

Council - 20 September 2017: Questions submitted from Members of the Public

Question No.	Question from	Question:	Question to:	Responsible Officer:
1.	Mr Jeff Tutt	<p>On 26th July 2017 the leader told Council he had be approached by a Parish Council chairman imploring him to recommend acceptance of the Local Plan to underwrite the 5.4 years housing supply and the 5 year supply for gypsy and traveller pitches.</p> <p>The Local Plan has now been made, which I am sure we are all pleased to at least have a plan, even if people disagree with certain components.</p> <p>One of the main building blocks of the plan is the land supply and the 5 year supply. Could the leader please explain the current position of the 5 year supply on gypsy and traveller pitches and the implications this has on planning applications?</p>	Cllr Gerry Lewin	James Freeman
<p>Response:</p> <p>As of August of this year, the Council considers that it has a five year supply for gypsies and travellers of 11.7 years against the current need for pitches in the Borough. This is a figure substantially in excess of the required five year supply and this means that applications for planning permission for further sites must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, including the specific policies in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Government's Planning Policy for Traveller Sites. A significant factor for decision making is that there is numerically no need to make further provision on the basis of the currently assessed need. However, before making its decision, the Council will consider the existing level of local provision and need for sites, the availability of alternative accommodation and any of the applicant's personal circumstances. It will, of course, also need to consider the impacts of any proposal before reaching its decision.</p>				

2.	Mr Jeff Tutt	There is also a large amount of fly tipping and general littering around the Borough, can we please know if there is a strategy to combat this scourge?	Cllr Horton	Alistair Andrews
<p>Response:</p> <p>Swale Borough Council has adopted the National litter strategy (England) launched by the Government in April this year; (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/litter-strategy-for-england).</p> <p>The key points within this strategy include sending clear messages regarding environmental issues; actively cleaning up the country; and improving enforcement. Swale council takes the issues of littering and fly tipping very seriously, working closely with other local authorities and organisations such as the police, National Farmers Union, and Environment Agency to share information on waste related crime and to target offenders. The council employs a range of tactical options and campaigns to combat deter, prevent and detect this selfish and criminal behaviour. Our campaigns, often in partnership are usually prepared in advance through the annual service plan process, although the strategy and tactical delivery plan are sufficiently flexible to allow a rapid response when necessary.</p> <p>Delivery of the strategy is through a tactical plan and I can report there are many examples of highly effective enforcement activity in Swale on these environmental issues. For example, our environmental enforcement officers who were introduced in 2016 to tackle litter, who last year issued around 3000 fixed penalty notices (FPN's) to individuals caught dropping litter in our community. The surplus income from this contract is used on local initiatives such as new litter bins, voting ash trays, pocket ash trays, anti-fly tipping initiatives, signs, community litter picks, equipment and educational school visits.</p> <p>Swale has also been highly active in coordinating and supporting community events such as 'Clean for the Queen' and the 'Great British Spring Clean' both of which were well attended by volunteers and well received by our community.</p> <p>Recently the Environment Response Team (ERT) have been quick to use new legislation to issue FPN's to small scale fly tippers as a swift and cost effective punitive measure. At the higher end of the scale we continue to be one of the more active councils for taking action in court against more serious offences of fly tipping, and other waste offences. The council has a high success ratio in court and all our prosecutions are well publicised.</p> <p>To complement our clear messages campaign a recent 'Bag it, Bin it, Win it' anti dog fouling campaign allowed officers to promote responsible dog ownership and to show residents that we are tackling the issues that they raise at our engagement surgeries. A new communications campaign will be launched very soon to tackle the issues of litter and fly tipping. The 'Cleaner Thinking' campaigns will be ongoing and well publicised on bill boards and radio stations within the borough, as well as in newspapers and on social media.</p>				