

Public Document Pack

Simon Young, Solicitor
Head of Legal and Democratic Services



To: All Members of the Council

Dear Councillor

COUNCIL - TUESDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2017

Please find attached the following information the meeting of the Council to be held on Tuesday, 17 October 2017.

4. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS (Pages 3 - 12)

To answer any written questions from Councillors

Note: The deadline for questions was 5pm on Wednesday 11 October 2017 (17.00 hours on the third clear working day before the meeting).

For further information, please contact Fiona Cotter, tel: 01372 732124 or email: fcotter@epsom-ewell.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S Young".

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

This page is intentionally left blank

QUESTION 1

Question from Councillor Alex Clarke to the Chairman of the Strategy and Resources Committee, Councillor Eber Kington

Has Epsom & Ewell Borough Council done a thorough examination of the Council's emergency contingency plans and crisis management provisions with a view to recent events?

Reply:

Over the last few months' our officers have undertaken a thorough review the Council's emergency contingency plans and crisis management provisions including:

- Updating fire risk assessments of all of our buildings with a detailed summary of any works and actions required. Funding has been released for the actions with confirmed costs and the Building Surveyor is obtaining further quotes. A follow up review of all the action points will be undertaken in January 2018 to ensure they have been implemented.
- Updating fire warden training, run internally by a member of staff.
- Undertaking in July an emergency planning exercise (planned before the Grenfell fire) which focused around a major incident and the resources the Council would require in such an event. This identified a number of action points, which were reported to the Leadership Team as part of the normal post implementation process.
- Our Emergency Planning arrangements were audited in June and found to be sound and we were given reasonable assurance of the processes in place. Action is in hand to implement the recommendations made.

In addition:

- The next One Team Meetings due in November will focus around all the work that has been done to date to make all staff aware and will also encourage more staff to be involved should there be a major incident or emergency.
- As part of normal business, further exercises are planned, and the Emergency Plans and Business Continuity Plans are regularly reviewed.

Our Emergency Plan was fully reviewed in August 2016 to provide a structure to respond, as far as practically possible, to the needs of all type of emergencies. This links to the Surrey Major Incident Plan, which was

refreshed in January 2017. These are supported by a range of plans, including the Emergency Assistance Centre Plan, that are all subject to regular review.

QUESTION 2

Question from Councillor Tony Axelrod to the Chairman of the Strategy and Resources Committee, Councillor Eber Kington

At the Community and Wellbeing Committee meeting held on the 9 October, this Council agreed to continue its support for the Shopmobility scheme in Epsom town. This Council is one of only two Surrey Boroughs directly funding such a scheme, supporting both our residents and town Centre businesses. In this difficult time of swathing central and local government cuts and withdrawal/reductions of service, can you please give any further examples of this Council's ongoing non statutory support for our Borough's businesses and residents?"

Reply:

I thank Councillor Tony Axelrod for his question.

I asked our Heads of Service if they would like to provide me with some examples of the non-statutory support that is provided by their teams for our Borough's businesses and residents. As you will read below, those Heads of Service were very willing so to do, not least because they are rightly proud of the range of services they continue to provide in these challenging financial times. I did not feel it right to select some examples rather than others and therefore I have reproduced their examples in full – which is extensive. However, I should also say that the list is not exhaustive.

1. Wellbeing Provision

Providing Community care within the community supporting independent living at home is a discretionary service that the Council offers its residents.

- Meals at home: Offering a choice of hot or frozen meals, sandwiches, essential shopping delivered to the door. We cater for different dietary needs including vegetarians, diabetics, pureed, low fat, low salt, gluten free and cultural requirements such as halal.
- Transport from home: Accessible buses offering a supported transport service that operates a door-to-door return journey service, collecting residents from their home to attend the Community and Well-being Centre, the doctors, hairdressers, hospital, Friends and family and shopping.
- Community Alarm plus: Offering the safety of a personal alarm system connected to a 24hr monitoring centre at a touch of a button, or

triggered by technology, for example, a falls detector, smoke alarm, minimum temperature alarm etc. which will alert the 24-hour monitoring centre, who will contact the most appropriate person, depending on which the alarm is triggered.

- Get Active 50+ programme e.g. strength training classes, swimming/ water confidence classes etc.
- Discretionary Fund to help vulnerable residents remain in their own homes
- Provision of a Discretionary Hardship Fund for those in receipt of Council Tax Support but who still experience problems with the payment of their Council Tax
- The Benefits Service can provide internet access and professional advice for those residents needing to claim Universal Credit
- Air Alert: We help fund this free to use service, which automatically alerts residents to instances of poor air quality, so that they can change their plans.

