

## **COUNCIL MEETING – 21 MARCH 2018**

Please note that owing to a fault with the recording equipment those parts of this transcript in *italics* are written from the clerk's notes and so may not be a verbatim record.

### **Question 3 to be put to Councillor Jones by Councillor Pope**

**Cllr Pope:** Could the Portfolio Holder please tell me if the planned Tooks development will include street trees, and if so, how many?

**Cllr Jones:** Thank you Cllr Pope for your consistent interest in trees. The Tooks scheme will include provision for approximately 156 trees, which will be planted across the development, and comprise predominantly of native species like Hornbeam, Ash, Birch and Crab trees.

And I have now sent you copies of the landscape plans, albeit this morning when I remembered but I hope you got that.

**Mayor:** I would just like to mention that as Mr Harding isn't here, we have moved straight to question 3.

#### **Question 4 to be put to Councillor Jones by Councillor Pope**

**Cllr Pope:** Since signing the Forest Charter can the Portfolio Holder update the Council on plans to plant more trees and hedges in Ipswich?

**Cllr Jones:** As you know, the Council agreed last year to support the Charter for Trees, Woods and People – or Tree Charter for short; and we remain committed to ensuring that the future policies of the Council are mindful of the Charter.

And you'll know, Cllr Pope, that the Chief Executive Russell Williams, has been in contact with the Woodland Trust and was even invited to be the only local authority speaker at the official launch in Lincoln, so that was significant. I don't know if they'll be planting a tree in his honour but . . . anyway!

So the important thing is that officers are drawing up a plan. They met with the Woodland Trust and are working up a plan to discuss elements such as what would be a realistic ambition for increasing our woodland cover and a planning policy DN10 currently – it's an ambition of 22% but you know, they may think that's over ambitious, they may think that's not ambitious enough. *Obviously we've got the country park as a key component of our work on the Ipswich Garden Suburb. We will also keep in place our policies that protect woodland and trees, and develop a Community Tree Planting Initiative.*

*You and I have already been appointed as our Councillor Tree Champions and once officers have developed a draft plan I suggest we meet to discuss it.*

**Cllr Pope:** *There are some areas of Ipswich with a good number and variety of trees, although I have noted that there are other areas where there is an obvious lack of trees; can Councillors suggest locations for new trees?*

**Cllr Jones:** *There is no reason why we couldn't ask Councillors where we could usefully and practically plant trees. I will discuss this suggestion with officers.*

**Question 5 to be put to Councillor Ellesmere by Councillor Phillips**

**Cllr Phillips:** *Will the Council be proposing a heritage visitor centre, museum or similar, at the Waterfront Gateway site, to display publicly any archaeological finds in situ, and other aspects of the town's history?*

**Cllr Ellesmere:** *We are committed to ensuring a top-quality entrance to the Waterfront but have no specific plans for the site yet. In the recent Executive report on the purchase of the Investec silo we set aside a sum of money to produce a masterplan for site.*

*However it is important to recognise that previous studies indicate there is unlikely to be any significant archaeological finds deriving from this site.*

**Councillor Phillips:** *As you will remember at the recent Executive meeting you invited me to email you with further information about my suggestion and wondered if you'd had time to consider your response and if you could let me know your thoughts.*

**Cllr Ellesmere:** *I'd like to thank Cllr Phillips for his recent email providing further information on this issue. I was disappointed though, that Cllr Phillips didn't advise me as to how much he thought it might be appropriate for the Council to spend on either building or running any such new attraction, especially as that was specifically what I asked him to do.*

*I am pleased though that you have apparently obtained the Leader of the County Council's support for such a project. I look forward to hearing how much money the County are prepared to invest in it, although I saw Councillor Noble this morning and he didn't mention it, although perhaps he had something else on his mind.*

**Question 6 to be put to Councillor M Cook by Councillor Phillips**

**Cllr Phillips:** *Will the Portfolio Holder confirm that this Council will confirm with all recommendations of our Auditors, Ernst & Young, contained within their recent Annual Audit Letter, including the recommendations relating to Ipswich Borough Assets?*

