

Full Council – 26 June 2019

Councillor questions:

1. From Councillor Whybrow to Councillor Peall, Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Regulatory Services, Waste & Building control

The air quality section of the Environment Statement included in the Otterpool Park Planning Application states that FHDC does not currently monitor for PM2.5 and PM10. Why not?

ANSWER:

The answer in brief is that we do not currently monitor for PM2.5 and PM10 as we do not have an Air Quality Management Area. Councils commonly only monitor for particular matter (PM) when they have needed to put in place an air quality management area.

To explain further –

The council currently monitor the most common air pollutant -Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) which is a primary greenhouse gas, linked with global warming, and is produced by any form of combustion. We also monitor Benzene, which is a chemical by product from the combustion of petrol as long term exposure to this chemical is considered to be a carcinogen (cancer causing).

Air quality testing is carried out using passive sampling in the form of diffusion tubes. The advantage of this is that it is cost effective, relatively easy to use and also gives accurate results. There are currently 16 air quality monitoring sites, all of which are currently meeting DEFRA's Air Quality Objectives.

Should any of these monitoring sites not meet DEFRA air quality objectives (pollution levels), the council would declare an Air Quality Management Area and an action plan put in place to reduce the air pollution to acceptable levels.

Particulate matter or PM10 and PM2.5 are particle pollution, which is a mixture of solid and liquid droplets. These particles are very small and are measured in micrometres (µm). The source is usually from combustion activities such as motor vehicles and industrial processes. Other sources is the wear and tear from brake pads, engines and tyres of vehicles, domestic heating i.e. wood burners. To monitor particulate matter, you would commonly use a scientific machine known as TEOM (tapered element oscillating microbalance). This machine is usually fixed to one site.

However as we currently do not have any Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) we therefore do not require to monitor Particulate Matter. As part of its consultation the Council have requested the Otterpool development applicant carry out an air quality assessment and propose appropriate mitigation accordingly. The council will be robustly reviewing these reports.

THERE WAS NO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION.

2. **From Councillor Meade to Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and special projects**

Given the recent problems with EKH regarding the omission of gas safety certificates, can the council clarify the position in regards to the electrical safety certificates and comment on how this has also been allowed to happen?

ANSWER:

I can advise that the position with LGSRs has now significantly improved, since the failure of the Council's contractors to carry out their legal obligations came to light. As of Monday there were 18 outstanding LGSRs, and 17 of these have appointments made for this week. Independent consultants HQN, have been appointed to look at the failure in respect of LGSRs, and we will ensure any lessons are learnt and implemented for the future.

With regard to electrical certificates, information provided by EKH has to date shown that necessary checks have been completed across the stock in accordance with current regulations. Notwithstanding this in the light of the issues with P&R, we have asked EKH to carry out a full audit of electrical certificates, and we have previously agreed that EKH should move to a five yearly cycle of electrical testing in line with current best practice.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

I would ask that Full Council have sight of this report. How many faults were dealt with under categories C1, C2 and C3? I am concerned that works are not being done to the correct level.

ANSWER:

A full investigation is taking place which will look into all aspects, and all Members will be advised of the outcome.

3. **From Councillor Davison to Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee, Cabinet Member for communities**

With the school holidays approaching what projects/arrangements are in place to deal with the issue of holiday hunger across our district?

ANSWER:

The Council continues to annually fund and support the Shepway Sports Trust who run the Fit and Fed holiday hunger project. The key aim of Fit and Fed is to offer as many free spaces as possible specifically to local families living on a low income, who as a result of their child/ren not accessing free school meals during school holidays are highly likely not to be in a position financially to feed the whole family. Their child/ren are also far more likely not to get the opportunity to access holiday sports and physical activity

programmes alongside their friends and peers as a result of the family financial position.

To achieve the key aim of Fit and Fed, Shepway Sports Trust will continue to deliver summer and half-term programmes for 5 to 14 year olds that will use positive, social and physical activities to engage participants. They deliver 45 days of sessions over a 12 month period offering safe, interactive and challenging activity. Sessions run from 8-30am to 5pm and include active gym, panna skills school, street dance, boxing fitness, fitness classes, cycling proficiency, socialising groups, social media education, team building challenges, volunteering training, and multi sports for both boys and girls. Each child attending will also receive a breakfast and lunch which includes hot, cold and vegetarian options.

