

**COUNCIL MEETING**

**12<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2012**

**ORAL QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

**1. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP of the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Safety**

What information he has regarding recent events at the Bethlem Hospital and if he will make a statement?

**Reply:**

The Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Safety will be making a Statement on this matter which will be dealt with under item 7 when there will be opportunity for member questions.

**2. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP of the Leader of the Council**

What representations he has made to the new Chief Executive of the South London and Maudsley Trust regarding the Council's concerns about the management of the Bethlem Hospital site?

**Reply:**

Councillor Carr responded that like you and indeed most if not all members, I have had very real concerns about the poor level of management at the Hospital with regards to security. For that reason we tried to arrange for the earliest possible meeting with the interim Chief Executive, Mr Gus Heathfield, as soon as he took over in his new position. This seemed not to be as straight forward as I had hoped and so I was forced to settle for a conference call on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October. This conference call took place with myself, the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Safety and Mr Heathfield.

After all normal introductions and pleasantries I believe I very clearly articulated to Mr Heathfield our very grave concerns at the casual and dismissive attitude to public safety demonstrated by the Hospital and indeed the previous Chief Executive and the Chairman of the Board. We explained what we considered to be a very poor response to recent incidents and the failure to abide by the recently agreed protocol. I went on to explain that my colleagues and I had lost faith in the management of the organisation and went on to suggest that a member of the Authority should be asked to join the Board.

That said I did assure the interim Director that the Local Authority would seek to work with him and his colleagues to ensure these issues could be corrected as it was crucial for the well being and safety of our residents.

Finally it was agreed to arrange a date on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2012 when I, the Portfolio Holder, the Chief Executive, Mr Davies and the Deputy Borough Commander would meet with Mr Heathfield to further our discussion.

**Supplementary Question:**

Councillor Bennett thanked the Leader for this response and referred to the concerns of local residents of West Wickham Ward which bordered onto the hospital boundary and their concerns about escaped patients who ended up in the shopping centre. He asked if the Leader would point out to the new Chief Executive that it was perfectly legitimate for this Council to express the concerns and fears of its local residents to him as Council Members were the only democratically elected representatives for the Borough unlike the SLAM Board which was appointed by the Secretary of State and had no democratic input directly from the electorate. Also that the Council would expect the new Chief Executive to respond very clearly to Council and resident's concerns in a more positive way which was not done under the previous regime.

**Reply:**

Councillor Carr fully agreed with these views which he thought should be directed to the Interim Chief Executive and he was aware that the Police also had very serious concerns about the dismissive attitude shown previously and advised that he would be happy to report back following the meeting.

**3. From Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP of the Leader of the Council**

Whether he will initiate a cross council review of all public facing services to see what processes currently undertaken by paper could be undertaken on line, including those carried out on behalf of the council by contractors?

**Reply:**

The Leader replied that he would happily initiate a cross council review as suggested by the Member and would be happy to discuss with contractors something similar.

**Supplementary Question:**

Councillor Bennett referred to the work already going on through the Education PDS Committee and the New Technology Working Group, Chaired by Councillor Will Harmer, to bring more work on line. He asked if the Leader would bring to the attention of Liberata a complaint he had received from a resident who was moving out of the Borough and had been told that he had to complete a form on line which then had to be printed off and posted to the Council. To claim any refund would be by post could involve him in 5 sets of written correspondence on an issue which Councillor Bennett felt ought to be dealt with fully on line.

**Reply:**

Councillor Carr responded that he would be happy to take this up with Liberata but it had to be borne in mind that whilst we could negotiate and encourage changes to their procedure he was not sure that the Council was in a position to make contractors carry this out but he would do what he could.