

Council 24 January 2018 - Questions submitted by Members

Question No.	Question from:	Question:	Question to:	Service area:
1.	Cllr Mick Galvin	<p>At a previous Meeting, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing suggested that buildings owned by the Prison Service in Rolls Avenue, Eastchurch could be converted to housing for single homeless persons. In response to a request for an update, at Full Council on 13 December 2017, the Cabinet Member stated that the accommodation could be used for ex-offenders. The probation service have always been responsible for finding accommodation for inmates on release and discharge payments are paid to inmates on their release to assist with their accommodation.</p> <p>If regulations have not changed or the new Homelessness Reduction Act says different, why is Swale Borough Council involved in this venture?</p>	Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing	Amber Christou

Response:

The Council has a statutory duty to provide advice, assistance and in some cases emergency accommodation to certain categories of person who meet the required homelessness tests. This can include some ex-offenders and those who have been institutionalised after spending time in prison. The Homelessness Reduction Act increases the prevention duty owed to a broader range of person, but with the existing homelessness and accommodation duties still applying.

The probation service also offer advice, assistance, and supported housing placements to some clients, although there is a shortage of this type of housing and if more were available, those who fall under the statutory homelessness duties may have a greater prospect of accessing supported housing rather than relying on temporary accommodation.

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<p>An additional local supported housing scheme for ex-offenders would provide a further option of interim housing for those who require additional support, training and employment needs upon release from prison and it is anticipated that this would help to reduce reoffending rates. As a statutory partner of the Community Safety Partnership, the Council supports the Partnership priorities, of which reducing reoffending is one and provision of appropriate housing is key to this agenda.</p> <p>In partnership with Standford Hill prison, a proposed supported housing scheme for ex-offenders is being explored and a feasibility report has been commissioned to ascertain if this is viable.</p>				
2.	Cllr George Samuel	On the 11th January Sittingbourne High Street was closed a week earlier than anticipated. Could the Cabinet Member for Regeneration explain why this was and what the current situation is?	Cabinet Member for Regeneration	Emma Wiggins
<p>Response:</p> <p>The planned relocation of the Market took place on Friday 12 January, the road was closed a week earlier in line with the sealed Road Traffic Order advertised as 5 January 2018. Through the consultation carried out between 2013 and 2015 traders had requested that the bottom of the High Street could continue to be accessed, we have listened to these requests throughout the consultation and the final scheme will also enable vehicles access to the High Street from Central Avenue. We are currently addressing the safety concerns raised by Kent Highways and our Traffic Management consultant in order to implement the final scheme. I have met with traders twice to discuss practical issues including deliveries that are being successfully managed.</p>				
3.	Cllr Roger Truelove	Most thoughtful analysis understands that to build a strong economy in this country we need investment in infrastructure and training to make this a more productivity led country. The wider picture also applies singularly to the Borough of Swale. Do you agree that the long term preference for outsourcing, which is now characterised by the failure of Carillion, is sadly not the exclusive way forward and that we will share locally the	Cabinet Member for Regeneration	Emma Wiggins

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		general consequences of stalled infrastructure projects, disrupted public services and most particularly the curtailment of apprenticeship schemes on the Sittingbourne Trinity Trading Estate?		
<p>Response:</p> <p>Whilst Cllr Truelove will have insider information on the genesis of outsourcing, to date we have no information that current circumstances will impact on the delivery of committed infrastructure projects within Swale. Carillion contracted with the CITB for apprenticeship provision, and the CITB has taken the lead in supporting the young people affected. Well attended drop in support sessions were held on the 18th January, to establish the number and position of the young people and the CITB are focused on identifying employers, with whom they can continue their learning. The Council has offered its support and has also spoken with Mid-Kent and Canterbury College's about alternative learning provision, should it be required. Mid-Kent College is promoting a hotline on 01634 383322.</p>				
4.	Cllr Mike Henderson	How many houses are there in Swale which have been empty for more than 6 months or for more than one year?	Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing	Amber Christou
<p>Response:</p> <p><u>The following are the numbers requested by Cllr Henderson:</u></p> <p>More than 6 months – 389 properties More than one year – 116 properties</p>				
5.	Cllr Roger Truelove	Do you agree it is time for a root and branch review of the Resident Parking schemes in the Borough and a full	Cabinet Member for Safer Families and	Martyn Cassell

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		assessment of the value to contributing residents?	Communities	
<p>Response:</p> <p>Over the years, Residents Parking Schemes have been introduced in various areas in Faversham and Sittingbourne. The main purpose of the schemes is to limit the period of waiting for non-residents and eliminate the impact of long term parking by commuters and workers/visitors to nearby Town Centres. The schemes are designed to maximise the availability of the limited on-street parking capacity for residents, by controlling non-resident activity during the peak period, mainly during daytime working hours, Monday to Saturday.</p> <p>Residents Parking Schemes will not provide a solution to all parking issues. There are a finite number of on-street parking spaces in any road, and in areas of terraced Victorian properties, there is a relatively short frontage to each property which means the number of spaces can be minimal. In many areas the number of residential vehicles is well in excess of the number of on-street spaces available, and no scheme can alleviate this problem.</p> <p>There is a formal mechanism in place for residents to provide feedback on schemes, or request the introduction of a scheme in their road or amendments to existing schemes. This is via a petition submitted to the Swale Joint Transportation Board, who can consider the request and recommend appropriate action by officers.</p> <p>In many areas, there is a perception that the majority of residents would support the introduction of a Residents Parking Scheme, but subsequent consultation has proved this not to be the case and proposed schemes have been abandoned.</p> <p>The fee applied to permits is used to cover the cost of administration and enforcement activity and is not a guarantee of a parking space. Therefore the costs are the same to any scheme, regardless of the local conditions applied following completion of the process above.</p> <p>As a result I do not agree that that there needs to be a major review of the scheme.</p>				