

ANNUAL COUNCIL 25 MAY 2023

AGENDA ITEM 12 – QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Question from Councillor Lucius Vellacott to the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group:

I can tell the Council with confidence that residents in Soham South voted overwhelmingly to oppose the Cambridge Congestion Charge, which the Liberal Democrat campaign refused to oppose outright, and for our other common-sense plans like keeping council tax low and car parking free. However, I note with concern that Cllr Dupré's Liberal Democrat group, to my knowledge and that of many residents, conducted no district council campaign activities in Soham South or Wicken for the latest election, but did conduct a great deal in Soham North.

Can Cllr Dupré confirm to my residents why her group sought to listen to the views of one half of our town, but not the other?

Question to from Councillor Mark Inskip to the Leader of the Council on Voter ID:

On 15 May former Leader of the House of Commons, Jacob Rees-Mogg said *"Parties that try and gerrymander end up finding their clever scheme comes back to bite them, as dare I say we found by insisting on voter ID for elections.*

We found the people who didn't have ID were elderly and they by and large voted Conservative, so we made it hard for our own voters and we upset a system that worked perfectly well."

What data does the council hold on the impact of Voter ID in East Cambridgeshire?

In particular how many individuals were turned away because they didn't have a valid ID?

How many others does the council estimate were deterred from turning out to vote on 4 May by the voter ID requirement?

And did Voter ID contribute to fewer people voting Conservative in May 2023 than in May 2019?

Question from Councillor Caroline Shepherd to Chair of Operational Services Committee:

In the Environment Plan adopted nearly two years ago by the council's Operational Services Committee on 14th June 2021, the action plan states: The Council has engaged with two national electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure companies, looking to determine potential for additional EV charge points on our own land (e.g. car parks). Barton Road and Newnham Street car parks appear the most viable, and investigations continue.

On Saturday 20th May all parking spaces for EV charging in Barton Road car park were occupied by petrol or diesel fuelled machines, meanwhile the chargers in Newnham Street car park have still not been commissioned. This left no council car parks where EV drivers visiting Ely could charge their vehicles.

It is three and half years since the council declared a Climate Emergency, why is Ely still so unwelcoming to EV drivers (I include myself amongst them).

Question from Councillor Kathrin Holtzmann to the Leader of the Council:

This council has declared a climate emergency in 2019. The built environment is responsible for 25% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions. It is clear that decarbonising construction plays a crucial role in reaching net zero.

However, the council's local plan, which has been created in 2015 and has had only a single-issue review in 2020, does still not address upfront emissions from new developments. It does not set appropriate standards for operational efficiency let alone biodiversity and conservation targets. When is the council going to start developing a new local plan that addresses these issues?

Question from Councillor Mary Wade to the Chair of the Operational Services committee:

On 1 June last, the council announced that it had opened the county's largest-ever tree maze with the opening of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee maze in Ely Country Park. The council's press release highlighted the intricate walkways planted up with more than 5000 native hornbeam saplings.

Today many of those saplings are dead and the maze is overgrown by metre high weeds including stinging nettles making it completely unusable for visitors.

How many of the 5000 saplings planted last year have died and how many have survived?

Why was an adequate maintenance plan not put in place when the maze was opened?

Have any lessons been learnt from this failure?