

Council 25 January 2017 - Questions submitted by Members

Question No.	Question from:	Question:	Question to:	Service area:
1	Cllr James Hunt	I'm pleased to see that Faversham is progressing well with their 20's plenty scheme and I hope that other areas in the Borough will be looked at to see whether the scheme could be implemented in those areas, but whilst work will need to be done in existing parts of the Borough with new developments already being designed with safety in mind 20mph speed signs could easily be installed within those developments. Can this Council put a policy in place so that all new development coming forward are 20mph zones?	Cabinet Member for Planning	Planning Services
<p>Response: I also am pleased that progress is being made with the 20's plenty scheme for Faversham. The introduction of 20 mph zones are the responsibility of KCC as Highways Authority, and the matter has recently been considered by the Joint Transport Board (JTB). In accordance with the outcome of the JTB, I understand that officers will be investigating the potential for further 20mph zones within the Borough, and I would expect the outcome of those investigations to be reported to the Council's LDF Panel and Cabinet, and to Kent CC as required.</p> <p>In the meantime, each major planning application for new housing development will need to be looked at in its own merits, and we should expect the Highway Authority to consider and advise on whether the introduction of a 20mph zone within or adjacent to a new development would be appropriate in order to mitigate any highway safety or congestion impacts arising.</p>				
2.	Cllr Mike Baldock	Can the Cabinet Member confirm how much has been spent on repainting yellow lines so far this financial year, in comparison to the amount budgeted for such activity?	Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities	Commissioning and Customer Contact

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<p>Response: The budget code for the repair and renewal of yellow lines within the Borough is 6220/21203 Road Lining. The budget allocation for 2016/17 approved by Council last February was £2,000. The total expenditure year-to-date has been £12,860.52, with the additional spend coming from income generated by our Pay and Display car parks. It is unlikely that any further spend on this budget will take place in the current financial year.</p> <p>Work on yellow lines is generally 'batched' based upon the priority, and allocated to the Contractor as a concise works program, as that is the most effective and efficient use of resources.</p>				
3.	Cllr Roger Truelove	The Swale Local Plan is about to return to its Examination in Public. The process is challenging for a District Planning Authority. What do you regard as the greater challenge; to meet the real local need for affordable and low cost housing for purchase and renting, or to meet the Government imposed speculative housing numbers and the aspirations of local developers to build the highest value housing at the lowest possible land costs?	Cabinet Member for Planning/ Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing	Planning Services/ Housing Services
<p>Response: The challenge of meeting the Government imposed objectively assessed need for housing will be the subject of discussion at the forthcoming Examination in Public Part 2.</p> <p>The modifications we are presenting to meet that target assess the affordable element at 25% as being realistically achievable. The assessment of affordable housing is based on a report from highly respected consultants, and takes full account of the viability of the market across Swale. The Plan therefore also contains policies to provide as much 'affordable housing' as could be viably and realistically delivered (in the absence of grants to housing associations), and without undermining the Council's ability to meet its five-year housing land supply.</p> <p>As and when the modifications are found sound (in addition to that which is already agreed with the Inspector), then the Council can deliver with greater certainty those housing numbers.</p>				

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<p>While enabling the delivery of affordable homes of any tenure is especially challenging at present due to many factors, including the reduction in National Affordable Housing Programme funds, we continue to work with our housing association partners and housing developers to increase the number of affordable homes locally, and the Council has now received its first planning application for Starter Homes. In addition, we await the imminent publication of the new Housing White Paper, which we expect to detail the future role of Local Councils in enabling new affordable homes.</p>				
4.	Cllr Roger Truelove	<p>On 29 November a number of members of the public were excluded from attending any part of an Emergency Scrutiny meeting on the Cabinet's proposed provision of borrowing as an investment in the leisure and retail parts of the Sittingbourne Town Centre scheme. There have been public complaints and a review of what occurred conducted by officers. Can you tell me what was the nature of that review?</p>	The Leader	Corporate Services
<p>Response: I would thank the member for his question. To be clear, there was no active exclusion of members of the public on the night, although I appreciate that there have been a number of complaints raised. As a result of these complaints matters were investigated and responses provided through the Council's complaints procedure.</p>				
5.	Cllr Cameron Beart	<p>In June 1667, the naval forces of the Dutch Republic sailed into the Swale, captured the incomplete garrison at Sheerness and invaded the town of Queenborough, hoisting the Dutch flag over the Guildhall before sailing further up the Medway to target the English battleships at the Battle of Chatham.</p> <p>Following the end of the Second Anglo-Dutch War, no mention was made of Queenborough in the Treaty of Breda, and on the 300th anniversary in June 1967 a celebration was held both in Medway and on Sheppey, where the Netherlands formally</p>	The Leader	Economy & Community Services

