

Council 21 September 2016 - Questions submitted by Members

Question No.	Question from:	Question:	Question to:	Service area:
1.	Cllr Mike Baldock	Can the Cabinet Member update us on the Council's progress towards developing a Heritage Strategy, and what consultation with the many local heritage / historical groups will be undertaken in formulating that strategy?	Cabinet Member for Planning	Head of Development Services
<p>Response:</p> <p>There has been discussion with Historic England on potential resources from them; Heritage Lottery Fund grants (e.g. the Townscape Heritage grant) and other heritage-focussed regeneration funding resources potentially available to complement in-house resources for conservation work are also being explored at the present time. For the foreseeable future, it would appear to be most effective to focus available resources on specific areas where initial project or scoping work has already been carried out. This would include the completion of the Conservation Area Character Appraisals & Management Strategies which support the Boughton & Dunkirk Neighbourhood Plan work; and a focus on the heritage-led aspects of regeneration at Sheerness which may also involve the submission of one or more project bids for Heritage Lottery Fund grant aid. Both of these activities fall within the list of issues which a Heritage Strategy (as identified at Main Modification 121 of the Bearing Fruits Swale Local Plan Proposed Main Modifications June 2016) would almost certainly cover. It is likely that these projects plus any reactive work (such as securing the conservation of the former military hospital at Sheerness – now listed at grade II level by Historic England); and responding adequately with design & conservation advice on development proposals will take up all available resources over the next two years or so. During this time, we will however seek to review the timing and programme for a heritage strategy with Borough wide coverage.</p>				
2.	Cllr Roger Truelove	In house parking provision for staff working in Swale House is inadequate. Consequently a number of staff park in nearby residential areas, especially on the Fairview Estate, off Chilton Avenue. This causes irritation and inconvenience to local residents. There is land adjacent to the Council offices, owned by the Mormon Church and lying redundant. Can I ask the	Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance	Head of Commissioning and Customer Contact and interim Director of

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		administration to pursue a compulsory purchase order for that site and, if successful, to dedicate some of the land use to providing staff parking and thus improving relations with our neighbouring residents?		Regeneration
<p>Response:</p> <p>Initial discussions with Legal have confirmed that providing car parking for staff would not be considered suitable grounds for a Compulsory Purchase Order.</p> <p>It should be remembered that staff parking concessions are entirely discretionary for any employer. The Swale House car park has limited spaces, and there is a clear policy which is rigorously applied in respect of allocations to this facility, based on a number of criteria including officers who frequently use their vehicle for SBC business during the working day. All other staff are offered free passes for SBC owned long term car parks in the Town Centre, which include St Michael's Road and Cockleshell Walk.</p> <p>There is therefore no need for staff to park in residential areas. However, they are at liberty to do so provided that they do not breach any parking regulations.</p>				
3.	Cllr Mark Ellen	Bartons point on Sheppey has been well used this summer. In particular for campers, tents, caravans and camper vans. So why are there no basic facilities, such as toilets, power supply, plug ins and drinking water supply? Refuse bins both general and recycling bins would also be welcome as there has been a plethora of rubbish left behind.	Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs	Commissioning and Open Spaces Manager
<p>The Borough Council is responsible for the grounds maintenance of the site including grass cutting, cleansing/litter clearance and structural integrity of the buildings.</p> <p>Other services such as the boathouse restaurant, golf, camping and water sports are managed by a concessionaire under a licence agreement. It is their responsibility to decide how these services are provided. In terms of the specific question regarding camping, the operators feel the location is best suited for basic camping. There are toilets that are available 24 hours a day and water is available from this area. Electric pitches are not available. Customers are informed at the time of booking about the limited</p>				

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<p>facilities on offer and the rules of the campsite.</p> <p>A number of the services on offer at the Coastal Park have seen an increase in usage recently following investment by the operator. As a result a recent meeting between SBC and the operator has identified the need for some further improvements including the toilet block. There are also ideas for additional activities and improvements such as better circular walks around the entire park. Funding bids are being prepared to try to make this happen.</p>				
4.	Cllr John Wright	<p>Residents and Parish Councils within my ward have asked the question whether this council will do all it can to overturn a judgement made in the high court in the Strand London on the 8th September 2016? Whereby after a planning application submitted to this council was refused. An appeal to the planning inspectorate was refused. After information was then received about a similar but much larger development was given to the council, a high court injunction was sort and granted on this land at some considerable cost to prevent this from happening, occurred. Enforcement officers attended early gave advice but further development continued. A high court hearing in July confirmed the injunction and fined the occupants with costs. A second high court hearing was adjourned with a third appearance on the 8th September.</p> <p>At this last court hearing the judge with their ruling has effectively deferred their decision by handing it back to the council to take this even larger application through the planning process and presumably appeal process to get back to the high court in 6 to 9 months, putting even more costs on this council and its rate payers.</p> <p>This decision effectively neuters the planning authority and</p>	Leader	Head of Development Services

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		gives rise by the greater public to the confidence they have with the planning and legal systems, where the rule of law and contempt for that injunction have effectively been ignored by this judgement. Will the Leader write to our MP, the LGA and the Minister to raise this case and strange judgement, as it does have national consequences if used as a precedent if upheld?		
<p>Response:</p> <p>I thank Cllr Wright for raising this question and issue. I am disappointed and extremely concerned with the outcome of the injunction at the High Court. Whilst I am satisfied that the legal and planning officers had dealt with the case expediently and appropriately in handling what I believe to be a straight forward unauthorised planning enforcement case, it was clear at the time of the serving of the injunction that no gypsy and travellers had accessed the site and that no children were involved in this case. The judge appears to have decided to provide an opportunity for the unauthorised occupants of the site to put forward a planning application to be determined through the processes involved, which could take up to at least a further six months. Councillor Lewin, as the Cabinet Member for Planning and as a Ward Member, has requested a full legal and planning review of the judge's decision and a meeting has been arranged with our lawyers and planners towards the end of September and Councillor Wright has been invited to that meeting to agree the way forward.</p> <p>I am also in agreement with Cllr Wright that this decision appears to undermine the local communities' confidence in the planning system and as such I will also be raising the issue with the Local MP and the Local Government Association.</p>				
5.	Cllr Cameron Beart	<p>At the June meeting of Full Council, I asked the Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities to consider my proposal of extending current time limits for disabled blue badge holders in our short stay car parks from 4 hours to 8 hours.</p> <p>In his response, he advised that the likely timescale for implementation of any scheme would be three to four months. Would he be in a position to provide an update to full council on the progress made?</p>	Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities	Head of Commissioning and Customer Contact

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<p>Response:</p> <p>The Cabinet Member has confirmed that blue badge holders will be able to park free of charge for up to 8 Hours in any bay within in our short stay car parks from 1st November 2016.</p>				