

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING 10 July 2012 Order Paper

Agenda Items

16(b) Written Questions (standing order 16.11.3)

1. By Councillor J Young of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Planning

Would the portfolio holder for planning consult with the Chair of Essex Fire Authority to amend planning policies to promote the installation of sprinkler systems. Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Fire Authority have done a great deal to spread good practice in this area which we could learn from?

2. By Councillor G Butland of the Cabinet Member for Education, Life Long Learning and the 2012 Games

What plans has he to tackle the issue of low academic achievement in Braintree District? Has his department identified the reasons for the district having the lowest percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C grades GCSEs, during the period 2007-11, of any of the districts in Essex?

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

Would the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation please clarify the following points regarding the Greater Essex Bus Timetable Book which was recently published by Here to There Publishing Limited :

- What involvement have the Members and officers of Essex County Council had in the publishing of this book in terms of pricing, size, weight, size of print, prior to it going to print?
- Which Bus User groups across Essex were consulted and asked for their views on this book prior to it being published?
- When the last Bus Timetable Book was produced by Essex County Council for sale at £1, over 10,000 copies were sold. How many books do the County Council expect to be sold at the new price of £13.50?
- Will the County Council consider subsidising any future Essex Bus Timetable Books to ensure that the pricing is affordable to the many bus users who have no internet access and who rely on the book for their bus information?

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

How are incidents to Highways logged and how does this relate to the decision as to when repairs are carried out? One of my residents told me last week that £260 of damage had been done to her car by a pothole. When she telephoned Highways to report it, knowing that it had already been reported by another resident, she was told there was no record of the previous complaints.

The officer who spoke to her also said that there is no money to repair the potholes. In the light of the announcement about funding for potholes, will you please ensure that such erroneous information is not given.

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

Where does the North Essex Partnership sit in the Essex County Council structure, particularly relating to democratic accountability?

Officers at NEPP are taking a very rigid line with regard to parking permits. Where does the Member discussion about such matters take place? How do Members influence the decisions?

6. By Councillor D Kendall of the Leader

Would the Leader of the Council please clarify the following regarding the 'Essex Works' magazine:

- When was the decision made to discontinue the Essex Works printed magazine and change it to an online e-magazine, and who made the decision?
- What is the cost of printing and distributing an edition of the Essex Works magazine and how many are printed per edition?
- How much revenue does an edition of the Essex Works magazine generate from selling advertising space?
- How are the many Essex residents, who do not have internet access, particularly the elderly, expected to receive the latest updates on Council services?
- Why has this issue not been considered first by a Scrutiny Committee prior to a final decision being made?

7. By Councillor G Butland of the Leader

Would the Leader of the Council agree that:

- (i) housing conditions are a significant contributor to the issues that the Community Budgets pilot is seeking to address;
- (ii) local authorities and other public bodies such as, Central Government agencies and the Police, have substantial land banks which could be released for affordable and social housing;

- (iii) too often such bodies, quoting the Local Government Act 1972, seek only to obtain the best consideration possible when disposing of land and rarely use that part of the Act that allows a local authority or other public body to sell land at a consideration which is less than the best which can reasonably be obtained, if it considers the disposal “will help it to secure the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area” provided the consideration foregone does not exceed £2m; and
- (iv) the use of this dispensation should be encouraged across the public sector in Essex and should figure prominently in the final submission to Government?