

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8**Council 25 July 2018 - Questions submitted by Members**

Question No.	Question from:	Question:	Question to:	Service area:
1.	Councillor Roger Truelove	<p>I am addressing this question to you as it should be, first and foremost, a health and well being question, rather than a financial one. My contacts with local residents (which may be different to yours) reveals considerable anger and frustration at the plan to reduce parking concessions at our leisure centres in Sittingbourne and Sheerness. There is widespread concern that elderly people will cease to attend day time activities that help them to engage with others. This seems contrary to all the concern expressed about loneliness in old age. There is concern that many children will no longer take part in physical activities at the centres. This seems contrary to all the concern expressed about childhood obesity. These are a sample of the concerns I heard whilst talking to people at the Leisure Centres, though I did come across one man who thought the concession change was a good idea. I have seen some of your counter arguments, such as people can walk there or go elsewhere but can I ask you now to set out an</p>	Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing	Martyn Cassell Head of Commissioning and Customer Contact

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		<p>explanation to our local community as to why you and the rest of the cabinet support this mendacious proposal?</p>		
<p>Response:</p> <p>I agree with Councillor Truelove that first and foremost the Council should be committed to helping improve the health and well-being for our residents and, in particular, the young and old, which is why we are investing £2m in improving our leisure centres, with Cabinet also approving a five and a half year contract extension for our centres.</p> <p>Cabinet approved the withdrawal of the parking refunds as the car parking saving is crucial to being able to finance the £2m for the new facilities and improvements. This includes new Healthy Living Gyms at Sheerness Pool and Swallows in Sittingbourne which are specifically designed to help those with health and mobility issues.</p> <p>The young who want to take part in physical activities can do so in the proposed new Family Adventure Zone in Swallows.</p> <p>The Council is committed to improving activity for all, recognising that physical activity is also beneficial for mental wellbeing. Cllr Truelove should also be reminded that physical activity does not just have to be in our leisure centres, we are working hard with our partners via our Active Lives framework to deliver low cost programmes across the borough including activities for the young and the elderly.</p> <p>Councillor Truelove will be well aware that Faversham Pools Trust does not issue parking refunds to its users and has regularly complained to the Council about the inconsistency as its users pay the full amount for parking, while the users of the Sittingbourne and Sheppey facilities received subsidised parking. This disparity has now been resolved.</p>				

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<p>Both centres are very accessible by public transport and this was an important consideration ahead of the decision to remove subsidised parking. However in recognition of the potential financial impact for users, Swale Community Leisure Trust will be freezing membership prices for the first year and new membership options will be available for the new facilities created.</p> <p>Finally Council officers in conjunction with the Swale Community Leisure Trust and Serco are noting all feedback on the proposed leisure improvements including the matter of parking refund removal and will be considering if any further mitigation options for particular groups are required, as we progress towards the implementation date of full paid for parking on the 1st October 2018.</p> <p>These will be circulated to the leisure centre members and promoted to casual users in the centres over the coming months</p>				
2.	Councillor Roger Truelove	As you know child poverty is essentially calculated as children living in families where the income is less than 60% of median incomes. There are other indices but this basically is a reasonable tool for making comparisons. According to the ONS, Swale has a level of Child Poverty that is below the National average but above average for Kent. What concerns me is the stark contrast between our various wards and communities. Wards like Sheerness, Murston and Priory have levels of child poverty three to four times as great as Iwade and Lower Halstow, West Downs or Woodstock. Priory has twice the level of your own	Cabinet Member for Regeneration	Emma Wiggins – Director of Regeneration

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		ward of St Anns. The situation is worse when housing costs are put against family income and this is anticipated to get worse with Universal Credit. Do you not agree that it is time to close these gaps? Children must not be denied equal life opportunities because of poverty.		
<p>Response:</p> <p>Employment is the single greatest factor that can shift children out of poverty, thus why our newly adopted Swale Economic Regeneration Framework continues to look at how to maximise employment and skills for our local community. In Swale employment is high and child poverty is well below the national average. Whilst incoming looked after children to Kent may increase the notional child poverty indices in some Swale wards, taking the comparison made between my own ward and Priory, the size of St Ann's, with almost twice the population, conceals the issues found in the Bysingwood area, which falls within the 20% most deprived communities in England. It is vital that this detailed understanding of our area must be conveyed to all those involved in meeting the challenge.</p> <p>Education may be the best predictor of children's life chances and lower income families' children in grammar schools do well.</p>				
3.	Councillor Mike Baldock	Parking on grass verges is again becoming a serious nuisance in parts of Swale. Although we have a bye-law in place to prevent such anti-social parking, this bye-law seems only to apply to land owned or maintained by Swale Borough Council. Land that is maintained by KCC seems not to be covered by our	Leader	Martyn Cassell – Head of Customer and Commissioning Contact

