

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL  
HELD ON**

2 November 2023

8.00 - 9.03 pm

**PRESENT**

**COUNCILLORS**

Andrew Johnson (Chair)  
Sue Livings (Vice-Chair)

David Carter	Kay Morrison
Joel Charles	Aiden O'Dell
Nick Churchill	Russell Perrin
Jodi Dunne	Daniella Pritchard
Tony Durcan	Nicky Purse
Tony Edwards	Matthew Saggars
Michael Garnett	Stacy Seales
James Griggs	Lanie Shears
Alastair Gunn	Clive Souter
Michael Hardware	John Steer
Maggie Hulcoop	Dan Swords
Eddie Johnson	Chris Vince
James Leppard	Nancy Watson
Ash Malik	Mark Wilkinson
Colleen Morrison	

**OFFICERS**

Andrew Bramidge, Chief Executive  
Niel Churchill, Communications Manager  
Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services  
Alison Hodgson, Electoral Services Manager  
Adam Rees, Senior Governance Support Officer

47. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Simon Carter and Steve LeMay.

48. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

49. **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023 be agreed and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

50. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR**

The Chair thanked those who attended his civic service. He had hosted another Gems of Harlow event for the blue light services.

He gave notice of the following upcoming events: Bonfire Night on 5 November; the Remembrance flag ceremony on 10 November; and the wreath laying at Netteswell Cross on 11 November.

51. **PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

52. **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

The questions, together with the answers, are appended to the minutes.

53. **HARLOW YOUTH COUNCIL UPDATE**

Full Council received an update from Harlow Youth Council, on the work they had carried out over the last six months. A copy of the update is attached to the minutes.

The Chair, on behalf of all Councillors, thanked the Youth Council for their attendance and the work they had done. He looked forward to further updates.

54. **QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL**

The question, together with the answer, is appended to the minutes.

55. **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

The questions, together with the answers, are appended to the minutes.

56. **MOTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

a) Disability Action Panel

Proposed by Councillor James Griggs (seconded by Councillor Dan Swords):

“This Council recognises that many disabled residents, their families, and carers believe that they do not have a voice and their opinion is often not heard. They are more used to having solutions to issues imposed upon them rather than as a result of consultation. Their lived experience and ideas for a better, more understanding and accessible Harlow should be at the heart of every relevant discussion and decision made by this Council.

To redress this historic failing, this Council confirms the creation of a new Disability Action Panel, which shall:

- Have the purpose of giving disabled residents a voice and enable them to directly influence the way the Council responds to issues of concern to them;
- Be chaired by the Leader of the Council;
- Include cross-party councillors (no more than two from each party);
- Include, by invitation, representatives from charities and groups who work with disabled people and disabled residents. It shall also invite the MP for Harlow to attend meetings;
- Be able to make, through the Chair, direct recommendations to Cabinet for implementation and approval of expenditure related to recommendations;
- Be supported by appropriate officer support to ensure the Panel meets on at least a quarterly basis;
- Have its terms of reference discussed and confirmed at the first meeting of the Panel and ratified by Full Council in the scheduled December meeting of Full Council;
- Be established and first meet within the month of November;
- Be non-partisan in its recommendations and activities. Any actions taken as a result of such recommendations shall always be reported and presented in a non-partisan manner.”

**RESOLVED** that the above motion be agreed.

57. **REFERENCES FROM CABINET AND COMMITTEES**

- a) Referral from Cabinet - HGGT Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Full Council received a referral from Cabinet on the HGGT Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Proposed by Councillor Michael Hardware (seconded by Councillor Dan Swords) it was:

**RESOLVED** that:

- i) Subject to all authorities within the Harlow and Gilston Garden (HGGT) partnership approving the updated wording of the revised HGGT Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), the HGGT IDP is supported and agreed and will form the basis of identification of the infrastructure needed in the Garden Town area. The IDP sets out the

necessary infrastructure requirements and their phasing, to support the sites allocated for development within the HGGT area.

