

Council 21 March 2018 - Questions submitted by Members

Question No.	Question from:	Question:	Question to:	Service area:
1.	Cllr Roger Truelove	For those in their 70s and 80s our three town centres are pretty cool places. Gangs of 1950s and 1960s kids are able to hang out with their mates in a wide range of cafe culture establishments, enjoying cappuccinos, Americanos, all day breakfasts and jacket potatoes with various toppings. But where can today's kids go?	Cabinet Member for Regeneration	Emma Wiggins
Response: I believe that in fact there are more coffee shops today than in the 1950's/60's. Other than 'virtual' hangouts which most young people are very skilled at doing, the leisure and visitor attractions in Swale make it almost impossible to get a better choice of options.				
2.	Cllr Roger Truelove	At a recent Cabinet meeting you indicated that progress is being made towards achieving a very long term aim of this council - a further education college for Sittingbourne. We have had many false dawns before but this is very encouraging news. Could you elaborate on exactly where we are?	Cabinet Member for Regeneration	Emma Wiggins
Response: At the end of 2017 the Council reached an agreement with both Mid-Kent and Canterbury Colleges to work collaboratively on the pursuit of an FE centre of excellence, capable of meeting local economic need. A brief has been put together, with the work commissioned to identify the scale and type of provision and draw together the outline business case. Whilst the site required will be informed by this work, identification of possible options will be progressed in parallel. Discussions are also to be held with KCC, with its vital support, as				

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both Local Education Authority and key partner in the Borough's regeneration.				
3.	Cllr Mike Baldock	Has the Council taken any action to raise the issue of the semi-permanent puddle and associated mess on the pavement at the junction of Bell Road and the High Street with the appropriate authorities?	The Leader	Martyn Cassell
Response: <p>Thank you for raising this matter. Officers have investigated the issue and it appears to be a drainage problem. This has been logged with Kent Highways for action. In the meantime we have added it as a 'hotspot' with our cleansing contractor who will make regular visits, sweeping away the water and detritus that builds up.</p>				
4.	Cllr Mike Baldock	Does the leader feel it would be appropriate for officers to decide that this council will pursue a major development not currently in the local plan, such as the proposed Quinn's development in south-eastern Sittingbourne 'in parallel' with the local plan review?	Cabinet Member for Planning	James Freeman
Response: <p>I am fully aware of the work being progressed by officers regarding the Local Plan review. I can categorically confirm that officers are working to the instructions agreed through the Local Development Framework Panel and at this stage there has been no commitment made to any scheme promoters towards supporting any new site allocations / developments beyond those already confirmed in the existing Adopted Local Plan.</p> <p>Inevitably, in reviewing options the Council may need to consider for future development strategies, officers will engage with scheme promoters to inform such work. As the Councillor is aware, a prospectus for gathering evidence for planning potential new communities, allied to a more general early public engagement consultation document, is to be released by the Council towards the end of April 2018.</p> <p>It will be for the Council members to decide what development strategies and sites will come forward as part of the review of the local plan based on the evidence and advice presented by officers and the results of consultation with the local community.</p>				

