

Council – 17 October 2016

Public Questions (3)

1.	Question from Mr Mike Evans to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan
	There is much talk at national level about the protection of children and young people. Would the Leader of Cheltenham Borough Council confirm that he and his fellow councillors are aware of such concern and are actively committed to ensuring that safeguards are in place in this borough to protect our children and grandchildren and explain where that focus lies?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Cheltenham Borough Council has two elected member champions for Safeguarding and a comprehensive safeguarding children and adults policy. The Champions work with officers and elected members to ensure that the Borough Council has safeguarding procedures within its own services but also that the Borough Council works with other agencies to support effective safeguarding across the Borough. This takes the form of working through multi agency groups as well as supporting partnership projects to support children at risk. The elected member champions are regularly in contact with the Chair of the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Childrens Boards to ensure local accountability for safeguarding the Borough's children.
2.	Question from Mr Barry Perks to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan
	Does Cheltenham Borough Council have – or does it intend to seek – any powers to recall any Member who causes grave public concern, as has been the case with one of the Councillors for Pittville, as a result of his comments concerning sex work as a career choice for children leaving school?
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> <p>Firstly may I commiserate with Mr Perks on failing to win the Pittville seat when he stood against Cllr Parsons in May.</p> <p>Cllr Parsons is entirely clear on what he said and why and that this has been misinterpreted in the press.</p> <p>As Cllr Parsons has stated, "My remarks were initially misinterpreted by the national media; and subsequently misrepresented by my political opponents.</p> <p>I was commenting in a discussion on a consultation paper on sex work prepared by a national Liberal Democrat study group. That document is in the public realm and can be seen at http://tinyurl.com/hp9dzm3. The paper listed 32 questions and the meeting was discussing them in blocks. My comments related to one single question - 'Do we have a duty to reduce stigma? Can we?'</p> <p>I was arguing that this could never happen because, to do so, it would be necessary to see sex work as no different from any other work - accountancy for example. And, taken to its logical conclusion, careers masters would suggest prostitution as an option for certain school leavers. I followed this by stating specifically 'It will never happen'. And of course it will never happen because it is unthinkable and no sane person would ever contemplate it. So there will always be stigma attaching to sex work.</p> <p>So, do I believe, as has been suggested, that careers masters should recommend sex work to school leavers? Of course not. To suggest such a thing is absolutely</p>

	<p>ridiculous.”</p> <p>Cllr Parson is more than happy to discuss this with any Pittville resident who was concerned by the press coverage. While Mr Perks isn't a resident in Pittville I'm sure the same offer extends to him.</p> <p>I do not expect Cheltenham Borough Council is likely to seek powers mentioned by Mr Perks since elections provide the appropriate means of deciding who residents wish to represent them.</p>
3.	Question from Mr Alan McDougall to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>As a concerned resident of Pittville I am extremely unhappy that I and my fellow residents are represented at Council by an individual who made such an appalling statement regarding the choice of sex work as a career option for children, as widely reported in the media, at the Liberal Democrat Conference. Would the Leader of the Council explain what steps he is taking to deal with this serious matter?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>I refer Mr McDougall to my answer to Qu 2.</p> <p>My aim would be to provide an environment where sensitive issues can be discussed without the risk of hysterical over reaction in the press. This would increase the chance of finding practical solutions to difficult issues. However, this would involve sections of the national press acting in a more responsible way than they currently do. Equally as a believer in a free press this is not something I would seek to impose but will always support providing such an environment locally.</p>