

Cabinet – 7 September 2023

Questions from the Public

1 Edmund Wilson to Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Environment):

On 5 June 2023 Natural England emailed Harlow Council stating that should Harlow Council wish to consider horse riding within Harlow Woods it would “require adequate resource management from the Council”. Please can the council detail the additional resources and resulting costs that would be required to permit this activity?

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

The Council has arranged a meeting between Council Officers and Natural England staff for later in September. At this meeting it is expected that advice will be given regarding what mitigating measures would be required to allow horse riding in the SSSI whilst protecting the site from further damage caused by the activity. If any affordable mitigating measures are identified, the Council will then submit a ‘Notice of proposal to cause, carry out or permit operations requiring Natural England’s consent on a site of special scientific interest (SSSI)’ to Natural England seeking consent to allow horse riding in the Harlow Woods SSSI. Natural England has 4 months to consider the proposal and respond once it has been received.

2 Edmund Wilson to Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Environment):

A recent freedom of information request revealed that Harlow Council asserts to have 10.75 miles of bridleway (please note that the request was for bridleways and not PROW). The OS maps do not detail such a network and at least two stretches listed on OS have been repurposed as cycle paths and no longer conform to the surface requirements for shared use routes that include horses. Can the council please explain what consultation took place when these bridleways were converted to cycle tracks and provide details of where bridleways that remain suitable for equine activity are located?

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

Details on the consultations that took place to convert bridleways to cycle tracks, and details of where bridleways that remain suitable for equine activity are located, are not held by Harlow Council. This information should be held by Essex Highways.

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Questions from Councillors

1 Councillor Chris Vince to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

At the last full council meeting the leader of the council declined to comment on the proposed closure of Harlow Town ticket office. He stated he would wait until the formal consultation period was over. As the consultation closed on the 1st of September can I now ask what submission Harlow council will make regards the proposed closure?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

I have heard the concerns of many residents, particularly vulnerable and disabled residents, in terms of these proposals and I will be writing to Greater Anglia to raise these concerns. I will share a copy of that letter with Cllr Vince next week.

2 Councillor Chris Vince to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

I recently met with members of the Harlow Licensed Drivers Welfare Association to discuss the issues of taxis in Harlow getting their licences from Wolverhampton. Although this practise is legal it does mean that Harlow Council are unable to inspect these vehicles. What if anything will Harlow Council do to ensure that these vehicles meet the high standards required of taxis in Harlow and that they can be regularly inspected? Moving forward what can we do to ensure all taxis operating regularly in Harlow have a Harlow Council licence?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

I entirely share your concerns. As you mention, whilst not in the spirit of the law, this practice is within the letter of it.

Alongside Robert Halfon MP, I have written to the relevant Government Minister who is looking into this matter. I am also working with other council leaders regarding this matter and will do everything possible to stand up for our local private hire and hackney carriage drivers.

I will update you further in the coming weeks.

3 Councillor Tony Edwards to Councillor Michael Hardware (Portfolio Holder for Economic Development):

Can you please provide an update on the progress or otherwise of the required Section 106 agreement with Strawberry Star?

Reply from Councillor Michael Hardware (Portfolio Holder for Economic Development):

A draft S106 has been signed and agreed. However, the County Council have raised a number of matters with the applicant, which Harlow Council understands were not previously identified. The Planning and Legal teams are liaising and thereafter the County Council and applicant with a view to clarifying outstanding issues so the permission can be issued without delay.