**Cllr Cook:** *Yes*

**Cllr Phillips:** *Will the Portfolio Holder agree to provide 'detailed financial plans, both for the subsidiary companies, and for the Council incorporating the income and other projections relating to the companies' to the Audit and Governance Committee, as recommended by the auditors.*

**Cllr Cook:** *I don't have a copy of the Auditor's letter in front of me and so am not certain about what Councillor Phillips is asking for, but I'm happy to discuss it with him. We will absolutely follow the recommendations that we've been given and ensure that all Councillors receive the information they need in order to oversee our wholly owned companies correctly.*

**Question 7 to be put to Councillor P Smart by Councillor Reynolds**

**Cllr Reynolds:** How many publicly available Electric Vehicle charging points currently exist within the Borough?

**Cllr Smart:** I understand that there are currently 22 such points.

**Cllr Reynolds:** Does the borough have a target for the year 2025 (or indeed any year in the 2020's) because 25 seems a little bit dismal to myself.

**Cllr Smart:** I agree that 22 is a very small number which is why I am absolutely delighted that that number will be more than doubled to 50, with the 28 charging points will be created at the new Crown Multi-Storey car park.

## **Question 8 to be put to Councillor P Smart by Councillor Reynolds**

**Cllr Reynolds:** In support of a greener Ipswich, could the resident parking permit scheme be amended to encourage smaller, greener, lower emission vehicles, helping reward positive purchasing decisions and could these same vehicles get reduced parking fees with the introduction of the new parking machines?

**Cllr Smart:** A little uncertain from this question as to whether it relates to residents parking or the council's off-street parking with the reference to the new parking machines, so will attempt to answer both.

Whilst it would be technically possible to vary the cost of residents parking permits according to vehicle size or emissions, some might see this as an attempt to penalise those households that require vehicles of different size to meet their own specific needs.

But I think that the most important point is that the council, as you're aware, is currently introducing a virtual permit system for residents parking and part of the reason for this is to make the administration of these permits simpler and quicker to use. Adding the requirement to check vehicle size or emissions would mean that the system would become more complicated and therefore contrary to these aims and presumably would require the council to store more information than is strictly necessary, and given the presentation we've just had about Data Protection and the issues in Islington, I think we tread carefully in that direction.

With respect to the off-street car parks, the use of these is more discretionary as people have a choice obviously. But to make different charges based on vehicle size or emissions would again be quite complicated to administer and the council is keen to ensure that the parking offer is simple, easy to understand and to enforce, so as such there are no plans to make those sorts of changes.

## **Question 9 to be put to Councillor Ellesmere by Councillor Fisher**

**Cllr Fisher:** I recently sent the other two Group Leaders three pledges the Conservative candidates for the Borough Elections were signing. The pledges were to set a good tone, debate respectfully & refrain from abusive or offensive comments. Could the Leader of the Labour Group confirm if his party's candidates will be signing the same pledges?

**Cllr Ellesmere:** It is important that however competitive an election is, it is conducted with due respect to the candidates and the honest disagreement and debate does not descend into abuse.

Sadly, especially with the advent of social media, this is becoming more prevalent though I do not believe this to be as big an issue in Ipswich as elsewhere.

I'm glad that the Conservative Party in Ipswich has agreed a pledge for its candidates to uphold high standards of conduct. The Labour Party has its own pledge which it expects all members to uphold and I'll just read that out if I may madam Mayor:

"I pledge to act within the spirit and the rules of the labour party in my conduct both on and off line with members and non members, and I stand against all forms of abuse. I understand that if found to be in breach of the Labour Party policy on online and off-line abuse, I will be subject to the rules and procedures of the Labour Party."

Madam Mayor, this pledge has been circulated to all our councillors and candidates in the forthcoming elections to remind them of their obligations as a Labour Party member.

**Question 10 to be put to Councillor Lockington by Councillor Fisher**

**Cllr Fisher:** Could the Leader of the Liberal Democrats confirm if her party's candidates will be signing the same pledges?

