

Full Council – 16 September 2021

Questions from Councillors

1 Councillor Jean Clark to Councillor Joel Charles (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Resilience):

Pets' Corner took huge steps to remain a sustainable, popular service. What are the new Administration's expectations regarding the future of Pets' Corner? Are there plans to generate more income? If so, what exactly are they?

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

Pets' Corner is a much-loved council asset that makes an important contribution to the health and wellbeing of our community.

Our administration is exploring options to invest in the council's valued non-statutory services, which includes Pets' Corner in the wider portfolio. There are no plans to make changes to the council's community services budgets that will negatively impact frontline delivery.

Work continues by our administration on delivering an updated medium-term financial strategy and a budget for the next municipal year that focuses on extending opportunity and prosperity – the guiding focus that flows through everything the council will aim to achieve in the future. The council's community services will play a key role in promoting inclusion to help realise the goal of extending opportunity. To practically achieve this on the ground, our administration is exploring opportunities for additional income generation at Pets' Corner, which includes looking at further educational opportunities, and scoping the potential to expand the use of the Learning Centre as a more established conference facility.

Supplementary question from Councillor Jean Clark:

I think we agree very much on the importance of Pets Corner and I am pleased to hear that there are no plans to make changes that will negatively impact it. There is a fine line between commercialisation and simple income generation. Can you make a commitment that you won't be introducing entry charges for Pets Corner?

Supplementary reply from Councillor Charles (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Resilience):

This administration, and let me be crystal clear with the Labour administration, will not be introducing charges at Pets Corner. Only this week, Councillor Clark, did we announce additional investment in Pets Corner; new cladding, larger stable windows for viewing access for young people, particularly families that visit that centre. I myself and colleagues in this room have visited Pets Corner and recognise the value of a free opportunity for families that may be struggling that are able to go to that petting zoo and the excellent work that it does and the fundamental to our support is making sure those families are able to access it in the future. This Council is serious about investing in its community facilities for the benefit of residents and is focussed not only on residents but also the welfare of the animals at Pets Corner. So I take great issue Councillor Clark with your suggestion as it hasn't entered my thought process whatsoever.

2 Councillor Mike Danvers to Councillor Russell Perrin (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance)

Do all sitting Harlow District Councillors live in Harlow?

Reply from Councillor Russell Perrin (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance):

All Conservative Councillors live in Harlow.

Supplementary question from Councillor Mike Danvers:

In that case Chair, would the Portfolio Holder ask the Conservative Councillors to make it clear in their Declaration of Interest that they do live in Harlow? That is unless of course they have no fixed abode.

Supplementary reply from Councillor Russell Perrin:

Yes.

3 Councillor Mike Danvers to Councillor Simon Carter (Portfolio Holder for Housing)

Given the situation over the last three months could he outline both the short term and long term strategy for repairing and maintaining the Clock Tower at Puffers Green? Would he consider giving the iconic building a small separate capital budget from the housing revenue capital account schemes for annual maintenance?

Reply from Councillor Simon Carter (Portfolio Holder for Housing):

A budget was allocated as part of the Housing Capital programme for 21/22 approved by Cabinet in January 2021.

This forms part of the Council's Housing Investment Programme (HIP) External Works. The scope of works has been developed and been extended to include both internal and external works refurbishing the property. HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd have been awarded the works. They are developing an implementation plan which is expected to complete in December 2021. This will following the planning application required with a listed building and Essex County Council approvals, which are taking longer than usual due to revised Covid-19 working arrangements. The revised updated timetable has been discussed with the tenant.

The clock and bell ringing mechanism is in working order following extensive repairs. The Council is establishing a longer term specialist works agreement to ensure servicing and repairs are mainstreamed should the need arise.

4 Councillor Tony Durcan to Councillor Andrew Johnson (Leader of the Council and Lead on Economic Recovery):

Last week was the twentieth anniversary of 9/11 were 2,977 people were murdered.

Your Harlow reminded us all of a local lad born and educated in Harlow who was a victim of this tragedy, Simon Maddison. Whilst he moved to America he should be remembered by Harlow in some way. I ask the council at the next opportunity that we find a naming opportunity to recognise Simon life and his ambitions.

Could we send a message to his family in America and at a suitable time enable them to be aware that Harlow never forgets its own?

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

9/11 remains one of the most poignant and tragic events in our lifetime and the twentieth anniversary last weekend was a powerful reminder to reflect on those that lost their lives, including Simon. I was moved by the tribute to Simon in Your Harlow and I'm aware that BBC Essex also carried out an interview with Simon's family in America where they spoke about his life in Harlow and his family home at Paddock Mead.

We should be guided by the wishes of Simon's family and I will ask Officers to gather contact details for his family and so we can ask them what they feel would be an appropriate memorial for Simon.

Supplementary question from Councillor Tony Durcan:

Andrew, I completely agree with everything that you said but would you agree with me that something fitting may well be the new buildings at the Lister House area because that is quite close to where Simon was brought up but also equally I hope that you could also look to see whether there is somewhere in the Town Park that we can actually have an area where we can go and enjoy and remember Simon as a good friend and a good comrade of Harlow?

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

I think, Councillor Durcan, there are a number of places around the town where memorials could be. I'm informed that Simon attended Abbotsweld school as I did so I think there are lots of places around the town that could be appropriate. I don't want to specify something until we have had a chance to speak with his family and see a) if they are happy and b) what they feel is appropriate but I am happy to invite Councillor Durcan to join me in the discussion of that once we have details from the family.