2. Leisure Provision

There are seven recreation grounds with sports facilities.

- Alexandra Park - Bowling Green, 3 Tennis courts, 5 Football pitches (2 full size, 2 mini pitches and 1 9V9), Cricket (2 squares) Basket Ball, 2 Pavilions, Multi-Use Games Area
- Auriol Park - Bowling Green, 4 Football Pitches (2 full and 2 mini pitches), Basket Ball, Pavilion, 2 Tennis Courts, Multi-Use Games Area
- Court Recreation Ground - Bowling Green, Astro Turf area, 3 Tennis Courts/Netball, 5 Football Pitches (2 full size, 2 mini pitches and 1 9V9), 2 Pavilions
- Gibraltar Recreation Ground - Bowling Green, 3 Football Pitches (2 full size and 1 5X5) Cricket (1 square), Pavilion, 3 Tennis Courts
- Poole Road Recreation Ground - Athletics Track & Harrier Centre, 2 Football Pitches (1 full size and 1 9V9), 2 Tennis courts, Basket Ball, Multi-Use Games Area.
- Longrove Recreation Ground – BMX/Skatepark Facility, Part of the park is used by the school for sport and play
- Warren Recreation Ground – Part of field used by school for sport and play

The Council has, and maintains, 23 playground facilities within the Borough:

1. Shadbolt Park Playground/Gym
2. Auriol MUGA
3. Auriol Playground
4. Curtis Road Playground
5. Hardwicks Yard Playground
6. Gatley Avenue Playground
7. Poole Road Playground
8. Poole Road MUGA (Multi-use games facility)
9. London Road Playground
10. Longmead MUGA (Multi-use games facility)
11. Gibraltar Rec Playground/Gym
12. Court Rec Gym Trail
13. Court Rec Playground
14. Alexandra Park Ball Park
15. Alexandra Playground
16. Elizabeth Welchman Gardens
17. Rosebery Park Playground
18. The Warren Playground/
19. The Wells Playground
20. Longrove Skate Park
21. Longrove Playground
22. Manor Park Playground
23. Clarendon Playground

Delivery of the Leisure Developments Action Plan but specifically:

- Surrey Youth Games
- Round the Borough Hike & Bike
- Epsom & Ewell Sports Awards
- Free Access to County Sports People (FACS) – free access to the Rainbow LC

Plus restoration of the pond in Rosebery Park

3. Supporting business and the local economy:

There are a number of non-statutory services we provide to support businesses and our local economy. The following are examples of some of the things we do:

- Adoption of a Borough-wide Economic Development Strategy in April 2016 and the Council contracts the services of an Economic Development Consultant to help coordinate efforts in this area.
- Epsom Town Centre is the major retail centre within the Borough and we are currently putting resources into supporting business to get a Business Improvement District (BID) off the ground.
- As an integral part of the Plan E transport improvements, led by Surrey County Council, the Borough Council is funding improvements to the Town Centre's public realm – paving, wayfinding, seating, and lighting – that will make our town an even better place to visit, to eat and to shop. We believe that investment in the public realm will also help attract new businesses and retailers into the Borough.
- Place Development convenes regular meetings with commercial agents in the Borough to share intelligence on vacant premises and the needs of businesses looking to come to the area. This is mutually beneficial.
- Business Leaders' Breakfasts are organised by the Borough Council and provide an opportunity to maintain strong links with local businesses and representative organisations and discuss key issues of mutual interest.
- Building on key partnerships is important to securing the necessary funding and collective effort to make things happen locally. To this end, the Borough Council is a member of the Gatwick Diamond initiative and the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership.
- Another Borough Council initiative is the Community Improvement Fund (CIF), which has seen the transformation of shops in the Borough's three main retail centres (Epsom, Ewell and Stoneleigh Broadway). This initiative has greatly benefitted the surrounding businesses and made for centres that are more attractive. The next round of funding for this initiative is about to be announced. It is likely that the next proposed iteration of CIF will spread the joy further – by widening the scope of eligible projects (beyond shopfronts to public realm improvements) and by opening the scheme to all of the Borough's retail areas.
- The Council has put in place Article 4 directions in Epsom town centres to stop offices being turned into apartments – so preventing the

dormitory town effect where town centres lose the office worker footfall. These Article 4 directions have also been put in place to protect shops being turned into more nail bars, estate agents, and coffee shops.