**Cllr Lockington:** Yes, I received the email on Sunday, but since I saw it came in as a question I thought I wouldn't respond to your email, but my response is simply that within our party it's always the Agent, and I have certainly forwarded your email to our Agent, who normally keeps an eye on *candidate behaviour*. *I would say however, that I agree with the sentiment of the pledges, and that I for one don't intend to attack other candidates personally. It is important that we can disagree on issues but that we treat others with respect.*



**Question 11 to be put to Councillor P Smart by Councillor Lockington**

**Cllr Lockington:** *Whilst acknowledging that the new Virtual Parking Permits will probably be fine for many of the residents living within one of the four Residents Parking Zones, can the Portfolio Holder inform us how residents who might not have a Mobile Phone or access to the internet via a computer will be able to fully take part in the Resident Parking Scheme which they are paying for?*

**Cllr Smart:** *Residents who do not have access to manage their permit online can ring the help number on the letter we have sent. That number is 01473 432840.*

*Residents can also call into the Customer Service Centre and receive assistance to make an online application.*

**Cllr Lockington:** *Does the Portfolio Holder acknowledge that the issue of providing a Council tax statement make the application more difficult for example for those renting rooms, and will there be some flexibility in the system.*

**Cllr Smart:** *If residents face difficulty in providing what they need to with an application form they should contact the Council in one of the ways I've already explained and we will consider the issues and help them to apply.*

## **Question 12 to be put to Councillor P Smart by Councillor Lockington**

**Cllr Lockington:** With the enhanced street cleansing programme, can the Portfolio Holder inform us how this will include better cleaning of our streets from the build-up of detritus as well as keeping our footpaths cleaner?

**Cllr Smart:** As Cllr Lockington may know, last year the Council approved £300k worth of capital to purchase new road sweeping equipment. This equipment was delivered this month and is now being put into use. This will give us the ability to better manoeuvre in residential streets.

There will continue to be issues with sweeping certain streets as they continually have parked cars on them. We can - where necessary - suspend car parking in these streets as we have done recently in Westerfield Road, but we do this as infrequently as possible as we are aware that this does have an impact on residents.

In the forthcoming year's budget this Council has approved a further £144k of capital and an ongoing £75k of revenue budget in order to purchase and operate additional sweeping equipment for footpaths that will enable us to enhance the Town Centre footpaths and pedestrian areas and footpaths right across the Borough.

**Cllr Lockington:** I got some answer here, but I would like to say what is the arrangement with the county council about how to move the cars in the streets so that we can get them swept better? Do you have an arrangement with the county council?

**Cllr Smart:** We, I'm sure, do consult with the county council when we suspend parking provision in certain streets. As I said, we do this very infrequently, well as infrequently as we can get away with. I'm not sure of the precise schedules that we have to go through. I'm sure these can be made available to Cllr Lockington if she was particularly interested.

### **Question 13 to be put to Councillor P Smart by Councillor Holmes**

**Cllr Holmes:** Please could the relevant Portfolio Holder confirm that the Borough Council is currently working with Suffolk County Council on the preparation of a new parking strategy for Ipswich and, if so, what progress has been made and when will a report be made available to this Council?

**Cllr Smart:** I'm happy to confirm that we are working on a new Parking Strategy in conjunction with Suffolk County Council and other stakeholders.

A consultant (there is always one of those) – a consultant's been engaged to produce a report and officers are currently considering an initial draft version of that report. I understand that its final version should be available this summer.

**Cllr Holmes:** Please could the portfolio holder assure us that the new strategy will have provisions for dealing with commuter parking, which in the north of Ipswich there are literally hundreds of cars parking all over the road and particularly on pavements, and I think this is an issue we need to address.

**Cllr Smart:** Since I have yet to see a draft of that report, I'm unable to assure Cllr Holmes in the way he desires. However, I do share his concern about the issue of commuter parking. We have a problem in my own ward as he appears to in his, and we have been in consultation with the county about how we might move this forward. It is difficult since they have no resource of their own or are disinclined to apply any resource of their own, but we might be able to make some progress later in the year.