

Questions submitted from Members of the Public

Question No.	Question from:	Question:	Question to:	Responsible Officer:
1.	Mr Greenhill	<p>At the Council meeting on 30 July 2014, the Leader gave a written response to a question submitted by Danielle Smith who, co-incidentally, happens to be the prospective Conservative candidate for the proposed Homewood Ward. In her question Ms Smith opined as follows: "...I and everyone represented by the Labour Party members are being short-changed and disconnected from the very important democratic process of reviewing policies of the Council and suggesting new ones." Anyone who attends Council meetings would realise that such a statement is palpable nonsense. The Labour members of Council take active part in debate and other procedures both in and out of the Council Chamber and are seen to do so.</p> <p>Would the Leader reflect on all that he said in his response and agree with me that it is in fact the Conservative members who are in fact short-changing and disconnecting by, amongst other things, curtailing the democratic processes in the Council Chamber and positively supporting, for ulterior motives, the effective and affective disenfranchisement of the residents of the Woodstock Ward by the decampment of the Conservative Willicombe councillors – the very councillors Ms Smith would aspire to succeed? And following in the vein of the Leader’s invective in responding to Ms. Smith’s question, has he not noticed or been aware in Council that the Conservative members resemble lemmings in their subservience to himself and his ‘cabinet’ and that ordinarily, in the collective, there would appear to be more activity on a fishmonger’s counter or a mortician’s slab than on the Conservative benches? If his answer is simply “No” to either or both parts of this question, then why?</p>	Leader	N/A

<p>Response: Another cycle, another Full Council, another politically motivated diatribe from Mr Greenhill.</p> <p>I am glad he has recognised that Danielle Smith is a prospective Conservative candidate for Homewood Ward; it shows the hard work that she has already put in is being noticed. As to Mr Greenhill’s second statement, whilst I accept that a few Labour Members take an active part in debate in some meetings, choosing not even to attend other important meetings can hardly be seen as taking an active part. It seems that in developing policies for the future governance of this Borough, the Labour Party locally, as it is nationally on the question of our constitution, has nothing to say and no answers for the people.</p> <p>I do not believe that the current personal circumstances of Councillors Alan and Jean Willicombe is in any way disenfranchising those who elected them - they are both active behind the scenes and in this Chamber.</p> <p>I do not recognise his comments as to the ‘subservience’ (his words), of non-Cabinet Members of the Conservative Group. Whether it is their work on Policy Development and Scrutiny, or within our very robust group meetings, I as Leader find them very far from subservient.</p>				
2.	Christina Booth	<p>The appalling traffic situation that exists at the junction of A2500 (Lower Road) and Barton Hill Drive on the Isle of Sheppey is well known to all road users in the area. There have been several recent studies of this junction and a number of observations that could go some way to alleviating the daily congestion suffered particularly during the morning and evening high traffic flow periods.</p> <p>I understand that KCC have finally agreed that the current traffic light junction be removed and replaced with a purpose-built roundabout. It is agreed that this measure would substantially improve traffic flows and reduce the exceptional delays that the area currently experiences.</p> <p>Whilst this decision is seen as a positive move, I am concerned that past history of Highways working takes a lengthy period to come to fruition. Would it not be appropriate for Swale Borough Council to consider if there is any way they can help and to offer a financial contribution to the scheme, and in doing so demonstrate to the road users of this heavily congested route that the Council both understands and appreciates the concerns.</p>	Leader	Pete Raine
<p>Response: I thank Mrs Booth for the question. I am well aware that she and others have been campaigning vociferously for some time on this matter. The highway infrastructure in this area is the responsibility of Kent County Council as the Highway Authority.</p>				

The KCC Head of Transportation and Development recently submitted a report to the Swale Joint Transportation Board setting out proposals for a roundabout to replace the traffic signals at the Lower Road junction with Barton Hill. There is currently no identified funding for a roundabout construction, although KCC have put the scheme forward for possible funding within the Local Transport Plan (LTP) schemes. The outcome of the bid for funding from the LTP will be announced soon.

I can, however, announce that last week I wrote to David Brazier, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, copied to the Leader of the County Council, Paul Carter. The substance of the letter was to ask if a “significant” contribution from Swale Borough Council towards a roundabout scheme would increase the likelihood of it being funded, whether by Kent County Council, the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, or a combination of the two. This was done with the agreement of Cabinet colleagues and the Council’s Section 151 Officer.