

Council 19 February 2014

Questions by Members of the Public

Question No.	Question from	Question:	Question to:	Responsible Officer:
1	Mrs Louise Hanafin	What steps are the council taking to ensure that the cleaning products used on its premises and/or in any cleaning contracts around Swale are not tested on animals? We are a nation of animal lovers, yet every day in laboratories in the UK dogs, cats & rabbits (amongst other animals) are being tested on for household cleaning products. I have been buying cruelty free products for over a year and there are plenty of reasonably priced, quality products available. Please will you insert a condition with current and any future tenders that any supplier must be certified under the Leaping Bunny programme by Cruelty Free International?	Cllr Bowles (Leader)	Brian Planner
<p>Response: Regarding our primary cleaning contract, the manufacturer of our products has a policy not to test their products on animals. Our sales manager has been researching and has not been able to find any manufacturers that supply our whole range of products with the certification from Cruelty Free International, so at this point we would not be confident in saying we could support the pledge.</p> <p>However, we are prepared to research the matter further.</p>				
2	Mr Chris Foulds (Chairman S.E.A.L)	For over two years Sheerness Enhancement Association for Leisure (known as S.E.A.L) have been working painstakingly with the local young	Councillor Mike Whiting (Cabinet Member for Localism)	Emma Wiggins

		<p>people and users of the existing Skate Park located in the Beachfields park area of Sheerness, to deliver a new modern Skate Park of polished concrete construction. This project initially began back in 2008 led by the young people of the community, under the guidance of Mr Ray Featherstone from Sheerness County Youth Club.</p> <p>Sheerness and the wider Sheppey region are areas of extreme deprivation where there is very little sports or leisure activity provision that local residents can access free of charge. Due to the low average household incomes, it is prohibitively for many families to travel for leisure or entertainment as they cannot afford to run vehicles or meet the costs of public transport, so local facilities like this are a key need. There are also high levels of anti-social behaviour within Sheerness and engagement with local youths has resulted in statements that this is created by boredom and a lack of quality activities and opportunities that they are able to undertake instead.</p> <p>Providing a positive space for young people is proven to be a constructive way to produce a happier and more vibrant community.</p>		
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<p>Response: The regeneration of Sittingbourne Town Centre is a priority for this council and plans for new development continue to progress positively. The aspiration is to create a diverse offer to our residents which includes leisure activity and the council agreed to support the Sittingbourne skate project in order that a borough-wide leisure facility with regional appeal could be provided to attract visitors to the town.</p> <p>Members may recall that a bike and skate area was opened in 2002 within the Beachfield Youth Zone, Sheerness, and this council contributed £40,000 for the development of the area from a total project cost of £140,000 with external funders providing the balance. The work of SEAL and others in providing facilities for young people on Sheppey is widely recognised and officers continue to support SEAL in its commendable endeavours to deliver a skatepark in Sheerness.</p> <p>With regard to further financial support, in times where local government finances are squeezed local councils have to prioritise towards their strategic priorities. However, I would encourage you to apply to members of this council and local Kent County Council members who have access to grant funding for projects such as the skatepark in Sheerness, and to discuss with officers what other possible funding agencies and opportunities may be available.</p>				
3	Mr Greenhill	<p>The Localism Act sets out the Seven Principles of Public Life. They are not defined in the Act. This Council adopted the descriptors applied to the Principles by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) for the purpose of its Code of Conduct for Councillors. The CSPL has revisited these descriptors and has</p>	Councillor Bowles (Leader)	Mark Radford

		<p>revised them for each of the Principles.</p> <p>The one value which is made explicit in the revised descriptors and was only implicit in the old ones is: "Holders of public office should be truthful". Thus the one new descriptor is truthfulness.</p> <p>As the Council chose simply to adopt the CSPL descriptors for its Code of Conduct why has it not kept up to date and followed the CSPL, revised them in the Code and acted upon them having regard at least to some recent responses in this Chamber and elsewhere?</p>		
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Response: Thank you for your question.

The Council's Code of Conduct incorporates the guidance issued by both the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Association at the time of the introduction of the revised standards regime under the Localism Act 2011.

Whilst I note that the Committee for Standards in Public Life has amended its descriptors in certain areas, the contents of the Local Code is a matter for each individual local authority. The Standards Committee has considered on an annual basis the operation of its Local Code, having regard to the experience to date. It has concluded that, whilst there might be a need to review the overall framework, which also covers the parishes within the Borough, at some future point, it is too early to do so in light of the need for the new Code and regime to bed down. I note the points raised and am sure this will form part of any consideration of any need to revise the Code.