

**SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS FOR
COUNCIL**

7.30pm on Thursday 23rd February 2023

In the Council Chamber, Civic Centre

AGENDA

6. Questions from the Public (Pages 2 - 6)
7. Questions from Councillors (Pages 7 - 10)

Full Council – 23 February 2023

Questions from the Public

1 Mick Patrick to Councillor Stacey Seales (Portfolio Holder for Governance):

It has been brought to our attention that due to the ULEZ zones in London and the proposed extension of ULEZ zone. That Arriva buses and post office vehicles have been transferred to Harlow from London. So, we now have higher emission vehicles in Harlow. What has Harlow Council done to encourage the use of lower emission vehicle from our public services.

Reply from Councillor Stacey Seales (Portfolio Holder for Governance):

Road transport is one of the biggest contributors of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter emissions. The London ULEZ is an example of how some authorities are tackling air pollution in a bid to improve public health. Unfortunately, as a result of low emission schemes in London, bus operators on commercial routes in Harlow and other towns outside of London are operating buses with higher polluting vehicles which are not the most up to date with regards to EURO standards.

Harlow Council is working with multiple stakeholders to encourage a modal shift within Harlow to use more sustainable forms of transport. Buses play an important part to this and so the Council and its partners are encouraging local bus operators and businesses to shift to lower/zero emitting vehicles.

As you may be aware, the Council is supporting the establishment of sustainable transport corridors (STC) in Harlow, with the development by Essex County Council of the Harlow North to Town Centre STC.

The Harlow Bus User Group was established to discuss bus services across the town. The meetings are open to the public and give the opportunity for the public to have their say on the bus network, including giving the opportunity for a wider discussion on the need to reduce air pollution emissions from the local bus operating network. The next meeting is currently being arranged and is expected to take place during April 2023.

2 Anthony Wiseman to Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

What plans has the council agreed with the Essex County Council for repairs to the pot holes in Harlow and are they planning to publish those plans via Your Harlow or the next quarterly leaflet distribution?

Reply from Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

As Mr Wiseman is no doubt aware Harlow Council has no legal responsibility to repair and maintain the vast majority of roads in Harlow, this is the legal responsibility of Essex County Council. However, whilst recognising that the deterioration of roads is a nationwide problem and not just isolated to Harlow or even Essex, my administration has been keen from the outset to raise the poor state of the roads here in Harlow with Essex County Council and to work with them to find solutions to speeding up and increasing the number of repairs to our roads.

I have been in discussions with the ECC cabinet member for highways over a good many months and we are close to agreeing a match funded scheme between our two authorities to increase the number of repairs to our roads. More details on this will be released to the media in due course.

Our County councillors, are in regular contact with their 'highway buddies' at Essex County Council to notify them of urgent works required to our roads.

An announcement by Essex County Council last week to increase the funding for pothole repairs by £9M will also have a positive impact on the rate of repair to our roads.

3 Anthony Wiseman to Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

Please explain what the additional cost per household would be, via Council Tax, if a special levy were to be used to raise the funds for pot hole repair. And could Harlow Council carry out those works if ECC will not?

Reply from Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

We have asked Essex County Council if they can provide us with the data that would enable us to make the calculation that would answer your question. If and when they are able to provide us with this data we would be happy to provide you with an answer in writing to your question.

It is not considered that a special levy can be sought for highway maintenance. It is understood that there are restrictions upon both who could seek a special levy and the purpose of any such proposed levy and that this request would fail on both aspects.

4 David Forman to Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment):

The cost of the premium green waste service was slashed by the last Labour administration from £96 to £42 on 28 February 2020. The then portfolio holder for Environment, the late Cllr Danny Purton, remarked in a press release: "...we recognise that many residents want the convenience of being able to recycle their garden waste from home. The cost has been too high for too long and we have listened and responded to our residents."

Does the portfolio holder for Environment consider the proposed above inflation increase of 14.29% for the green waste service - the largest percentage increase in the Analysis of Fees and Charges - mean that the Conservative administration has stopped listening to residents and failed to spread increased charges more evenly across the board?

Reply from Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment):

A regular and reliable collection of green waste is a valuable service provided to Harlow residents, and is a service considered important for residents by me, the Portfolio Holder, as well as the wider administration.

There was no increase in the charge to residents last year for this service, despite there being a 7% increase in the charge made to Harlow Council for the provision of the service. It is anticipated that the price to the council will increase again with effect from 1 April, and this will be in line with the Consumer Price Index at that time. The increase proposed in the council's fees and charges for 23/24 is equivalent to an increase of 50p per month for household choosing to use the service, and this, in my opinion, remains good value for money for residents.

