

Question from Member of the Public pursuant to Standing Order No 7

Question from Dr David Samson:

Please could Councillors explain why the Council is spending thousands of pounds of North Warwickshire Resident's Council Tax money on applying for an injunction to stop protestors at the Valero Oil terminal site in Kingsbury, especially as the Police already have power to arrest protestors if necessary and the oil company has millions of pounds to spend on protecting their own site?

Response from David Wright - Leader of the Council:

I understand completely the frustration that this Council has had to spend considerable resource in dealing with the unacceptable and criminal elements of the protests centred on Kingsbury Oil Terminal. This is not how I, nor I suspect any Councillor here, would have preferred to have spent this money. We are in discussions with central Government to seek to recover these costs.

The background to this case is set out in the report that I asked Officers to bring to the last Executive Board earlier this month. Whilst the oil companies have lots of resources, the main issue here is public safety and as set out in the report the injunctions that oil operators can apply for cannot include a power of arrest. The injunction that the oil company obtained here prior to ours was proving ineffectual because of this. The Police do have a power of arrest for criminal activity but usually have to release people straight away or very shortly afterwards.

As set out in the report, a local authority injunction with a power of arrest is more effective than a civil injunction or the Police's general powers, in cases such as this. Being prosecuted some months after the event provides little disincentive to highly committed protestors whereas increasing periods of detention under our injunction has proved to be the only effective way to bring these protests under control.