost-effective to continue to use the current method that is not fixing problems but just covering the surface for a short period of time.’

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

‘What plans are the County Council putting in place to provide the infrastructure for more electric charging points in view of the news today (4th February) that the government has announced the phasing out of petrol and diesel cars by 2035.’