- ii) Authority is delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, to make any necessary, non-consequential and minor amendments and to liaise with the HGGT Chair and Director.

- b) Referral from Licensing Committee - Licensing Act Policy - Outcome of Consultation/Agree Policy

Full Council received a referral from the Licensing Committee on amendments to the Licensing Act Policy.

Proposed by Councillor Nick Churchill (seconded by Councillor Clive Souter) it was:

**RESOLVED** that the final draft of the Licensing Act Statement of Policy (attached as Appendix 1 to the report) be adopted.

- c) Referral from Licensing Committee - Pavement/Highways Policy

Full Council received a referral from the Licensing Committee on amendments to the pavement/highways policy

Proposed by Councillor Nick Churchill (seconded by Councillor Clive Souter) it was:

**RESOLVED** that that the updated Temporary Pavement Licence Procedure 2023 – 2024, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be adopted.

## 58. **REPORTS FROM OFFICERS**

- a) Interim Review of Polling Districts and Places 2023

Full Council received a report on the interim review of polling districts and places.

Proposed by Councillor Dan Swords (seconded by Councillor James Leppard) it was:

**RESOLVED** that the changes to the Polling Districts and Places (set out in Appendix C to the report) be approved with effect from 1 December 2023.

59. **MINUTES OF CABINET AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

- a) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 7 September 2023 of Cabinet
- b) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 12 September 2023 of Scrutiny Committee
- c) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 20 September 2023 of Development Management Committee
- d) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 11 October 2023 of Development Management Committee
- e) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 12 October 2023 of Cabinet

60. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL

# Full Council – 2 November 2023

## Questions from the Public

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

With no minutes of the meeting between Harlow District Council and Natural England held the week of September 18th, can you please provide an overview of the meeting and any proposed solutions and barriers that were discussed?

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

The meeting on 18 September between the council and natural England served two key purposes. Firstly, it enabled officers from Natural England to re familiarise themselves with the site and involved inspecting the woodland and the surrounding area of the SSSI. Secondly, following the inspection it enabled a discussion to take place between Natural England and the Council regarding measures the council would need to take or could introduce and maintain to enable 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 be submitted.

**Supplementary question from Edmund Wilson:**

This is not the first inspection from Natural England. This inspection showed the damage was considered minor. Can you share the latest outcomes with us?

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

I will provide the information in writing to you.

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

With Natural England proposing an all-party meeting on the 28th November where it can be discussed if horse riding in Harlow Woods can be a consented activity, can you please confirm who from the council will be in attendance and provide to us any assessment(s) of the woods specific to this

activity to date, in advance to help with the information requested by Natural England?

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

The meeting will be attended by myself, Simon Freeman, Deputy Chief Executive, Norah Nolan, Interim Assistant Director Environment, the Environment Client Team Manager and the Wildlife Assistant from the council.

The Harlow Woods management plan, published on the council's website contains assessments of the condition of the woods. Visual inspections have been carried out during the most recent site visits that have been made. I understand that Natural England have asked the horse-riding community for confirmation regarding the nature and extent of the access to the woodland that they are seeking.

**Supplementary question from Edmund Wilson:**

Has the Council put forward or proposed internally any management plan changes to accommodate this activity given that Natural England have said it is for the council to make changes?

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

I will provide the information in writing to you.

**3 Nicholas Taylor to Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

On 26 February it was announced that a Social Housing (Regulation) Bill will require senior housing managers, which includes those with job titles such as Property Manager, Assets Manager and Income Manager, an appropriate level of housing management qualification regulated by Ofqual equivalent to a level 4 or 5 certificate or Diploma in Housing or a Foundation Degree from the Chartered Institute of Housing.

Can you tell me how many staff there are in the Council's Housing Service and how many of those have the qualifications described above and in view of the services they provide whether any staff employed by HTS have these qualification and what steps the Council is taking to ensure staff who do not have the necessary qualification can meet the new regulation?

