

Council 3 April 2019: Questions submitted from Members of the Public

Question No.	Question from	Question:	Question to:	Responsible Officer:
1.	Kane Blackwell	Does the Leader agree that we need to build homes and communities for our young people so they have a place to call their own and that all elected representatives and those seeking public office should come up with real solutions to solve our housing crisis instead of grandstanding with no credible plans?	Leader	Head of Housing, Economy and Community Services
<p>Response:</p> <p>I agree with the sentiment behind the question, but in reality of course, not everyone can come up with the solutions, but of course everyone can help deliver them. All of us in public service have our part to play in resolving the national housing crisis. That is why Swale has ambitious housing targets set out in 'Bearing Fruits' our local plan; to ensure we play our part in delivering the solution. However, Swale Borough Council are not simply relying on the local plan, we have a draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy currently out to consultation, sets out what the Council intends to do with partners to address the housing needs in our community. One strand of the strategy is to work to ensure that the right homes are in the right place and at the right price, this is as much for our young people as other parts of our communities. We work hard with developers and our registered providers to maximise affordable homes in our community despite the difficulties presented by affordability, a recent significant development toward this is that both Optivo and Hyde housing have been awarded Strategic Partnership status enabling them to access funding from Homes England to accelerate the delivery of affordable homes across Swale.</p>				
2.	Jeff Tutt	<p>Could the leader please explain why he had private talks with Canterbury City Council regarding lorry parking, that led to CCC Policy & Resources Committee on the 13th March 2019 being asked to resolve the following motion:</p> <p><i>'That officers are given authority to explore further with Swale Borough Council, Kent County Council and Highways England potential options for lorry parking within Swale'.</i></p>	Leader	Chief Executive

		Could the leader further explain why this information wasn't imparted to the JTB at either the December or March meeting, one week before CCC policy and resources committee unanimously agreed to discuss parking all lorries in Swale because there is nowhere near the A2 in Canterbury.		
Response:				
<p>Thank you for your question not least because it gives me an opportunity to talk about an issue that is hugely concerning for the residents of Swale and which is coming up very regularly on the doorstep.</p> <p>The reality is that this borough is overwhelmed with inappropriately parked heavy good vehicles; they fill up laybys and increasingly I am seeing them parked on the hard shoulder of motorways. This creates serious road safety issues and if we are being honest issues for local residents with the detritus that the lorry drivers leave behind them.</p> <p>Over a long period I've been looking for a solution to this and recent discussions with the Leader of Canterbury City Council, and Canterbury has similar issues to us, and with the KCC Cabinet Member for Highways identified a possible solution. I should also emphasize that the discussions assume that we would get the same enforcement powers as Ashford Borough Council were granted when their overnight parking facility was opened.</p> <p>This is only a very preliminary decision by both Councils at this stage, it is commercially sensitive and it commits us to no more than the expenditure of officer time and energy in exploring options. The proposal to do this came to Swale's Cabinet in March. It would not have been appropriate to raise the question at a JTB meeting prior to this preliminary decision having been taken by the relevant committee of the two Councils, as had the proposal been defeated at those meetings then that would have been the end of the matter. However, I am sure that whoever is representing Swale on the board at its next meeting in June will want to provide an update as to how the exploratory work has progressed.</p>				
3.	John Peto	<p>Could the cabinet member please explain why, at Brotherhood Wood under Planning permission 17/502338/FULL, only 18 of the 40 consented mobile homes are listed for council tax. This also applies to the business premises on the site. Clearly the council is not collecting all monies due to them.</p> <p>The council has been unable to issue a site licence. Whilst</p>	Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance	Head of Finance

	<p>this would make it impossible to insure, putting the wellbeing and the welfare of the tenants at serious risk, it is also a major concern that the Council could be financially liable if anything occurs as it has known this for seven years. Have the financial implications of this been considered and what might they be.</p>		
<p>Response:</p> <p>The 18 properties represent the latest information which we have. We will be updating this and any Council tax due will be backdated. The site is registered for residential use and not as a holiday site, and is therefore not registered for business use. The Council does not consider it has any financial liability.</p> <p>The licence is a matter between the owner and the council and we are continuing to pursue this with the owner. The site, its tenants and any insurance is the responsibility of the site owner and not that of the council as this is a privately owned site. The manner in which individual caravans are occupied and rented is not a licencing issue and if complaints are received from tenants they will be investigated appropriately.</p>			