

10 December 2014

Ordinary Council

Questions from the Public

Report of: Jo-Anne Ireland – Acting Chief Executive

Wards Affected: All Wards

This report is: Public

1. Executive Summary

1.1 In accordance with the Council's Constitution, a member of the public resident within the Borough may ask a maximum of two questions relating to the business of the Council providing notice has been received by 10.00am two working days before the relevant meeting.

1.2 If the person wishing to ask the question is not present at the meeting when the item is called the question(s) will be deleted from the list of questions to be asked.

1.3 Every question asked pursuant to rule 11.1 of the Constitution shall be put and answered without discussion but the Member to whom the question has been put may decline to answer. An answer may take the form of a direct oral answer at the Council meeting or where there has been insufficient time to research an answer, a written answer will be sent to the questioner.

1.4 At the time of publication of the agenda three questions had been received from members of the public as follows:

1. Question from Mrs Gearon-Simm: *“Before Hutton Community Centre needed major refurbishment, why had the building been allowed to deteriorate so badly?”*

2. Question from Mrs Gearon-Simm: *“In the past, authority was symbolically vested in individuals and these representatives of authority were themselves held accountable.*

These days it seems that we live in a world where power is anonymous and cannot be localised and therefore no longer exercises any moral authority.

The Brentwood Accord declares it is open and accountable to the electorate whom it will not ignore.

Who in the current administration do members of the electorate contact if they are dissatisfied with the response to their problems? Contacting ward councillors does not seem to have been a workable system in my experience.”

3. Question from Mr and Mrs Edmonds: *“In regard to the ‘Homelessness Prevention Strategy’, can we be assured that the Council’s standard procedure will be followed in that:*

- a) When a person comes to the Council and declares themselves to be a rough sleeper, they will be given a face-to-face meeting on that day and not interviewed via the internal phone, or worse, sent away.*
- b) That a person will be dealt with thoroughly and a fair assessment given, especially in regard to their vulnerability in the ‘Pereira test’ and for this to include a Doctor’s assessment.*
- c) That each person will have a homelessness report produced.*
- d) That each person will receive a letter in regard to ‘Section 184 of the Housing Act’ as to the outcome of their application.*

Paragraph 1.7 of the Brentwood Council’s ‘Homelessness Prevention Strategy’ (issued November 2013 by Cllr Jan Pound) states that incidents of rough sleeping are dealt with immediately. This must happen to ensure vulnerable people are not cast aside. The longer a person is left rough sleeping, the more vulnerable they become.

In light of this and the fact that Brentwood does have rough sleepers, could the Council, with possible help from local charities and/or businesses, set up a place for these vulnerable people to signpost them to seek the right help and know their rights? A place that can give them fresh clothes and perhaps even a place to wash themselves? A place where they can talk to someone if they feel the need to? Food banks only do so much, can more be done for our community?”

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