

**Council 13 December 2017 - Questions submitted by Members**

Question No.	Question from:	Question:	Question to:	Service area:
1.	Cllr Roger Truelove	In July this Council agreed an amended motion calling on our local MPs to continue to press for capital funding for our local road network. In September this Council agreed that Highways England's proposal 12A cannot provide a solution to the transport problems at the M2/A249 junction at Stockbury. We also called on adequate funding for either option 4 or option 10. What response has the Council had to these motions?	Leader, Cllr Andrew Bowles	Emma Wiggins/Kieren Mansfield
<p><b>Response:</b> Having submitted the Council's response to the consultation, to date only a generic response from Highways England has been received, which I summarise below.</p> <p>The M2 J5 scheme is currently in the options phase. The purpose of the options phase is to: identify whether there are any road solution options that meet the project objectives, are affordable and offer value for money; followed by identifying the preferred road solution to the transport problem. The M2 J5 scheme is therefore still at a formative stage, and the preferred road solution has not yet been identified. Highways England are evaluating the responses to the consultation, which closed on October 16th before a decision is made as to what the preferred road solution will be.</p> <p>We understand that there is also ongoing technical work to complete the options phase and that this will include further traffic analysis. This will need to incorporate the impacts of the proposed Lower Thames Crossing, for which modelling work has been delayed until early in the new year.</p>				

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2.	Cllr Roger Truelove	More and more visitors come to the Leas at Minster. When they come next summer, what toilet facilities will be available?	Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs, Cllr David Simmons	Martyn Cassell
<p><b>Response:</b> Minster Leas is currently serviced by the White House toilet block. Opening is all year round as per the current standard opening times of 7am – 7pm weekdays and Saturdays, Sundays, 9am – 6pm.</p> <p>Given the success of the beach huts and seafront concessions, a project is underway looking at creating further provision on land at the off street car park (Seaside Avenue end). An initial £30,000 has been set aside in the budget for this and investigations around drainage and utilities are underway.</p>				
3.	Cllr Harrison	As part of our Housing Strategy, what overall benefits would there be for the majority of residents, by making the old Sheerness East (SEW) Ward a Selective Licensing Area.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing, Cllr Ken Pugh	Amber Christou
<p><b>Response:</b> I thank the member for her question, however, at the present time there is no benefit to the majority of residents in the old sheerness east ward through the introduction of a selective licensing scheme that cannot be tackled through existing housing, public health, antisocial or planning powers.</p> <p>Recent changes to housing legislation, namely, civil penalties under the Housing Act, a minimum energy rating for rented properties (band E) for new tenancies starting after 1 April 2018 and the possible future mandatory licencing of all houses in multiple occupation, where there are five or more tenants are all relevant to our approach. These new changes along with work already undertaken by the council should help towards improving the rented properties within that area. Selective licencing will only target landlords and not necessarily resolve any issues created by the residents or visitors themselves.</p>				

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4.	Cllr Cameron Beart	Following his announcement at Full Council in October, could the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing provide an update on progress made on proposals for the Sheerness Military Hospital and accommodation at the Sheppey Prison Cluster?	Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing, Cllr Ken Pugh	Amber Christou
<p><b>Response:</b> The Housing and ECS Teams are working in partnership to draft a paper to determine feasibility of the delivery of a new or re-developed supported housing scheme for ex-offenders being discharged from Standford Hill prison (HMPSH) on the Isle of Sheppey. It is anticipated that this paper will be finalised early in the new year.</p> <p>The Council's Property Department has commissioned an independent review of the work necessary to adapt the Military Hospital to residential use including use for homeless accommodation. They will also report back to the Council early in the new year.</p>				
5.	Cllr John Wright	The government is looking into the delivery of housing and housing targets and has blamed in the past district planning departments for that failure. Part of this application process includes particularly on medium and large housing sites the signing of section 106 agreements. Can the cabinet member tell the council how many passed applications by officers or committee that are over 6 months old that are still waiting for section 106 agreements to be signed and how many houses this encompasses? Is delaying the start and delivery of these sites thus affecting our housing number delivery that is so important to defending our local plan in terms of housing number delivery?	Cabinet Member for Planning, Cllr Gerry Lewin	James Freeman
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>There are currently four planning applications with a resolution to grant planning permission for housing development (including mixed use development) which are more than 6 months old since the resolution to grant has been made. They comprise a total of 764</p>				

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<p>dwelling noting one application comprises 600 dwellings. Three of those planning applications have drafted S.106 agreements awaiting signing from the applicant's solicitors. The fourth application is being held up over the issue of the provision of off-site reptile receptors being defined and agreed with the developer. No planning applications are being held up for more than six months either through Planning Services or Mid Kent Legal Services delays.</p> <p>The completion of a s.106 planning obligation or the issue of a decision notice is not a determining factor of "delivery" (for the purposes of the 5 year housing supply). To be considered deliverable, sites should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that development of the site is viable. Sites with planning permission should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that schemes will not be implemented within five years, for example they will not be viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans.. As such, deliverability looks at the certainty and likelihood of developments coming forward. This could include consented schemes, schemes under construction, schemes that are consented but not (as yet) commenced, resolutions to grant subject to a s.106 and, potentially, schemes in advanced pre-application discussion.</p> <p>It is frustrating that major planning applications can be held up within the planning system or by developers not proceeding expediently with development following the grant of planning permission. In response to the Government's recent consultation 'Planning for the right homes in the right places', the Council put forward a proposed measure for developers to submit housing delivery statements as part of pre-commencement conditions. Local authorities would then report to CLG or HMRC on whether such delivery timescales had been met and an appropriate fiscal measure applied, perhaps via tax reduction or increases as appropriate. Internally, we have been working to expedite the completion of s.106 agreements and progress has been made in this regard. Naturally, we cannot dictate the pace of the turn-around of s.106 agreements when the agreement is with the developers, its solicitors and agents but we are endeavouring to do what we can internally to speed up the process. MKLS are using a standardised template for s.106 and it is hoped that this will be published as part of the revamp of the Council's web site. We are also agreeing a s.106 'protocol' whose aim is to expedite the instruction process and the turn-around of drafts of s.106 agreements. The protocol will guide officers on the information to be submitted when instructing MKLS and the procedures and timeframes to be met in settling drafts of the agreement internally.</p>				