

Council 14 November 2018: Questions and responses submitted from Members of the Public

Question No.	Question from	Question:	Question to:	Responsible Officer:
1.	Kane Blackwell	Can I ask the Leader what the Council is doing to make sure the Borough is kept clean and attractive?	The Leader/Councillor David Simmons, Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs	Martyn Cassell
<p>Response: Swale Borough Council is part of the Mid Kent Waste Partnership comprising of Swale, Ashford and Maidstone, with Kent County Council as the disposal authority and Biffa Municipal as the contractor for the partnership.</p> <p>As part of the street cleansing contract, which costs the Council approximately £900k a year, Biffa are responsible for clearing some 1,231 kilometres of highway (made up of around 3,000 roads) of litter discarded by members of the public. In the past year Biffa have collected 924 tonnes of litter within Swale alone. Biffa's mechanical sweepers have collected 1261 tonnes of road sweepings.</p> <p>In addition to this we have a large number of litter and dog waste bins around the borough and are currently in the process of reviewing the condition and location of these bins. We will be replacing damaged bins across the borough. We also have a number of new 'recycling on the go' litter bins in the High Streets of Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness to encourage residents to recycle wherever possible.</p> <p>Contract monitoring officers are in place to ensure the contractor meets the performance requirements in the contract, however litter can be 'a moment in time' and unfortunately areas can often become littered shortly after cleansing has taken place. Clearly resource is not available to clean or monitor every single road on every single litter dropping occasion and we do rely, to a degree, on litter being reported to us. We also use the zoning system as recommended by the Government's Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse, which dictates what frequency and standard areas should meet.</p> <p>In addition, Swale Borough Council run fortnightly deep cleans across the borough, in areas where parked cars make regular and thorough cleansing difficult. This involves informing residents of the area by letter of the intention to cleanse the road, signage being placed in the road prior to the day of the deep clean requesting that cars do not park in the road between 10am and 12pm. A team of street cleansing operatives attend and thoroughly cleanse the roads ensuring all channels and back edges are cleansed as well as any</p>				

litter removed.

We have an Environmental Projects officer liaising with a number of communities to arrange community litter picks and Swale Borough Council are part of the Kent Resource Partnership, comprising of the borough and district councils and Kent County Council. The Partnership enables councils to share good practice on street cleansing and Swale has taken part in a number of street cleansing campaigns with them.

Although collection is important, Swale Council takes the issue of littering very seriously and as such we have been undertaking a wide range of work to get to the source of the problem and change unacceptable behaviours. The focus has been on a balance of enforcement and education. At the request of residents, a team of highly visible environment officers patrol hot spot litter areas on foot and issue fixed penalty notices (FPN's) to anyone caught dropping litter. In the past few years several thousand of these FPN's have been issued which has not only served as a deterrent to others but it has funded the initiative and any necessary follow up enforcement action. Any surplus funds are ring fenced for enhancing the cleanliness of the borough. The success of this scheme has been well publicised to encourage people to do the right thing with their litter. Funds from the initiative have been used to undertake litter picks, run competitions and deliver litter awareness educational campaigns to groups and schools. We have also provided many new litter bins for the borough and thousands of pocket ash trays for smokers. Swale council has recently used social media and roadside and railway billboards to remind residents of their responsibilities and the impacts of dropping litter.

We recognise that there is still more to do and we are currently working with our legal team and other partners in Kent to target the issue of litter being discarded from vehicles. We are considering several options to tackle this issue, one of which includes using recently introduced legislation to challenge car owners if we receive sufficient evidence from other drivers and their privately owned dash cameras.

2.	Stephen Palmer	In a letter from Swale CCG to the Planning Department dated 24 August 2018 is a comment "Swale's potential growth is likely to be 30,000 people over the next 15 years equating to circa £90m loss of revenue funding." If you count all the applications that have been approved or are in the system this accounts for just under 10,000 people within 5 years. As S106 payments will be nowhere close to £90m what plans do the council have to ensure that there is no detrimental impact on the service the NHS currently provides and what are they doing to increase the number of permanent GPs, as currently 23% of GPs in Swale are locums and to increase the overall	Councillor Sarah Aldridge, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing	Charlotte Hudson
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		number, especially as the NHS are declining to allow developers to build new medical centres as part of their applications.		
<p>Response: The Council worked with the CCGs (and other service and infrastructure providers) during the production of the Bearing Fruits Local Plan to establish what capacity there was within existing GP health centres and what additional capacity would be needed to meet the needs of the new development allocated as part of the Local Plan. Infrastructure needed to support the adopted Local Plan was set out in the Implementation and Delivery Schedule 2016/17 which support the Bearing Fruits adopted Local Plan. It notes which sites will need to make provision, through development contributions, to appropriate infrastructure provision to support them. S106 development contributions must be for physical infrastructure provision, not revenue considerations such as personnel and salaries. The Swale CCG accordingly advised that an extension to the Meads Health Centre was its preferred way of providing for increased demand arising from the SW Sittingbourne site. This is reflected both in the relevant Local Plan Policy and the Implementation and Delivery Schedule.</p> <p>Consequently, the Council has fulfilled its responsibilities in respect of ensuring that relevant development contributions are made. The responsibility for revenue and staffing issues for local health provision lies with the CCGs themselves and is not something within the Council's direct remit or influence and is determined through the funding formula from NHS England.</p> <p>That said, of course the Council continues to work closely with the CCGs so they are clearly sighted on the challenges arising from new development which the Borough faces and will work with them to ensure that new facilities are planned for and land allocated where the need for it is advised.</p> <p>Swale CCG are also working hard to address the future needs of the borough through wider workforce developments across Kent and Medway, including the Community Education Provider Network (CEPN) and Local Workforce Area Boards. The work being undertaken to increase the resilience of the primary care workforce is aligned to the Kent and Medway Strategic Transformation Plan (STP) and supports Local Care. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practices from Swale participated in the first phase of the International GP Recruitment scheme which aims to recruit GPs from overseas to work in the UK. The programme is to be rolled out across Kent and will continue to include practices from the Swale area. • Engaging with the local General Practice Vocational Training Schemes (GPVTS) for GP Specialist Trainees, to promote living and working in Swale upon completion of GP training <p>The CCG have not declined to allow developers to build new medical centres as part of the developer's applications however they have developed a strategic estate plan for the Swale area and have identified the priority areas for improving primary care capacity.</p>				

They would only decline the building of a new medical facility if it was not in the right area or if the developer puts forward an unaffordable solution for a medical centre. In the majority of cases the developers are happy to build a medical centre facility but these are often then associated with high commercial rents for a 25 year period. These rents are generally excessive and unless a developer was prepared to 'gift' a fully built medical centre to the CCG, the NHS does not have the funding to enable such a facility to be built.

3.	Brian Spoor	If the precept is set lower than what has been suggested Sheerness will not get the services it deserves, so can we please have the proposed amount?	The Leader	
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Response: As set out in the report to the Council meeting on 14 November Swale has followed a prescribed process involving the Kent Association of Local Councils to come to a recommendation on the level of council tax. Appendix II of the report on Sheerness Town Council shows a range of council tax options per Band D property for the new Council and in each case what the income from that council tax would have been for 2018/19. For example, the proposed £50 council tax would result in an income of £135,941, whilst if the council tax was set lower, for example £20, then this would provide a reduced income of £54,376. These income forecasts are based on the tax base for 2018/19, as the tax base for 2019/20 is not available until early December.

It will of course be for the democratically elected and publicly accountable Town Council to set the level of council tax from 2020/21 onwards.