

## Councillors Written Questions and the Responses

### Full Council – 24 March 2021

(Questions in *italics* and Answers in **RED**)

#### Questions to Councillor Lamb (The Leader of the Council) from Councillor Fiveash

##### 1) **Pandemic response.**

*I note your public statement that Crawley Borough Council has been working to “end the pandemic”.*

*Given that the only ways to end a pandemic are through a vaccine, herd immunity or a cure could you please clarify for the public what actions the council has taken under your leadership to “end the pandemic”?*

*I'm not aware of any public statement I've made to that effect. However, I did Tweet from my personal account: 'Every step of the way #Crawley Borough Council's attempts to end the pandemic locally have been hampered by the Government stopping us from getting data we needed on infections in our area >> Coronavirus report scathing on UK Government's handling of data' on the 15th March. This was one of a number of Tweets I made on that day from an account which clearly states in its bio 'Tweets in a personal capacity'. It is gratifying to note Cllr Fiveash is prepared to give up so much of his time to follow my every remark.*

*Unfortunately, the question cannot be answered in its current form, as it is built upon a logical fallacy. The question sets out that there are only three ways of ending the pandemic, attempting to infer that as such things are out of the hands of the local authority the council could not play a role in ending the pandemic. Like many logical fallacies, the error essentially involves discounting the potential for other possibilities than those which have provided, as is the case here. All the more puzzling here because the clue as to the error is contained within the question itself.*

*Why would a vaccine, herd immunity and a cure (which I only include here because it is in the initial list, not because it would actually help to end the pandemic, unless it were administered prior to the infected becoming infectious) help to end the pandemic? Because they limit the potential for the virus to be transmitted. So, we are faced with a simple question: are these three things the only things which might prevent a virus from being transmitted, to which we come to the obvious conclusion: no.*

*For viruses to survive they have to be spread and that requires humans to put them in contact with other humans. Prevent that from happening and there's no transmission, hence no pandemic. Lockdowns have been used precisely because they reduce the rate of transmission, with rates climbing once they are removed for the same reason. Reduce the rate of transmission to zero*

*and you've essentially ended the pandemic. New Zealand has managed to maintain new cases numbers at essentially single digit levels since last April precisely through using such restrictions. It is in these efforts at limiting transmission that local authorities have, alongside the Police, played a major role on the ground in trying to end the pandemic, most significantly through the council's enforcement via environmental health officers and community wardens, getting the homeless housed to reduce the risk of transmission, implementing safety restrictions in the council's sheltered housing stock, implementing food and medicine deliveries for high-risk individuals, and through restrictions applied to the council's own facilities. In addition, the council have supported track and tracing, and vaccination efforts within the borough, albeit in a minor role.*

*Council officers have been through an incredibly tough year, with significant challenges yet to come. It would be nice for them to know that councillors recognise the considerable efforts they gone through to try to end the pandemic in Crawley, rather than their sacrifices being sneered at for the sake of petty politics.*

## **2) Adventure playgrounds.**

*The Council has decided to close the adventure playgrounds in Bewbush and Broadfield while keeping open for unsupervised play those in Langley Green and Furnace Green (despite Bewbush and Broadfield having a higher density of children and Furnace Green having Tilgate park available for unsupervised play for children).*

*The reason given by the Cabinet Member is that these two adventure playgrounds required £500k of refurbishments which the council cannot afford.*

*I notice that the Towns Fund plan includes £565k for "micro parks" in Manor Royal, presumably for the use of adults at work.*

*Will you commit to exploring the reallocation of this funding to the adventure playgrounds to facilitate their reopening*

*"The criteria for allocating Crawley Towns Fund plan monies are set by the government and not by the Council. As set out in their Towns Fund guidance the government requires Towns Fund monies to be spent on projects which help "to drive the sustainable economic regeneration of our towns for long-term economic and productivity growth".*

*The government has also confirmed that Towns Fund monies can be used to support economic recovery. This means projects that help directly to attract jobs and business investment and economic activity.*

*The Micro-Parks project has been identified by the Manor Royal BID and business community there as a priority project to help improve the Manor Royal environment to attract more businesses and jobs. The project has also been endorsed by the Crawley Town Deal Board. Also since the delivery body*

*for the Micro-Parks project is the Manor Royal BID - it is not a Council initiative – the Council would also need the agreement of the Manor Royal BID and its Board to reallocate the funds.*

*Unfortunately, it would prove to be very difficult to argue that using Towns Fund monies on reopening adventure play grounds is an economic regeneration project. The Council cannot decide to allocate these funds unilaterally but would need to persuade the Crawley Town Deal Board and ultimately the government. I am not convinced your suggestion would meet the government's Towns Fund criteria".*

### **3) Transparency.**

*In my previous questions I asked if you believed that the removal of Councillors rights to "any document" in the possession or control of the leader or a cabinet member (regarding council decision making) from the constitution made the council more transparent.*

*In you answer you stated that the rule change from April 2020 did not "change the entitlement for Councillors" and that therefore "level of openness and transparent remains the same". You also said that "Prior to April 2020 Councillors were entitled to any formal documents" but this is obviously incorrect given the wording of the previous constitution.*

- i) *Could you please state that you understand the difference between "any document in your possession or control" and "a formal document" and set out what those differences are in your view?*

*The entitlement hasn't changed as "any document in your possession or control" meant any formal document covered under Access to Information Rules & Freedom of Information legislation, but this wasn't clear previously and was open to misinterpretation, as your question has shown. For this reason the wording was amended to read "formal document" to avoid any doubt and clear up any confusion.*

- ii) *Given the huge difference could you please state whether you believe that this change has made the council more transparent and open?*

*As the previous answer shows, this phraseology doesn't change the level of openness and transparency. Rather it clears up any ambiguity.*

### **Questions to Councillor Mullins (The Cabinet Member for Wellbeing) from Councillor Bob Burgess:**

1. *What was the total cost of installing the petanque pitch at West Green Park?*

*£4,715*

2. *Since installation, what have been the maintenance costs each year?*

*Approximately £200 per annum*

3. *How many people in each of the years it has been in use have used the pitch? If no figures exist please provide an estimate.*

*The facility officially opened in October 2018. It is unsupervised with no requirement to book so no usage figures are collected. It is very difficult to estimate usage of such a facility. Anecdotally, use of the facility is infrequent however a new facility will often take time to establish and the Covid19 Pandemic will have inevitably hindered this over the past 12 months.*

4. *Are people wanting to use the facility able to hire the necessary equipment? If so, how much are the hiring costs?*

*Yes they can borrow equipment from Town Hall, free of charge.*