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Should Quinn Estates decide to pursue any planning application outside of the adopted Local Plan, officers will in any event have to undertake and / or evaluate similar evidence to reach a position of being able to make an appropriate recommendation to Members on such a planning application.				
5.	Cllr Ghlin Whelan	Do you recognise the fact that many residents in the local community consider that Quinn Estates have too influential a status when it comes to planning decisions in Swale, whether it be through the Town Centre, revisions to the Local Plan or Highways strategy?	Cabinet Member for Planning	James Freeman
<p>Response:</p> <p>I accept that this could be the perception held by residents, but I am also mindful who has caused this.</p> <p>As members are aware Quinn Estates along with two other developers form part of the Spirit of Sittingbourne Consortium who are contracted to deliver the Town Centre Regeneration. The Spirit of Sittingbourne Consortium was successful following a major tendering exercise, specialist legal and commercial advice has been taken by the Council before entering into these arrangements.</p> <p>Quinn Estates have to interact with the Planning system as all other major developers do and are treated accordingly. The promotion and inclusion of the SW Sittingbourne site in the current Local Plan was independently reviewed as part of the Local Plan Examination in Public. Recently the Council also won an appeal made by Quinn Estates to develop a site at Dunkirk, upholding the Officer recommendation for refusal. A further appeal by Quinn Estates relating to the site has recently been withdrawn.</p>				
6.	Cllr Monique Bonney	Was the Leader Cllr Andrew Bowles and the Cabinet Member for Planning Cllr Lewin aware that Quinn Estates were instrumental in drafting the bid for the Housing Infrastructure Fund, hand in glove with Swale Borough Council officers?	Leader/ Cabinet Member for Planning	James Freeman
<p>Response:</p> <p>On the 26th July 2017 the Council resolved that “<i>With the Government proposing to allocate some of the £6 billion a year raised from</i></p>				

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<p><i>Vehicle Excise into upgrading our A road system, this Council welcomes the MPs for Sittingbourne and Sheppey and Faversham and Mid-Kent pressing Government and KCC to secure funding to the strategic highway network across Swale including the completion of the Northern Relief Road and Southern Link, Brenley Corner, and A249 improvements to the M2 thus significantly improving air quality and traffic flows.”</i> The Housing Infrastructure Fund represented an important opportunity to do just that, in accordance with this Council’s resolution and to address the strong message given to us by the planning inspector in considering our now adopted Local Plan. Whilst the content of the bid submitted was determined by Kent County Council, as the submitting authority, in partnership with Swale Borough Council it would be considered best practice to involve scheme promoters relevant to securing the funding – whether that is one from the private sector, or in the case of our successful HIF bid for Queenborough and Rushenden, with Homes England. The schemes finally included in the HIF bid were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grovehurst junction A249 - £31M • Key Street Junction A249 - £6M <p>Design and feasibility work for Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road; Sittingbourne Southern Relief Road and J5A - £3M (in parallel with work on the review of the local plan).</p>				
7.	Cllr Monique Bonney	When is the Council going to inform members about the new transport model, a fundamental piece of evidence for the New Local Plan; what is its scope and cost?	Cabinet Member for Planning	James Freeman
<p>Response:</p> <p>Initial reporting on the findings of the new transport model evidence will be reported towards the end of 2018 ie before Members are asked for a steer on the preparation of the Preferred Options stage of the review of the local plan and its scope will be in accordance with Dept for Transport modelling standards and will be validated by both Highways England and Kent County Council. The scope of the modelling will involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a base modelling stage, to replicate the current situation; • a ‘do minimum’ scenario which will model the build out of existing development allocations at points through the new local plan period with no major network improvements and no additional development allocations; 				

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> it is expected that several future development scenarios with transport network changes will then be modelled to assist with informing a choice of development strategy for the local plan; a final model run is likely to be undertaken to support the preferred option of the plan and transport strategy and identify highway and other transport improvements which will be needed to deliver the new local plan. <p>The base modelling plus 'do minimum' modelling is being undertaken in partnership with developers and costs a total of £179,000 of which Kent County Council Highways and Swale BC are sharing 34% between them (i.e. 17% each). Costings for future development scenarios will depend on their precise nature; how many are undertaken; and whether any additional partnership funding is appropriate or relevant to ensure that the Council's and the Highway Authorities' modelling requirements are met. Overall the cost is estimated to be of the order of a further £100,000.</p>				
8.	Cllr Mike Henderson	When will further homes be made available to Syrian families now that the halfway time has been reached of the target of 10 families in 5 years?	Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing	Amber Christou
Response: Resident Services is currently working with KCC to provide another two homes for two families by Summer 2018. We hope to provide housing for the final four families over the next two years.				