**Reply from Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act has a number of implications for Housing Authority Landlords which will come into force by April 2024. There are a number of consultations covering these new duties. In the section outlining professionalism, the Act amends the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 to allow the Housing Regulator to set an additional regulatory standard in relation to the competence and conduct of individuals involved in the management of social housing. The Act will require individuals to obtain specific qualifications. The requirement will be that “Senior Housing Executives” will require a foundation degree or level 5 qualification, whilst “Senior Housing Managers” will require a level 4 qualification in housing management.

It is not clear how this is defined or when this will be applied but it does indicate what kind of roles and managerial levels it will apply to. We believe there will be secondary legislation which will clarify the position and set out the new guidelines. In advance of this the Housing Directorate will work with the HR team to undertake a skills audit of existing staff, many of whom are both qualified and experienced, to identify those roles affected and where additional training might be necessary.

The requirements for HTS are likely to be slightly different and linked more to technical qualifications. HTS will undertake the same process to ensure the high level of professionalism already in place is enhanced where necessary and maintained to meet the requirements of the Act.

HTS have asked for relevant professional qualifications from candidates wishing to apply for the Managing Directors role.

**Supplementary question from Nicholas Taylor:**

Will there be a budget available to provide staff with the required skills?

**Reply from Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

Yes.

**4 Nicholas Taylor to Councillor Michael Hardware (Portfolio Holder for Economic Development):**

In December 2020 the Council approved its Local Development Plan. This identified sites known as HS2 that would be earmarked for development or



redevelopment. On 24 March 2022 Cllr Swords presented a list of potential sites earmarked for new housing. On the 23 March 2023 I asked you of what progress was being made to develop the sites at Pollard Hatch, Fishers Hatch and Sumners Hatch, bearing in mind an architect had already been appointed. You advised me that an appraisal of these sites was continuing the results of which would be completed in September.

Bearing in mind that two of these sites had been identified to be developed within the first five years of the Plan, are you now, some 19 months since Cllr Swords announcement able to advise me if the appraisal of these sites has been completed and if so, what was the outcome?

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

Following the completion of validation and high level feasibility assessments, it has been determined that the three sites at Pollard Hatch, Fishers Hatch and Sumners Hatch will not progress as part of the Harlow Council Housing Building Programme at this current time. Instead, a programme of hatch renewals will be coming forward to significantly upgrade the existing hatches.

**5 Karen James to Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

I recently attended the public consultation meeting at Staple Tye Library held by Essex County Council about their new waste strategy. It is clear that better methods of collection will need to be implemented if the amount of waste put into landfill is to be reduced.

I am aware that Harlow Council has been providing new bin areas to flat blocks around the town in order that recycling can be increased. Can you advise me of how many flat blocks have had new bin areas created, how many are still to be done and when this work will be completed?

**Reply from Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

We have 674 Flat blocks and to date we have since 2018 completed 55% (369), installation of new bins areas or upgrades to existing to ensure that they comply with the Fire Risk Assessments and regulations.

The programme is continuing, and we estimate based on available budget and priorities it will be completed in the next 4years.

**6 Karen James to Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability):**

The issue of disposing of food waste by those residents living in flat blocks was also raised at the meeting. Has the Council taken any action to enable residents of flat blocks to dispose of their food waste separate from other waste?

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

The Council previously introduced food waste collections from flat blocks in 2013. Despite high levels of promotion of this service, including a temporary Officer dedicated to it full time, participation levels were found to be low and contamination levels were found to be high. When the specification for the current waste collection contract was being drawn up in 2017, separate collections of food waste from flat blocks was removed from the specification due to the high cost of the additional service, the low yield resulting from the collections and the increased workloads for the flat block non-recyclable waste collection crews who had to make additional journeys to empty contaminated bins.

The Government is mandating separate food waste collections from all properties in their waste collection reforms and the Council will be required to re-introduce these collections when the reforms are brought in from March 2026.