- Hosting the monthly local Pubwatch scheme to support our trade and those out on the town

And finally:

- Provision of a Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme for local charities, community amateur sports clubs and non-profit making organisation to assist with the payment of their annual Business Rates bill

QUESTION 3

Question from Councillor Hannah Dalton to the Chairman of the Environment Committee, Councillor John Beckett

Food hygiene and food safety is important to our residents when visiting restaurants, buying food or arranging their children to have school meals. Whilst our own Environment Health Team do an excellent job in inspecting local premises, and many of most of our food outlets achieve a high rating, the law does not currently oblige food outlets, restaurants etc. to display their current food hygiene mark. However, displaying ratings publically will both inform residents but also enable them to make more informed choices about where they shop and eat.

Will the Chairman of the Environment Committee therefore please confirm that this Council is supporting the Local Government Association's call to make the public display of Food Hygiene Marks compulsory?

Reply:

I thank Councillor Dalton for her question on this subject. I am happy to confirm this Council's support for the LGA's call for the mandatory display of food hygiene ratings. I commend those food businesses who are compliant and who take food hygiene seriously. I am pleased to see that many local businesses already choose to display their rating publically. The Council's Environmental Health Team will always work to support local food businesses aiming to improve on their marking. The Environmental Health Team are about to launch a new initiative focusing on those business that need further assistance. Under the current Government system, food establishments, which are significantly unhygienic, do not have to display their ratings. This surely cannot be allowed to continue. Consumers/residents should know this information before they walk through the door and be able to make an informed choice as to where they want to eat.

QUESTION 4

Question from Councillor Alex Clarke to the Chairman of the Environment Committee, Councillor John Beckett

How goes the 'big switch' of bins? Have there been any issues or specific success, and if so what lessons have been learnt from them?

Reply:

I thank Councillor Clarke for asking his question and the Big Switch went extremely well. We think it was the most successful service launch we've ever done.

During the switch, many residents spoke to our launch teams. Residents were overwhelmingly supportive, knew what to expect, and were looking forward to it. Some people told us they didn't need our leaflets and labels, because they knew how it all worked and when it was happening for them. A few had even pre-switched their bins before we even got there and left notes to tell us!

So we knew that our intense pre-publicity programme – 40 roadshows being at the heart of this and lots more besides – had done a great job of getting the message across to residents. They knew what to do, and were happy to do it.

The key aspects of the project's success were:

1. Communications – not just publicity actions, but also careful attention to the branding and wording of leaflets, stickers etc. The 'Big Switch' name and our clear, visual style got very high recognition and everyone understood.
2. Planning – so much planning! We paid huge attention to detailed project and contingency.
3. Teamwork – we involved everyone we could think of especially the refuse and recycling operatives, without whom the launch could not have been successful.
4. Leading from the front – office staff and management were out there leading the launch teams. Not easy when you don't normally walk the routes all week. However, it gave us great quality, dealt with issues on the spot and motivated the refuse and recycling crews. We think it was also a major factor in the lower-than average call rates during the Switch.

5. Doing route changes separately – we knew some roads' collection days had to change, and we did those six months before the Switch. That went really well, and avoided any confusion come the Big Switch.

And a final learning point: In view of Surrey County Council's continuing restrictions at the tip – now including closing two days a week from January – we must continue to push recycling, police our bins, encourage residents to recycle more and throw less in their refuse bins, and shout from the rooftops how great our service is.

QUESTION 5

Question from Councillor Alex Clarke to the Chairman of the Strategy and Resources Committee, Councillor Eber Kington

Since the decision of 21 April 2015, has the Monitoring officer seen fit to make any constitutional changes?

Reply:

No.

QUESTION 6

Question from Councillor Alex Clarke to the Chairman of the Environment Committee, Councillor John Beckett

Can it please be confirmed that it is still the case that Epsom & Ewell Civil Enforcement Officers are not set quotas or incentivized targets, have regular training which itself is reviewed to ensure its appropriateness vis a vis requirements of duties, and that their rate of appeals is low?

Reply:

I would like to thank Councillor Clarke for his question and it is noted that similar questions were asked in December 2015 and December 2016.

As per previous answers provided, I can confirm that Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Civil Enforcement Officers are not set quotas or incentivized targets for issuing penalty charge notices. The Officers do have ongoing training during their employment. Some of the most recent examples include spending time with the customer service processing team to view appeals from the back office perspective to instill best practice and updated fire warden training has taken place for those who work in our car parks.

In 2016/17, the number of appeals received as a percentage of the number of penalty charge notices issued was 31.7%. This figure includes both stage 1 and stage 2 appeals which means that in some cases there is more than one appeal against the same penalty charge notice. As Councillor Clarke knows, nobody likes getting a parking ticket and everyone has the right to appeal a penalty charge notice. However, if an appeal is submitted it does not mean that the ticket was issued incorrectly. Even a subsequent cancellation of a ticket following an appeal does not necessarily indicate that the ticket had been incorrectly issued.

This page is intentionally left blank