

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9

Council 9 January 2019 - Questions submitted by Members

Question No.	Question from:	Question:	Question to:	Service area:
1.	Councillor Roger Truelove	A number of schools in Swale are paying more Business rates than is necessary because they appear to be unaware of their rate relief entitlement. The approach of this Council has been hitherto to wait for the schools to apply. Can we reverse this approach? It is not difficult to ascertain who the schools are. Can we proactively encourage schools to apply for the considerable relief to which they are entitled, so that our local children benefit rather than the Treasury?	Councillor Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance	Nick Vickers, Chief Financial Officer
<p>Response: The Council does award mandatory relief to all schools that are academies; these schools are not funded by Kent County Council. If the council becomes aware of any schools changing their status to an academy, the school is sent an application form. Any schools that are still managed by the Local Education Authority are not able to claim any mandatory relief. As per the tribunal case of Kent County Council v Ashford Borough Council and others (1999).</p>				
2.	Councillor Roger Truelove	This Council determined to provide accommodation for 10 Syrian refugee families. Can you update the Council on progress?	Councillor Alan Horton, Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing, Economy and Community Services
<p>Response: I am pleased to confirm that we have now completed the project to help 10 Syrian families move to Swale. We have assisted a total of 11 families, one family was delayed and as a short term measure we agreed in the meantime to take two emergency families. The final family arrived just before Christmas and all families are settling in well. We are the first authority in Kent to reach our target of the number of families we agreed to assist.</p>				

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3	Councillor Ghlin Whelan	In the weeks running up to Christmas there was a disturbing rise in the number of people sleeping rough in Swale. Can you tell the council what the estimated figure was for this year and how it compared with the previous two years?	Councillor Alan Horton, Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing, Economy and Community Services
<p>Response: Swale along with all Local Authorities undertakes an annual rough sleepers count. Swale does so through an estimation process rather than an actual physical count. There are strict guidelines on the process, it is undertaken with partners working to monitor rough sleepers regularly and throughout the year. This year's estimate 'count' concluded there were 32 people sleeping rough in Swale, worryingly up on previous counts, which were 9 in 2017 and 6 in 2016.</p> <p>Next week we will be sharing the emerging objectives and priorities of a new Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy with the Policy Development and Review Committee, this makes specific reference to actions to prevent rough sleeping and provide appropriate support for those finding themselves having to do so, including for example changes to our Severe Weather Emergency Protocol to reflect the significant increase in need. Swale Borough Council are also exploring funding available through the Government's Rough sleeping initiative and in the meantime, we continue to work in partnership to support our rough sleepers, who are well known to our staff and partners.</p>				
4	Councillor Tony Winckless	After the Cabinet Member on Medway Council responsible for the monitoring and overseeing the running of C.C.T.V. recently admitted he was not aware it was part of his Portfolio. As the C.C.T.V. in Swale is monitored by the control centre in Medway located in Strood. Can you assure me all C.C.T.V in the Swale area, is and was monitored and working correctly?	Councillor Alan Horton, Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing, Economy and Community Services
<p>Response: As the Cabinet Member responsible for CCTV, I have regularly attended the CCTV partnership Board, I can assure you that our CCTV system is, and has been, monitored and working correctly throughout the past couple of years. The CCTV board and SBC Officers regular monitor the compliance of the system with the partnership agreement. Our system is checked daily by Medway</p>				

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<p>Commercial Group and a maintenance contract ensures that faults are easily identified and quickly rectified. Members are aware that there are regular reviews to ensure that all camera placements meet the requirements of the Surveillance Camera code of practice. Over the past year or so we have conducted a significant review of our current CCTV System to determine if it is fit for purpose in the future and I shall be presenting the draft Vision and Priorities for the next generation of CCTV system for Swale to the Policy Development and Review Committee next week.</p>				
5	Tony Winckless	Can the Cabinet Member for Regeneration tell me if and when there are any plans to make improvements to the new roundabout outside Sittingbourne Railway Station? As buses and long vehicles have problems getting round.	Councillor Mike Cosgrove, Cabinet Member for Regeneration	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration
<p>Response: KCC Highways have responsibility to agree road layouts, road safety and sign off any required modifications. On 15th November 2018, following the opening of the revised A2 layout, the stage 3 Road Safety Audit was carried out by an independent highway safety auditor from the Safety Forum. The results of the audit were that advanced signage of the roundabout should be added and the roundabout itself made more prominent and Spirit of Sittingbourne’s highways designer, Connect, is currently preparing a designer’s response which will be discussed with Kent County Council’s Highways team. Following these discussions any requirements will be confirmed and then implemented.</p> <p>A sterilised trial bus/coach trial was previously carried out on the roundabout on 19th October before the main route was re-opened to traffic which showed that a U-turn at the roundabout could be successfully undertaken. Subsequently, at the request of Arriva, Connect has recently assessed the swept path of the 12m Citaro bus (this bus is known for its poor turning circle) performing a U-turn at the roundabout which does suggest that the vehicle can negotiate the roundabout without overhang of the footway.</p>				