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		<p>returned the Town to the United Kingdom and cemented a lasting relationship by twinning the Town with Brielle.</p> <p>This year marks the 350th anniversary of the invasion and the 50th anniversary of Queenborough's 'Independence Day'. Medway Council have announced nine days of events and celebrations this summer, 'Medway In Flames', but could the Leader confirm if Swale Borough Council will be doing anything to mark this momentous event of historical significance to our Borough?</p>		
<p>Response: As the local Ward Member and community champion for Queenborough and Halfway, the Council is grateful to Cllr. Beart for reminding us of this significant history of which we, and our local partners in Queenborough and Rushenden, are aware, including the plans of our North Kent partners.</p> <p>You will know that the Council has a number of resources (heritage, culture, and Members' grants in particular) that its communities can use to support and deliver this type of work. Examples have included a number of high profile partnership events, such as Victoria Cross, Princess Irene, and the Gunpowder Explosion.</p> <p>Members will be aware that there is no Events Team at this Council, rather that officers work in an enabling role with Town/ Parish Councils and other community groups. In this regard officers are keen to facilitate and encourage development work, and have for some time been engaging directly with the key organisations in Queenborough (eg Queenborough Town Council, Queenborough Society/The Guildhall Museum) on behalf of Visit Kent around this 350th Anniversary and other historical matters.</p> <p>We understand that local partners have determined their local priorities, and are currently co-ordinating project work for delivery in 2018 with regard to the 'Queenborough Charters Anniversary'. Swale BC officers have been invited to contribute their knowledge and expertise in this regard, and a meeting is scheduled for mid-February at which this Council will play a full part.</p>				

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6.	Cllr Ghlin Whelan	<p>Some time ago we benefited from two separate presentations from two senior practitioners in the field of Mental health. Their greatest concern was inadequate housing. When asked what Swale planned to do in this area, the Leader advised that it was not this Authority's responsibility and we would be doing nothing.</p> <p>Bearing in mind that the needs of mental health patients can be a major factor in housing allocations, and in light of the Prime Minister's recent utterances on the subject of funding being made available, is it still the policy of this Authority to do nothing as regards the mental health problems of its residents, in particular the housing problem?</p>	The Leader	Housing Services
<p>Response: Applicants with a mental health condition are given preference on the Housing Register for social housing and priority under homelessness legislation, along with a number of other vulnerable groups.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that suitable housing for all is in great demand but short supply, in particular specialist supported accommodation, which is funded and currently commissioned by Kent CC.</p> <p>The Housing Options Team work with Kent CC, the clinical commissioning groups and other local agencies to ensure that homeless households with mental ill health have access to the support that they need.</p>				
7.	Cllr Ghlin Whelan	Now that the Council is funding the provision of a seven- screen cinema and retail outlets etc, could the portfolio holder advise what exactly residents are getting in return for giving up the car parks, and providing a £3,000,000 multi-storey car park?	Cabinet Member for Regeneration	Director of Regeneration

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<p>Response: As was shown in the November Cabinet report and discussed in great detail at the Scrutiny Committee, the Council has an excellent financial opportunity to become the funder and owner of the Sittingbourne Town Centre development. The Council has to find new revenue streams to replace Revenue Support Grant which will be completely eliminated by 2020/21.</p> <p>The case for the Council becoming the funder and owner of the multi-storey car park was fully set out in the Cabinet report of 16 July 2014. The multi-storey car park is integral to the regeneration project, providing car parking for the hundreds of thousands of new visitors to the Town Centre to enjoy the cinema and new restaurants.</p>				