
ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

13 December 2011

Order Paper

Agenda Item

13(b) Questions (Standing Order 16.11.3)

1. **By Councillor T Smith-Hughes of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.**

'Councillor Candy issued a message to all Members on 26 November 2011, giving the impression that the County Council's position in the judicial review case of the closure of children's homes had been fully vindicated. The second paragraph of her message stated –

"The claimant's case was dismissed and an agreement was reached which Essex fully supports as it sets out the course of action we had previously intended."

However, media reports of the case state that Mr Justice Collins described the 15 December deadline for children to move out of their homes as "foolish" and that the Council had failed to communicate its intention to "protect the interests" of every child to the children themselves and those representing them. The Judge also ordered the Council to pay all the legal costs of the 17 year old boy who took the County Council to Court.

In future, please, can Councillors receive balanced statements which give a rounded picture of an issue rather than misleadingly spun messages which show the Council in too rosy a light?'

2. **By Councillor T Smith-Hughes of the Cabinet Member for Education and the 2012 Games.**

'I have been approached by a number of Essex residents about a consultation that took place in October and November 2011 regarding a proposal to change the priority given to siblings in the criteria used when schools are over-subscribed. I originally knew nothing about the consultation and then heard Councillor Castle interviewed on BBC Essex on the subject. Yet the proposal – presumably his – has gone

out to “stakeholders”, which I understand includes schools and parents, but not to County Councillors.

Why, once again, have non-executive Councillors been treated in such a cavalier way, having to hear about a proposal being considered by the Council which could, if introduced, affect their constituents as a result of chance conversations or through the media?’

3. By Councillor M Mackrory of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation Programme

‘In the light of recent revelations regarding unspent and returned Section 106 monies held by this Council, will the Cabinet Member make available to me details of funds held in what is historically known as the 'Springfield Pot', together with the expiry dates by which such funds have to be spent?

Will he further undertake to make available to all Members similar details of Section 106 monies held on a district by district basis?’

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

‘Two Brentwood County Members were recently told that dangerous road junctions in their Divisions at -

- Sandpit Lane / Ongar Road in Pilgrims Hatch and
- Devil’s Head crossroads at Warley

would not get funding for major road improvement schemes because there had not been enough reported personal injury accidents and fatalities to make them a priority.

Our residents would now like to know how many people have to be seriously injured or die at these junctions before the County find the funding to enable these much needed schemes to go ahead?’

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

‘I understand that the October edition of the Bus Timetable book was not produced, and a review of the Timetable Book is now going to be carried out.

Will the Cabinet Member please give her assurance that the Bus

Timetable book will continue to be published by Essex County Council, on the same basis as it has been up to now, as many of our residents, particularly the elderly, rely heavily on the book because they are unable to access bus timetables via the internet?’

6. By Councillor B Aspinell of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation

‘Many Councillors have examples of residents who have suffered serious personal injuries, or claim to have damaged their vehicles in potholes caused primarily by recent bad winters and the Council’s failure to carry out repairs in due time.

When they come to complain or seek compensation they usually get a reply from the Legal Department – a standard type of letter admitting no liability and offering no assistance.

Given the ease with which the Council is able to deny blame for serious injuries suffered by Essex residents, many of them elderly, as a result of badly maintained roads and footways, and the insensitive tone of the letters subsequently sent out to distressed people, would the Cabinet Member agree with me that a rethink of both the Council’s policies, and attitude towards the payment of compensation for residents that have suffered financial and/or personal injury because of the bad state of repair of the Council’s highways network is now necessary?’

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

‘Back in Dec 2007 I asked a question about street clutter, in particular ‘A Boards’.

Subsequently a draft guidance paper was put out to consultation in August 2008. Since then I have repeatedly asked questions about progress, and the matter was eventually taken up by the Safer and Stronger Committee in July 2010. When this Policy Scrutiny Committee was disbanded in May 2011, the matter was then delegated to the Safer and Stronger Task and Finish Group and a report was submitted at the September 2011 meeting. The November meeting was cancelled. When can I expect some action and see the guidance become policy?’

8. By Councillor Mrs T Higgins of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

What progress has been made with Partners to provide move-on accommodation for young / older people in care or in a similar situation, including those with disabilities?

9. By Councillor M Mackrory of the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Community Wellbeing

'The Cabinet Member will be aware of the outstanding work carried out by the Essex Respite Association [ERA] throughout the County, over many years.

In the light of the withdrawal of ECC funding, will the Cabinet Member make contact with Essex Respite Association to establish an interim arrangement which would allow ERA to facilitate the introduction of the new system of payment by personalised payments? Failure to do so could see the demise of a service that provides help for one of the most socially excluded sections of society.'

10. By Councillor S Mayzes of The Leader of The Council

'Given the announcement by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games that the Olympic Flame as part of the London 2012 official torch relay will be celebrated in every other local authority area in Essex except Tendring;

Can the Leader assure the residents of Tendring that this Council is actively pursuing efforts to bring about a 'minor detour' to the route in order for Tendring to be part of the celebrations?'