5 Colin Thorpe to Councillor Michael Hardware (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Strategic Growth):

At a recent residents meeting in my capacity of Chairman my attention was brought to the decline of bus services in Harlow in general but in particular the possible withdrawal of the number 9 which serves Potter Street which would leave some areas more isolated than they already are.

In light of plans for a new bus terminus how does the Council plan to address these issues?

Reply from Councillor Michael Hardware (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Strategic Growth):

The new Sustainable Transport Interchange represents a key step in the regeneration of our town centre, delivering a fit-for-purpose transport hub that delivers significantly improved facilities and public realm.

These improvements will provide a safe and welcoming environment for current users and will act as one of a wider grouping of catalysts to increase the adoption of sustainable transport modes by new passengers. It will be through this adoption that sustainable transport options and bus services will become an increasingly popular mode of choice.

The design of the Interchange has been developed in conjunction with Highways and Passenger Transport colleagues at Essex County Council, as well as wider stakeholders including the Bus Operators, to ensure the scheme delivers its intended outcomes.

With reference to the number 9 commercial bus service, we are aware it is due to be withdrawn by Arriva in April 2023. We understand the reason for this is due to lack of available drivers and the knock-on effect this has to services and profitability.

The Council is currently liaising with Essex County Council on the matter who have indicated they will be undertaking a sustainability study to understand whether they can directly support the service in the future. The timeframe of this study is currently being considered.

6 Colin Thorpe to Councillor Joel Charles (Portfolio Holder for Community and Business Resilience):

In the light of recent crime both in the Stow and Prentice Place CCTV footage should have been available. I have been informed by one resident after the theft of a motor bike from Prentice Place that the police were awaiting release of CCTV footage from the Council.

In Prentice Place cameras are facing to the ground so giving no overall view. The question asked is does the CCTV work in both the Stow and Prentice Place?

Reply from Councillor Joel Charles (Portfolio Holder for Community and Business Resilience):

The Council is committed to tackling anti-social behaviour and crime. In the new Community Safety Strategy for the town, the Council is clear that CCTV provision is a tool to assist in the identification of perpetrators of crime and can help to increase the number of successful prosecutions through the criminal justice system.

I can confirm that all the CCTV cameras at The Stow are fully operational – officers have made sure to check this is the case. All council-run CCTV cameras are checked regularly as part of a routine maintenance cycle.

The installation of the CCTV at Prentice Place was intended to be a temporary solution to monitor the refurbishment works that took place as part of the regeneration programme in response to the vandalism that was taking place at the site whilst the works were ongoing. As part of the works, security doors were also installed to reassure residents that access to certain areas of Prentice Place would be managed. The CCTV system is not currently operational as its specific purpose was to act as a building site deterrent. However, housing officers and the property and facilities team are reviewing the CCTV provision at Prentice Place to determine what is the most proportionate solution to meet ongoing monitoring needs.

The Council continues to use CCTV because it is proven that it deters people from using certain areas for anti-social and criminal activities.

Full Council – 23 February 2023

Questions from Councillors

1 Councillor Chris Vince to Councillor Alastair Gunn (Portfolio Holder for Housing):

Having met with council officers before Christmas I am aware that there is to be a re-tender for fire safety work being done on Morley Grove.

Can I ask that residents of Morley grove are communicated with throughout this tendering process and that all costs involved are explained in detail so there are no surprises when they are re-charged.

Reply from Councillor Alastair Gunn (Portfolio Holder for Housing):

The Council has recently reviewed the way it consults with residents for major works schemes.

Following completion of the initial surveys to identify the work required in relation to the Fire Risk Assessment, a newsletter will be sent to all residents which will include information from the initial surveys.

Section 20 Notices (NOI's) will be issued to leaseholders on completion of the scope of works and estimated costs have been finalised and agreed. This will be the first of two Section 20 Notices issued to leaseholders, in order to inform them of the intent to carry out works.

2 Councillor James Griggs to Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

At Cabinet on 13th October last year Robert Halfon presented his disability charter. This you enthusiastically accepted with warm words about my response to it and my proposed additions.

You said it would be considered in the next budget round which we will see presented for approval this evening. Would you please update me on progress with the charter and point me to any reference to it in the budget?

