

**Council 21 March 2018: Questions submitted from Members of the Public**

<b>Question No.</b>	<b>Question from</b>	<b>Question:</b>	<b>Question to:</b>	<b>Responsible Officer:</b>
1.	<b>Richard Palmer</b>	Given the recent news that the Council intends to consult on a range of further housing options, including a further 2500 in Newington and 11,000 around the Kent Science Park, does the Council's actions and deeds in helping construct the recent Highways Infrastructure Fund bid mean that a conclusion has already been reached on this matter?	Cabinet Member for Regeneration	Emma Wiggins
<b>Response:</b> <p>I believe Mr Palmer is referring to the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), as this question relates to others that are answered in more detail later, I can say that the consultation planned by Swale for late April relates to the review of the current local plan (due for adoption 2022) and a range of further housing options, which will be needed if the government announce new housing targets. These options will be tested for the further impact on transport networks and further improvements to the network which would be needed in order to deliver such development. This research has begun and will be part of the evidence needed to support the choices of where to build in the next local plan. The process is still at a very early stage, so no decisions on this yet.</p>				
2.	<b>Kane Blackwell</b>	Can the Leader or Cabinet member tell me does Swale have any new plans for youth projects in the borough?	The Leader	Emma Wiggins
<b>Response:</b> <p>Youth Services remain the responsibility of KCC and we work closely with them in order to ensure that the youth work is reflective of the needs of Swale young people.</p> <p>Through our work in regeneration, open spaces and leisure services we ensure that needs of young people are considered and catered for. We are also progressing with Sittingbourne Skatepark which has recently been granted detailed Planning Permission.</p>				
3.	<b>Swale Seniors Forum</b>	Why has the public bench seat which was situated to the left hand side of the Bargeman statue in Sittingbourne High Street been removed and when will it be replaced? Further, now that a market has to be held in the High Street on	Cabinet Member for Regeneration	Emma Wiggins

		Fridays will directions be given to traders to refrain from using the public seating as a repository for their stock, from storing awnings, etc. underneath the seating and from placing rails of clothing around the seating, all of which prevents the seating from being used and will the market marshalls be instructed to enforce such directions.		
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**Response:**

The bench unfortunately had significant damage and was beyond repair has therefore been removed.

Your concerns have been highlighted to the market manager who will ensure that public seating is left unobstructed and available for the residents of Swale.

<b>4.</b>	<b>Mr Greenhill</b>	In the light of recent social and other media reports and to allay public concerns, will this Council agree that concerns go beyond merely “having words with officers” and that there should be an external inquiry into (a) an allegation recently made that Swale Borough Council officers have failed to disclose relevant material under a recent Freedom of Information request and (b) into the drafting and content of documents by Quinn Estates in relation to the bid for the Housing Infrastructure Fund and developments such as the Kent Science Park and will such inquiry investigate what role, if any, was played in the latter by the leader of the Council and his public comments thereon. If not, why not?	The Leader	Monitoring Officer/Emma Wiggins
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**Response:**

Before answering the question I have reviewed the transcript of what I stated at the meeting referred to by Mr Greenhill. I did not state ‘having words with officers’, but that I would ‘talk to officers’.

There has been no attempt to withhold information which was requested under the Freedom of Information Act. The Code of Practice issued under section 45 of the Act makes it clear that authorities should have an internal complaints process where a requester is dissatisfied with a response. The request referred to is currently going through this process. This is a review of the request and not of the officers. On receiving the response to the review, should the requester remain dissatisfied they have the legal right to complain to the Information Commissioners Office who will decide whether or not to undertake an independent review. As there is already a legal

process for a review to take place there is no merit in an external inquiry being undertaken.

Scheme promoters have been identified across the borough relating to Queenbrough and Rushenden, Faversham as well as South Sittingbourne. It is common practice for officers to work with scheme promoters on reviewing options and therefore there are no identified grounds for misconduct therefore an external inquiry is unnecessary.