The Council continues to provide an ongoing annual grant to Shepway Sports Trust. However, it should be noted that the Council's ward grant funding has also supported the Fit and Fed initiative. In 2018/19, a ward grant of £200 towards Fit and Fed was awarded by Cllr Damon Robinson. In 2017/18, three Ward Grants were awarded to Shepway Sports Trust to provide a similar project to Fit and Fed.

In the latest holiday period the programme Fit & Fed holiday hunger project provided 750 hot meals to children. Schools and Youth hubs across the District also run holiday clubs where children are provided with food and the local food banks are also available for any one in need to access.

In addition to this the Folkestone & Hythe Local Childrens' Partnership group which is a KCC run group (and Folkestone & Hythe District Council are a member of) have provided funding to Shepway Sports Trust for 19/20 to enable the Fit & Fed project to continue.

The Council's 2019/20 ward grant application process has just opened and we are aware that the Shepway Sports Trust will be approaching Members to continue their support of Fit & Fed.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Would you look into this issue more to see how many children are covered by this, and what else is available?

ANSWER:

All grant money is monitored carefully. I will take on board your comments and see if I can find further information for you.

4. From Councillor Keen to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council

Do you have plans to purchase the old harbour line that runs alongside Tram Road from Network Rail, and if you are then what are your intentions for the site?

ANSWER:

The disused section of the Folkestone Harbour Railway Line is currently being marketed for sale by Batcheller Monkhouse on behalf of Network Rail. Offers need to be submitted by 31st July 2019. Policy RL12 of the Places and Policies Local Plan supports the use of the line for a linear park, promoting active travel by providing a cycle and pedestrian route to the harbour area, together with visitor parking. I have asked officers to investigate the feasibility of delivering such an option in order that an informed decision can be taken regarding any purchase. A meeting is also being arranged with Folkestone Town Council to discuss the District Council's approach and how both Councils might work collaboratively on this community project.

THERE WAS NO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION.

5. **From Councillor McConville to Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and special projects**

An item in report C/19/01 states, Homelessness- The increase in income relates to the recovery of income relating to self-contained nightly lets, which produces a higher rate of contributions than the bed and breakfast costs. What are these self-contained nightly lets and where may I see a breakdown of the costs?

ANSWER:

In terms of subsidy arrangements for Housing Benefit, these apply where the local authority provides accommodation to discharge a homelessness function or prevent homelessness. The types of accommodation are:

- Board and lodging (also known as B&B) or non-self-contained licensed accommodation; or
- Short-term leased or self-contained licensed accommodation

Self-contained accommodation is where none of the following are shared with another household:

- a kitchen,
- a toilet,
- a bathroom

For B&B cases (non self-contained) the Council can claim full subsidy for expenditure up to of the one bedroom self-contained LHA rate as at January 2011. For Folkestone-Dover LHA area this is £96.92 per week. Any amount over this is not reclaimed via subsidy.

For short term leased cases (self contained) where the LA is the landlord the Council can claim full subsidy for expenditure up to 90% of the appropriate LHA rate for the size of the property (based on the number of bedrooms) as at January 2011.

In terms of the breakdown of actual costs this will depend on the nature of the case, the size of the property and the individual circumstances of the people

involved. I would be happy to have a further conversation with Councillor McConville to discuss the type and breakdown of costs so that I can ensure he is provided, as far as is possible, with the information he is seeking.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

I would like to know the make-up of people and families using the nightly lets, and where they are from?

ANSWER:

I would suggest you raise this with me separately after the meeting, and I can seek the information you require from the relevant officer.

6. **From Councillor Dorrell to Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee, Cabinet Member for Communities**

With the rates of child poverty hitting 46% in East ward and 48% after housing costs in Harbour ward. This should be a top priority for our council to address, as the next generations prospects and their future opportunities can be significantly reduced by the effects of living within poverty. And now with the introduction of Universal Credit being rolled out, have the cabinet considered any plans on reliving the pressure claimants will face, as the minimum 5 week waiting period will find some of our more vulnerable household going into rent arrears with greater risks of homelessness or deprivation resulting in others needing to visit a food banks just in order to get by. What, if any are the councils proposals for helping to reduce the alarming rates of child poverty within and across our district?

ANSWER:

Folkestone & Hythe District Council is currently delivering Community Led Local Development Programme, which aims to help local people access jobs, and to support local businesses by delivering the Folkestone Local Development Strategy (LDS) in the most deprived areas of Folkestone. The funding stream recognises the importance of paid work in increasing the stability of people's lives, including families and reducing their reliance on benefits. The programme will run until 2022, and with match funding will invest £4.9 million into Folkestone's most deprived areas.

