

Full Council – 19 December 2019

Councillor questions:

1. **From Councillor Mrs Sacre to Councillor Hollingsbee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities**

We are all well aware of the sad lack of pride in Folkestone, rubbish is scattered without thought and fly tipping is widespread, on the premise of prevention is better than cure I should like to give something back to our community to propel them into a state of well-being to regain awareness of themselves and others.

Outdoor gym equipment has been seen to have a very positive effect on communities if it is sited in the right place. How could you help me with this project?

ANSWER:

Thank you Cllr Mrs Sacre for your question.

I firstly need to say that I cannot agree with your comment about there being a lack of community pride in Folkestone. The community is at the forefront of our efforts to combat fly tipping and rubbish generally. It is due to the combined efforts of the community, the council and its contractors that the streets remain clean particularly over what was a brilliant summer in terms of visitors to the district. It is often due to information from the community that leads to successful prosecutions for fly tipping.

The Council has recently introduced a new Area Officer scheme to build community relationships and help tackle issues right across the District. In two months the team has undertaken over 2000 jobs including removing over 1000 pieces of graffiti, dealing with 24 separate fly tips and organised 19 community litter clearing events.

In turning to the main part of the question. Positive policies are set out in the Local Plan which seek to ensure that the provision of open space and play equipment are provided as part of larger developments, or existing sites are improved through commuted payments. The Open Space and Play Spaces Studies that were commissioned by the Council have identified the level of provision across the district for a range of facilities - from local provision to the larger destination style provision. This will help decide where to focus any future investment.

Other Strategies could also help with improving pride in the district as well as improving health and wellbeing. The emerging Heritage Strategy, for example has looked at how engagement with heritage activities can help with health and wellbeing of local residents through activities such as archaeological excavation, community heritage projects and conservation management. In addition, Kent County Council is currently discussing possible schemes with the public health commissioning stakeholders, which may provide opportunities in this district.

We are always keen to improve the play, sports and health and well-being facilities within the District working with all Councillors, Town and Parish Councils and community groups to achieve these aims. Often the Town and Parish Councils are best placed to recognise the needs and ensure provision within their local areas. Great examples of this are where the District has transferred open space land on long lease arrangements to the Town Councils who have then been able to decide how they best manage and operate the open spaces. Arrangements like this have been put in place with Hawkinge Town Council and Sandgate Parish Council. Both HTC and SPC have installed outdoor gym equipment in their open spaces.

Officers at the District Council are keen to work with any Town or Parish Council and local groups who are motivated to raise funds for facilities in their local area.

A fantastic recent example of this is where the Council worked with the community and other stakeholders including East Kent College, Folkestone Town Council and many others to completely renovate Radnor Park, converting the derelict lodge into a community tea room, renovating the historic St Eanswythe's drinking fountain and designing and building an amazing new play area surrounded by landscaping and gardens. The park has now been awarded the much coveted Green Flag Award.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Would you assist me in putting gym equipment in Radnor Park?

ANSWER:

I would reiterate what I have already said in my answer. The Council is willing to work with any community group or organisation wishing to install new equipment in Radnor Park.