**7 Alan Leverett to Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

It has been pleasing to note the reduction in the number of outstanding repairs to homes owned by the Council.

Can you tell me what percentage of jobs reported to the Council are inspected before work is allocated to a tradesperson to ensure the correct work is identified, what percentage of completed jobs are inspected to ensure they have been carried out correctly and who carries out these inspections?

**Reply from Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

Our contractor HTS carries out 100% pre-inspection of repairs on the following trades/work areas:

- Roofing

- Double glazing units
- Voids properties
- Plastering
- Fencing

HTS also post inspect 10% of all repairs. This is carried out by HTS dedicated inspectors. HTS inspectors and Housing technical staff also post inspect 100% of all void properties. This is monitored monthly and reported to a joint Housing/HTS performance and financial assurance meeting. Tenants are also contacted by phone after a repair has been carried out – customer satisfaction in response to these phone calls is currently running at 98%. This was a new measure we introduced over the summer.

**Supplementary question from Alan Leverett:**

Does the council keep statistics on jobs that have been repaired, but then need a second visit to do the same repairs?

**Reply from Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

It does and I will write to you with that information.

**8 Alan Leverett to Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

Further to my previous question, having waited weeks, months or even years since being reported, how many jobs attended to have been found to have been completed by the tenant or others and therefore been marked as completed or no longer required, since the beginning of this year?

**Reply from Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

Since HTS started recording statistics in August and their telephone audit of the backlog, 536 jobs have been cancelled either for works already completed or duplication of works raised. However, it has often been the case that the works have already been completed by HTS and were duplicated in the system, as opposed to carried out by the tenant.

**Supplementary question from Alan Leverett:**

Do the figures you have mentioned in the terms of the reduction in repairs include the 536 jobs that have already been cancelled, or where the jobs have been done by the tenants themselves?

**Reply from Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

No, they don't.

**9 Yasmin Gregory to Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability):**

Gardening guru Monty Don warns gardeners to wait until after August before getting their best hedge trimmers out, as it could be harmful to local birds.

As we are now in November, can you advise when hedges and brambles will be trimmed for the safety of all residents who have to walk past hedgerows?

A resident of The Oxleys has been in contact with me expressing their concern that someone will be injured as the shorter days are now with us. They have tried to cut the brambles back from the water way but due to their declining mobility, do not feel comfortable.

Without wasting precious time on who is responsible for pieces of Harlow, please can you take a pragmatic and common sensical approach to solve this problem so that those residents who are able to walk on pavements unencumbered by parked cars don't risk losing their sight from overhanging foliage.

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

There has been an overlap with the Summer and Winter programmes of landscape maintenance from mid-October to early November. The Winter programme of cutting back hedges/overgrown shrubbery has commenced this week, it is expected that the planned works for The Oxley area will be completed by Mid-November. We have overhauled our landscape maintenance programme which means grass will now be cut more regularly and strimmed at the same time and hedges will be cut more often too for the reason you highlight.

**Supplementary question from Yasmin Gregory:**

If a tree overhangs a path or road, will the council serve notice?

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

We have started dealing with the issues you have raised when they are reported through to us. Where the issue affecting a road, it would be dealt with by Essex Highways.

**10 Yasmin Gregory to Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability):**

Whilst there is a questionable debate over whether vaping does assist with the cessation of smoking, do you feel it is appropriate that a chemist has posters on their front windows advertising the selling of vapes from their premises and does she have the authority to stop the sale of such products from there?

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

The council has no powers to prevent any premises from selling, or advertising the sale of, vaping equipment. The Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is the competent authority. Underage sale should be raised with Essex Trading Standards.

**Supplementary question from Yasmin Gregory:**

What can the council in terms of enforcement and recycling?

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

The council doesn't have power to prevent sale. I will write to you about what can be done to recycle vapes.