The European Social Fund (ESF) strand is focused on Folkestone Local Development Strategy Objective 1: Enhancing work- readiness and well-being. This objective has four actions:

Action 1: Work experience and job preparation for young people

Action 2: Getting people back into work

Action 3: Promoting emotional and physical well-being

Action 4: Promoting financial wellbeing

The Council has secured £975,000 of ESF funding which with match funding from the delivery organisations will result in £1,950,000 being invested into achieving outcomes under Objective 1.

Following a call for projects in 2018 to deliver these actions and the associated outputs and results, five projects were awarded funding. One projects subsequently decided to withdraw due to a change in their circumstances. Four projects are currently delivering services:

Money Matters– ESF funding allocated £49,049

Lead organisation: Rotary Club of Folkestone in partnership with Citizens Advice and Kent Coastal Volunteering

This project recognizes the barrier indebtedness is to well-being of the whole household and has created a new integrated service to provide support and advice to working-age residents, who are job seekers, unemployed or economically inactive. It combines the financial expertise of Citizens Advice with professional mentoring coordinated by Kent Coast Volunteering.

The service aims:

- To provide an efficient, empathetic service of mentoring and support to those in debt;
- To offer free, independent and practical financial advice;
- To empower individuals to gain greater financial stability and progress towards a debt-free future;
- To guide individuals through the maze of financial burden leading to greater physical and mental wellbeing and thus improve self-worth and self-confidence.

Money Advisers from CA will work to provide a robust and individual Money Action Plan (MAP), which a mentor will then work to implement in collaboration with scheme participants. This vital outreach service will be provided at venues such as FoodBank, Folkestone Rainbow Centre and Mind.

For further information regarding the project:

Email: adviser@citizensadviceshepway.org.uk

Working Together ESF funding allocated £230,895

Lead organisation: Social Enterprise Kent

This project recognizes that multiple factors impact on residents' ability to be enter the job market or undertake training or education. This new service supports residents who want to enter the job market but need support to become job ready and find suitable work; or helps residents realize their aspirations to start a training course or return to education. The project offers tailored one to one support from a skilled advisor who guides/coaches/mentors the resident on their personal journey.

The advisor develops with each client a Personal Development Plan which identifies objectives that the resident will be supported to work towards alongside a clear action plan of tasks and activities to help them achieve a positive outcome. This can include creating a CV, using effective job searching techniques, developing interview skills and becoming more confident by addressing underlying issues by helping them access debt services, housing support, benefit advice and much more.

For further information regarding the project:

Email: e.woodward@sekgroup.org.uk

Website: www.sekgroup.org.uk/

Moving Forward Together ESF funding allocated £299,080

Lead organisation: Shepway Sports Trust

This project recognizes the benefit of physical activity and sport to people's well-being. The new service offers a two tier programme of access to regular sport and physical activity combined with national accredited training.

The first tier engages residents in team sports such as football, table tennis, basketball to build confidence, develop physical fitness and build interpersonal skills. Alongside these sessions, participants will participate in sessions such as CV writing, first aid training that have been agreed and co-designed to assist them to move towards their goals – job search, employment, training or education.

The second tier is the YMCA level 1 and 2 Introduction to Lifestyle Management and Community Activator accredited training. These accredited courses will enable participants to gain qualifications that gives them practical and social skills to improve their lives and will help them move into employment especially in the leisure industry.

For further information regarding the project:

Email: e.ghassempour@shepwaysportstrust.org

Passport to Employability ESF funding allocated £98,152

Lead organisation: Kent Coastal Volunteering

This project recognizes the importance of volunteering as a gateway to improved well-being and employment. Kent Coast Volunteering through its Folkestone & Hythe Hub is providing a programme of training and support for unemployed and economically inactive residents to help them gain skills and experiences that will help them on their journey into work.

The new service enables participants to be supported by skilled staff and volunteer mentors with 1:1 support and tailored training to improve skills and confidence before being provided with a volunteer placement. Core training sessions include introduction to volunteering, customer service, confidence building and skills for volunteers. Each participants will have an agreed personal development plan with mentors accompanying them to placements to assist with the adjustment and the establishment of a routine they can live with. The support continues beyond the volunteer placement into job searching and employment.

