



Future East Ayrshire Live transcript: part 3

(0:05) We know budgets are restricted by the Scottish Government and we can't spend money we don't have. One of the efficiencies mentioned once was street lighting. We were once pushing for this to be improved so that it helped stop crime. We've already solved one problem – do we want to recreate it?

Chris McAleavey: The council has been using LED lighting in residential areas for the last couple of years. They still offer the same level of light but at a much reduced energy cost. That's the way forward – taking advantage of new technology and adapting our replacement programmes in the future. So we can get the best value but still maintain safe lighting levels.

(2:25) Can older people choose to have a council contractor to come in and can they expect the same level of service?

Eddie Fraser: The Council provides almost three quarters of the care at home services in this council area, and we also have partner providers. Every person we work with has the option of direct payment – they can take control of their money and choose any company to come in. As of 1 April 2014 this will change to Self Directed Support. Instead of thinking about services it's about thinking about outcomes. We talk to the person about what they want to get out of it. And we can give them options of services. We will monitor these outcomes. Some people might want us to arrange their services, some might want to do it themselves – people will be able to choose. Currently not many people ask to change carers in their annual reviews.

It's a big change for staff as well as for the people using the services. Hopefully it's going back to stop looking at 17-page single shared assessment forms and start talking to people. Staff are taking it on board and are delighted they can do this. In short, things are in a time of change. People are happy with their services but they will have more choice on how they can be delivered in the future.

(6:10) What measures will be taken to ensure spending from here on in is responsible, measurable and sustainable for the future?



Alex McPhee: Once of the things we've done is to make sure we've got a package that takes us to 2016-2017. By 2016-17, although we will have these demographic and funding pressures, if we achieve everything we've set out to do then we will still be solvent. We have had clean audit certificates since 1996 – and are held up as exemplary across Scotland. We don't have cause for concern but it's something we're never complacent about. It's my job to ensure we continue to be sustainable into the future.

(07:28) The closures targeted are due to external economic factors (e.g. Scottish Government cuts). What will be put in place to safeguard our facilities and services for any future changes e.g. if conditions were to worsen.

We've made assumptions on how much money we will have from the Scottish Government, and how much they will get from UK, over the next three years. We've had that validated by an economist from the Improvement Service. We're conscious that conditions can change – it's a case of making sure we keep our eye on the horizon for things coming forward. At the moment we have a budget which we believe will be balanced until 2017.

(8:50) What education is given to our young people about the financial and social costs of dropping litter on our streets?

David Mitchell: The first answer must come from the schools themselves and it does – they put a lot into teaching the young people about the environment e.g. the green flag initiative. There are a range of measures within the schools to raise awareness about littering, dog fouling and fly tipping. This is supplemented by the enforcement unit. They also go out to schools with presentations to supplement what is being done by the schools, including on the health aspect.

They do have an enforcement edge to them as well. While there are only two of them in the enforcement team they are very committed. They go out early in the morning, they go out at night, they work with colleagues in outdoor amenities and waste. We try and maximise their usefulness. They issue fixed penalty notices where appropriate. We look to the public and other staff for information as well.

It can only be described as serious anti-social behaviour – it has health consequences and it is prevalent. It is something we're



committed to and we also work with the Police and Keep Scotland Beautiful on a national level. We've redeployed a member of staff to help and the team have had some notable successes. They came forward with the idea of bikes so they can get further across the area. I'm currently working on a proposal to further grow that unit that I'll bring to cabinet.

We do take the data you give us and we might not be there the next day but we build it up and we have a yearly plan with planned activities in communities as well as routine patrols.

(17:55) What plans and future plans does East Ayrshire have to roll out the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill when it comes into play?

David Mitchell: There's quite a range of proposals in the bill – ranging from derelict buildings to community provision and a lot in between. The bill is out and we're currently preparing a response to take to cabinet. We are aware of it, reviewing it and will be taking a report for political approval to cabinet prior to submitting it to make sure our voice is heard in terms of what that bill can offer. If there are any specific questions we'd be happy to take them after the meeting.

(19:35) Could we not have more people who deal with this issue? Two people for the whole of East Ayrshire really does not seem a lot.

Fiona Lees: As David said he does want to look to having additional staff in this area. One thing we want to do is work closely with the local communities – you know where the areas are, and you know the times when these offences occur. We need to work in close partnership here.

(22:10) This winter is set to be a bad one. Is there any more help you can put in place to make sure no homeless people on the street will die this winter because of the cold?

Chris McAleavey: This is a serious question and one that is on our mind right through the year. We work hard with colleagues elsewhere in the council, in health, in education, in social work, with voluntary groups, the church, the police – it's all about trying to identify where



that risk exists for people and trying to prevent people from getting into such dire circumstances that they put themselves at risk. We've got arrangements in place that can prevent that from happening and we work really hard to stop that. It's important to stress that it's not just at Christmas it's right through the year.

(23:40) Is there any more funding available to top up the £2million set aside for the bedroom tax?

Chris McAleavey: There has been additional money allocated to help local authorities deal with the changes to the welfare system, particularly the changes to the under occupancy charge. We've had an additional allocation awarded to us to help us deal with claims for discretionary housing payment. We're receiving claims and going through the process to work out if they are eligible, providing support and assistance etc. It's going to be an ongoing process for the council. We're working with the Citizen's Advice Bureau to give the best advice and practical support we can to the people affected.