Reply from Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

I can provide the following update on the items in Robert Halfon's Disability Charter:

New signage and line painting on Council owned disabled parking spaces: The Council's Environment Team are conducting an audit of all spaces in

Council-owned car parks and if any works are required then this will be delivered and funded through existing highways budgets. Additionally, the Council is reviewing the location of disabled parking spaces as part of the regeneration of Playhouse Square under the Levelling Up Fund.

Installation of ANPR cameras for disabled parking spaces: I agree with Cllr Grigg's previous comment that the installation of such cameras, as well as being very costly, would not resolve any problems since Blue Badges are not linked to individual motor vehicles. However, the enforcement of parking in disabled spaces lies within the contract for the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) and we will be asking them to ensure that this is vigorously enforced.

Enforce blocking of dropped kerbs: I am advised that there are limited legal avenues to enforce this. However, I have asked officers to look at rolling out a Communications campaign to highlight the problems that this causes and also target NEPP to focus on any locations that are identified as having a persistent problem.

Ensure signal-controlled crossing points have rotating cones to replicate visual and audible crossing alerts: This is an Essex County Council responsibility and ECC have advised us that "all push buttons now include a tactile rotating cone to assist visual and hearing impaired users".

Ensure tables and chairs are in designated areas: This is managed through our licensing work and is monitored by the Council's Licensing Team with any action taken as appropriate.

Ensure A Boards are in designated areas: This is not covered by licensing regulations but the Council's Regeneration team monitor this in the town centre and speak with retailers and others where any transgressions occur.

Audit of Disabled Toilets on Council premises: A list of all such toilets is currently being compiled and the Council's Property and Facilities team will undertake an inspection of these, although it is not envisaged that any do not meet the standards required.

Require private landowners to install ANPR on disabled parking spaces and to ensure that their accessible toilets are fully accessible: The Council has no power to require private landowners to do anything in relation to parking spaces or toilet provision. However, in the spirit of Robert Halfon's petition, I have written to more than 30 private landowners urging them to vigorously enforce abuse of disabled parking spaces and to ensure all accessible toilet are properly accessible.

There is no direct reference in the budget to measures to implement elements of the petition because it has been identified that any actions that the Council can take, can all be delivered within existing budgets. None of the items I have listed require an additional budget line.

3 Councillor James Griggs to Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

As ECC have failed to deliver on your promise of immediate action on 21st January to fix the potholes on First Ave, and your subsequent abandonment of the post of having 'special responsibility for roads' you must have come to the conclusion that ECC are treating your administration with the same contempt they showed for the previous Labour administration.

In the past few days Essex County highways portfolio holder, Cllr Lee Scott, has declined my invitation to visit Harlow to see the extent of the problem.

Will you, therefore, accept my invitation to sign my pothole petition and join councillors and residents on the next public protest event?

Reply from Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

As has already been said tonight the responsibility for repairing and maintaining the majority of the roads on Harlow rests with Essex County Council. I have made no promise that potholes will be fixed, I cannot promise what is not within my power to deliver. However, I have stated publicly Essex County Council's commitment to ensure that safety critical repairs to First Avenue would be made immediately (relative to 21st Jan 2023) weather permitting. I have included here a copy of the press statement which was released to Your Harlow:

"News / Sat 21st Jan 2023 pm31 08:36pm

THE LEADER of Harlow Council has issued a statement regarding the state of First Avenue in Harlow.

Councillor Russell Perrin said: "Since becoming Leader of Harlow Council I have been in regular contact with Essex County Council regarding the state of our roads. It is no secret that our roads are in a poor state. This is not a problem that is confined to Harlow or even Essex this is a nationwide issue.

As many people know, the responsibility for maintaining our roads is not a Harlow Council responsibility but one that rests with Essex County Council. That said I, like everyone who lives and works in Harlow, travel on these roads and as such I want to see them better maintained.

Many will have seen the gradual deterioration of First Avenue. The recent bad weather and snow has made the situation worse. My team and I have been in contact with Essex since the recent thaw of snow to accelerate safety works to this and several other roads. **We received confirmation this week that safety works to First Avenue would take place immediately.** Two thirds of First Avenue safety works have now taken place with the remaining third due to take place this evening (Sat 21st Jan), the rest of the weekend and early next week, weather and temperature conditions permitting.

The only delay to further work taking place will be if we have wet weather or if the temperature drops below 0 degrees as this can cause any repairs to rupture further, making the initial repair pointless.”

The Labour Party have protested for many years when they were in administration yielding no discernible improvement in the condition of our roads. We are committed to working with Essex County Council to increasing funding and speeding up repairs So, no I will not sign the petition.