Thank you for inviting Harlow Youth Council to the meeting. My name is May, and I am a Harlow Youth Councillor. Harlow Youth Council is a locally elected group of 13- to 19-year-olds who live in or attend school in Harlow. As a group, the Youth Council represents the views and opinions of young people in the town.

Harlow Youth Council is not affiliated to any political party. All young people can have their say, through their youth councillor, about issues that are important to them.

I am here to share an update on the work that Harlow Youth Council is doing. Our current priorities are –

Promote positive physical and mental health and wellbeing for children and young people.

And

Protecting the environment and supporting the council's climate change agenda.

Youth Councillors were able to give feedback on The Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and are keen to support the 5 priorities set out by the board. 3 of our Youth Councillors are now part of the West Essex Integrated Care Youth Board where they will share their opinions on health topics that can affect young people and help to shape the future of NHS services in Harlow.

We are particularly keen to raise awareness of the importance of regular physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight in young people. At the Museum Community Fete Youth Councillors had a stall with 3 sports stations set up – hula hooping, jogging on the spot and ring toss. Children and families were encouraged to do each activity for 1 minute, decorate a paper bag and take away a piece of fruit. Youth Councillors engaged with over 100 children and young people at the event. HYC want to raise awareness of the importance of 30 minutes daily exercise and choosing food options that can help us to maintain a healthy weight.

During the summer holidays some of our Youth Councillors volunteered at school readiness project community events to do similar activities with children and young people. Youth Councillors engaged with over 250 children at 3 different events. Alongside these activities oral health packs containing toothpaste, toothbrushes and information on good oral health were given out to families to encourage good dental care from an early age to help prevent unnecessary tooth decay and extraction in childhood.

Youth Councillors have recently had a stall at the Black History multicultural festival at Harlow Town Park. This is an annual event run by PATACC Youth Councillors delivered an activity that focused on positive mental health and wellbeing in young people. People were invited to come and create a wooden coaster for someone who inspires them. Throughout the day 150 coasters were decorated with art and craft resources and taken away. People were also encouraged to scan a QR code that linked them to leaflets produced by Youth Councillors. The leaflets give information and tips on positive mental health and wellbeing for young people.

Young people in Harlow are passionate about climate change and Youth Councillors had submitted a project plan to the Council's Environment team earlier in the year to consider placing more recycling bins alongside general waste and dog bins to encourage people to recycle their rubbish when out in public places. Youth Councillors are delighted that a split recycle bin and general waste bin has been placed at Church Langley Field which we understand is being well used. We will continue to monitor use of the bin and hope that it encourages not only more recycling but less littering in the area.

Community safety remains a concern for the young people in Harlow. We have two Youth Councillors who represent young people at the police led Independent Advisory Group. In addition to this the Youth Councillors are part of the stop and search panel where they view bodycam footage on stop and searches in Harlow and can provide feedback on how they think officers conducted the search.

Some Youth Councillors were fortunate to be able to attend the opening ceremony of the Knife Angel, a powerful reminder of knife crime and the negative effects of violent behaviour. The ceremony included speeches, performances, and poetry to mark the start of a month of community events which we shared with other young people through our social media channels.

Harlow Youth Council are being consulted on the HGGT Garden Town projects and we are pleased that we have been given the opportunity to help shape the growth and development of Harlow going forward. We recently attended a workshop around the Stewardship Charter and gave our views on what stewardship may mean to young people in Harlow.

Harlow Youth Council will be planning another activity evening for Youth and Ward Councillors in February. We are keen to build closer working relationships and welcome any opportunities to work with Ward Councillors on any issues that affect young people in the Town.

Thank you.

# **Full Council – 2 November 2023**

## **Questions from the Youth Council**

### **1 Finlay Thurstan-McGowan to Councillor Stacy Seales (Portfolio Holder for Community):**

Youth Councillors feel it is important for all young people in Harlow to have dedicated safe, indoor spaces where they can meet with friends to socialise, learn, access positive development opportunities and be signposted to support services when relevant.

