

# Full Council – 16 September 2021

## Questions from the Public

**1 Hugh Hoad to Councillor Andrew Johnson (Leader of the Council and Lead on Economic Recovery):**

When the public space protection order in the town centre was introduced he wanted begging as a thing that wasn't allowed, but his idea wasn't accepted. Now he is Leader will this be introduced?

**Reply from Councillor Andrew Johnson (Leader of the Council and Lead on Economic Recovery):**

The Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) in the Town Centre (x2) were implemented in August 2019 and will remain in place for a period of three years until August 2022.

It may be possible to extend or vary the PSPOs, for example to change the size of the area covered by the PSPO or to remove or add new prohibitions, such as begging. However, before any changes can be made the council must follow a process to make sure that a number of statutory conditions have been met. The council will also need to gather evidence to show that it has reasonable grounds for any specified problems contained within the PSPO, with clear data and other evidence to justify any variations and additions to it.

During the coming months the council will begin to gather evidence to determine whether or not an extension or variation to the PSPO under any grounds, including begging, can be justified. If the view is that it can, then there will be appropriate consultation and other necessary legislative requirements to undertake before a Cabinet decision can be made on the precise nature of the PSPO.

The council is determined to provide community leadership to address the root cause of begging, that of homelessness, by working with charities including Streets2Homes to identify local issues and signpost individuals to the appropriate support.

**Supplementary Question from Hugh Hoad:**

As you've got to wait to add begging in, there is a total ignorance of the order, wouldn't it be cheaper to do away with the order totally because, yet again, there is a total waste of Council Tax payers money because the order is not enforced?

**Supplementary Reply from Councillor Andrew Johnson (Leader of the Council and Lead on Economic Recovery):**

I think I share your concerns about Public Space Protection Orders and their viability. I think we had a good debate in this Chamber about that back in 2019. The fact that remains Mr Hoad is that this will remain legally enforced until August 2022. To make any changes or to renew at the end of that one or non-renew, we will still require the Council to continue to gather the evidence of effectiveness at the moment. So I think that, at the moment, the Public Space Protection Order will remain in place until August 2022 and, as we gather more evidence over the next nine months, we will then be able to make a future determination about the future of PSPO's or not.

**2 Hugh Hoad to Councillor Andrew Johnson (Leader of the Council and Lead on Economic Recovery):**

As we have not had a separate food waste collection will there be a refund on next year's council tax?

**Reply from Councillor Andrew Johnson (Leader of the Council and Lead on Economic Recovery):**

Food waste collections were temporarily suspended for two weeks due to Veolia operatives having to isolate due to being pinged by the Covid 19 app.

We will bring forward council tax proposals next year as part of the normal budget process.