

Council 29 March 2017: Questions submitted from Members of the Public

Question No.	Question from	Question:	Question to:	Responsible Officer:
1.	Eastchurch Parish Council	<p>Eastchurch Parish Council has tried to engage with Enforcement over outstanding issues and eventually managed to arrange a meeting in August last year – some of the issues discussed have been ongoing for years.</p> <p>The Committee members are unsatisfied with the updates, the lack of communication and lack of action by the Enforcement Team with constant referrals back to Legal despite existing appeals etc. having been gone through and failed.</p> <p>The Parish Council are concerned that several of these issues now represent a major public health issue for both local residents and the pupils of Eastchurch School.</p> <p>The Chairman and Councillors of Eastchurch Parish Council question the amount of time it takes to resolve long standing enforcement issues and ask how the Council aims to resolve this situation?</p>	Cabinet Member for Planning	James Freeman

Response:

I am aware officers have met with Eastchurch Parish Council to provide a more focussed approach to resolving planning enforcement issues within their community. Much progress has been made on 10 cases raised at a recent meeting with the Parish Council of which 4 are now closed or have no ongoing planning enforcement issues. 2 cases are with the legal Team and are awaiting applications to court for determination. Of the remaining 4 cases, officers are still dealing with certain aspects of the cases which remain outstanding to be resolved. I am aware that one of the remaining outstanding cases requires a multi agency approach involving waste dumping and burning through environmental health and environment agency regulations as well as dealing with a complex planning history and land ownership. Therefore, this case does require a more measured approach to handling public health issues and potential planning breaches. I have asked the Head of Planning in liaison with the Head of Economy and Community Services to co-ordinate discussions

with the Parish Council to explain the approach being taken and to ensure progress is made as expediently as possible and given the priority it requires.

2.	Andrew Cooper	In recent weeks the Council's website has included an online version of the petition expressing concern about the Councils intention to borrow up to £28 million to fund Sittingbourne regeneration. There have been multiple complaints about the accessibility of the petition. Will the Council take steps to make such petitions more available?	The Leader	Dave Thomas
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Response:

Thank you for your question. The issue of accessibility to the e-petition's link on the Council's website has been investigated. There are just two clicks to access the e-petitions link from the main Swale Borough Council homepage, and 163 members of the public have 'signed' the e-petition. I believe that some users have experienced an issue in accessing the petitions link indirectly from using a search engine rather than accessing directly from the Swale Borough Council website, but we are attempting to resolve this with search engine providers. Other issues from users were identified as being dependent on an individual's web browser which is out of the Council's control. The software used is from a leader in the market for providing e-petition software to local authorities and the issues reported have been fed back to the company.

3.	Simon Clark	Does the Leader of the Council acknowledge that there is serious, widespread concern among the residents not only of Sittingbourne, but also in the borough as a whole, regarding this Councils proposal to borrow up to £28m to fund the leisure and retail parts of the Sittingbourne Town Centre project?	The Leader/Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance	Nick Vickers
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Response:

Thank you for your question. I want to make it absolutely clear that this is a decision which we have come to after a great deal of research and investigation. It is interesting that as I talk to people in the local area the people who welcome the cinema and a better range of restaurants far outnumber those who have concerns. I think in reality if you start off not supporting the regeneration project that will determine your position on the Council's approach.

I have rehearsed many times why I think this is a good investment for the whole borough. The extra income this will generate will help us continue to provide services across the borough which are threatened by the further cuts in funding that we know are on the way. But I fully respect those who have a different opinion.