We are pleased and excited to see that, through private and public investment, there are plans for major regeneration of the Town Centre. Youth Councillors would like to know if any of these plans include opportunities for new youth provision? If so, what would this look like for young people and how might HYC and Harlow's young people be involved in the design and development of these spaces?

### **Reply from Councillor Stacy Seales (Portfolio Holder for Community):**

The Council is committed to the whole-place regeneration of the town centre and is bringing forward a number of schemes that will see such a transformation take place.

The plans absolutely include the spaces you highlight and the Leader of the Council would be pleased to meet with you to discuss these plans in more detail. Significant consultation has also taken place with young residents on many of these plans.



# Full Council – 2 November 2023

## Questions from Councillors

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

I know that all of us send our deepest sympathies to students, parents and teachers of SFG during this ongoing difficult time. Can I ask what support has been offered to the academy trust by this council and which of that support has been accepted?

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

The events that have unfolded with regard to SFG have been nothing short of appalling for the community, families, teachers and pupils. When the news first broke, the council offered any possible support including temporary use of buildings if feasible, support with public meetings and any other such activities. Our planning team worked closely with the school and DfE on planning related matters for temporary facilities which we fast-tracked.

A renewed offer of support was made to SFG following the latest developments and a meeting with the Trust is being arranged. We have offered and continue to offer any possible support.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Chris Vince:**

Is it right to say the offer of additional buildings hasn't been accepted?

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

At the time the offer was made, the Trust believed the facilities being provided were sufficient.

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

In a previous council meeting you informed us you would finally be making representation to the consultation about the proposal to close Harlow railway station's ticket office. Have you received a response and if so, can you share it with us?

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

I shared my representations with you and other members several weeks ago and shared the response I received with you and members of the campaign group earlier this week. You will also be aware that the Government has announced ticket offices will remain open and I commend the tireless efforts of local residents in the campaign on this matter, with particular recognition of the passion of Mandy Jacobs.

**3 Councillor Kay Morrison to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):**

I think we all agree that our current bus service is inadequate and may be, to quote the Local Government Association, 'in a spiral of decline.' The effects are well known to us; they make bus user travel in Harlow difficult and downright inconvenient.

If we're serious about sustainable travel which has to include coaxing drivers out of their cars, we must do a whole lot better.

Greater Manchester is the first city outside London to run franchised bus services. The LGA and the Urban Transport Group call for all local authorities to have the same rights, giving them powers over fares, bus service frequency and routes.

What pressure are we applying to Essex County Council, to our current MP and to our lovely county councillors in a bid to deliver good, affordable bus services, including resurrecting the bus users group? Are we powerless onlookers or anywhere near the driving seat?

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

We continue to apply as much pressure and lobbying of Essex County Council as possible through meetings, letters and other such means. However, we do not have direct control over such services. I will ensure that we continue to lobby for improved services and excel that wherever we possibly can.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Kay Morrison:**

Are you dissatisfied that the council cannot affect change?

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

It is disappointing to see services reduced. However, thanks to the Government's cap, fares are being reduced.

**4 Councillor Tony Edwards to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):**

Given that the current situation at the Sir Frederick Gibberd College is causing considerable disruption to the education of pupils and stress to pupils, parents, and staff, will you call for an urgent meeting with Gillian Keegan, Minister of Education to stress the council's concern with regard to the lack of progress on this matter?

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

I am aware that a public meeting with the relevant Government Minister is already being arranged on this matter.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Tony Edwards:**

Would you invite Gillian Keegan to the town?

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

I'm happy to discuss this with the MP.

**5 Councillor Tony Edwards to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):**

Given that the Health Security Agency have recently erected new signs – replacing the previous Public Health England signs - at the Pinnacles site, will you please invite the Health Security Agency representatives to a cross party meeting with Councillors to update us on their plans for the site?

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

Yes, I will arrange such a session and ongoing sessions on this matter.