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		<p>bye-law. However, despite this having been raised several weeks ago with the KCC Cabinet Member for Transport, the KCC web page still advises members of the public "If a vehicle is causing an obstruction on a grass verge or pavement, you need to report this issue to your district council enforcement team."</p> <p>Given KCC's advice, does our Council have details of who at KCC these concerns should be forwarded to, and how are members of the public supposed to know who owns or maintains the land in question, and to whom they should report the nuisance?</p>		
<p>Response:</p> <p>If a vehicle is causing a physical obstruction on any Highway, as opposed to habitually parking on the grassed verge and causing damage, the Police would have powers under the Highways Act to take action.</p> <p>The purpose of the bye-law was to prevent vehicles causing damage to grass verges and to enable the council contractors to have access to the verges for maintenance purposes. The bye-law was originally written in such a way that it only applies to land that is maintained by Swale Council.</p> <p>Our officers will make contact with the Swale District Manager at KCC to discuss the content of the KCC website to provide some clarification and ensure that we are providing members of the public with consistent information.</p> <p>However to give you some assurance, we regularly have residents log their concern with SBC customer services and officers will direct them to the correct place depending on the ownership of the land in question.</p> <p>We are currently working on a project as part of our improvement to customer contact with the Council and part of</p>				

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this will include a map layer on the internet that will be able to show areas of land that SBC own/manage. This will of course make it easier for those who wish to use such a tool but we will always be happy to assist in the current way via the call centre who will also have access to this information.				
4.	Councillor Tony Winckless	There has been universal disgust at the quality of grass cutting by Kent County Council in the last month. Though it is not Swale Borough Councils responsibility complaints and questions have been directed at Swale Borough Councillors and people expect us to speak on their behalf. Will you press the Cabinet Member for Highways on KCC to offer a public apology to the residents of Swale for the dire service provided this summer?	Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs	Martyn Cassell – Head of Customer and Commissioning Contact
<p>Response:</p> <p>You are correct that the maintenance of grass highways verges is the responsibility of KCC.</p> <p>I can assure Cllr Winckless that I and the officers have been in regular communication with KCC Highways over the course of the summer to try to improve situation. The weather conditions at the start of the season did add pressure to all of us that undertake grounds maintenance and I am sure the situation is replicated in other Boroughs.</p>				
5.	Councillor Ghlin Whelan	On July 12th one of the members for Teynham and Lynsted convened a public meeting in Newington, promising the public the presence of Kent Police, the KCC, the two ward councillors, Kent Fire and Swale	Leader	Charlotte Hudson - Head of Economy and Communities

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		Borough Council. As a senior Swale Borough Council Officer attended, presumably on behalf of us all, can we have a report back on the meeting? As it involved so many important agencies, was it well attended and what were the main outcomes?		
<p>Response:</p> <p>Kent County Council hosted a public meeting for the Swale West division which SBC were invited to attend to provide an update on Sittingbourne Town Centre Regeneration. The Head of Economy and Community Services attended on behalf of SBC to be able to respond to any questions on this topic.</p>				
6.	Councillor Monique Bonney	What was the cost of the last Local Plan including officers' time and outside consultants, over what time period?	Cabinet Member for Planning	James Freeman/Gill Harris Planning Services
<p>Response:</p> <p>Since 2008/09 to July 2017:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Costs: £91,190 per annum. • Total external spend: £716,600 • Total officer costs: £2.9M 				
7.	Councillor Monique Bonney	How much is the New Local Plan going to cost, and what are the actual costs to date?	Cabinet Member for Planning	James Freeman/Gill Harris Planning Services

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<p>Response:</p> <p>A paper on programming and budgeting for the Local Plan Review is being prepared for Local Plan Panel for 20 September.</p> <p>Since the inception of the Local Plan Review at July 2017, just under £226,000 worth of consultants' work has been commissioned.</p>				