Email: mark.connorton@kcv.org.uk

Website: <https://www.kcv.org.uk/passport-to-employability>

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

How many private rented tenants are being pushed into rent arrears?

ANSWER:

I am unable to answer that question at present, but will consult officers and provide a response separately.

7. **From Councillor Davison to Councillor Wimble, Cabinet Member for the District Economy**

Do you think that everything that could have been done by the previous administration has been done to defend jobs and retain Debenhams as a cornerstone trader on Folkestone high street and if not, what steps will you now take?

ANSWER:

The closure of department stores is a national issue arising from the shift of consumer spending to online retail and has affected many stores previously regarded as the cornerstone of High Streets such as House of Fraser, BHS, Marks & Spencer as well as Debenhams.

The Council has been working for some time with Ellandi, the owners of Bouverie Place, and the owner of the Debenhams store, on exciting plans to regenerate Folkestone town centre. The intention was to commence consultation on these plans in the coming months, but the announcement that Debenhams will be closing in 2020 has given the Council and other stakeholders an opportunity to accelerate this work.

It is not only a matter of regenerating Folkestone town centre but also finding ways to better connect with other assets of the town such as the Creative Quarter and harbour arm that attract large numbers of visitors whom could potentially spend time and money in the town centre too. This work does require resourcing and an application has been submitted for Government support through its Future High Street Fund and a decision awaited.

The Council has shown leadership in bringing stakeholders and public agencies together to create a new Folkestone & Hythe District Accelerated Delivery Board with a District-wide remit to promote economic growth and job creation. Folkestone town centre will be an important part of this work and the Board provides an opportunity to share early ideas for the future use of the Debenhams building and how it can continue to play a part in Folkestone's renaissance as a modern seaside town, with fantastic transport links and a thriving economy.

Much has been done and there is much more to do.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Will you undertake to publish the minutes of the Accelerated Delivery Board be published?

ANSWER:

Yes, these would be made available.

8. **From Councillor Davison to Councillor Wimble, Cabinet Member for the District Economy**

Do you consider that downgrading the percentage of 'affordable' housing provided in specific future housing developments like Otterpool from 30% to 22% is acceptable when thousands of families are on the housing waiting list and we have people sleeping rough on our streets?

ANSWER:

Our planning policies need to be supported by robust evidence. National planning policy says that local planning authorities should produce evidence to show the need for affordable housing in their areas. Where a need for affordable housing is identified, policies in local plans can then set out requirements for meeting the need, taking into account other issues such as the viability of development. National policy states that on major sites at least 10 per cent of homes should be affordable.

The council completed a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to identify the need for housing, including affordable housing. This found that 139 affordable homes were needed a year to 2037. When considering all the new homes to be provided over the plan period this equates to around 22 per cent, and this figure is included in the draft policies in the Core Strategy Review that were consulted in 2018 and 2019. The policies will be considered by an independent planning Inspector during a public examination of the Core Strategy Review who will consider the evidence and will judge whether the council is justified in its approach.

The draft policy figure is more than double the national default level and is designed to deliver 139 affordable homes a year. The adopted 2013 Core Strategy currently makes provision for 100 affordable homes a year, so if the Core Strategy Review is found 'sound' by the planning Inspector, it will help deliver a substantially increased supply of affordable homes to meet the district's identified need.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

You did not answer my question?

ANSWER:

My response stated that we are hitting double our targets.

9. **From Councillor Davison to Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee, Cabinet Member for Communities**

Can you provide an update on discussions with Kent County Council about the enforced closure of Folkestone Central library?

ANSWER:

Responsibility for library provision, opening hours etc. lies with Kent County Council (KCC). Earlier this year, KCC undertook a 10-week public consultation on the Libraries, Registration and Archives (LRA) strategy – see <https://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/LRAStrategy>. The draft strategy sets out how KCC will continue to provide a sustainable libraries, registration and archives service to meet the needs and choices of its customers and communities.

The Council has contacted Cllr Mike Hill, KCC's Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, inviting KCC's Libraries service to attend a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee in order to provide our members with an update on the consultation, how people in the district were consulted and the results. This will provide members the opportunity to discuss library provision across the district, including Folkestone Central library.

The library had been closed due to a leak and the ground floor has reopened today.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

The recent closures are unacceptable. Would you support organising a face to face meeting with the KCC Cabinet Member?

ANSWER:

The closure was disappointing, but as there was a leak, there was little that could be done. I am sure a meeting with the KCC Cabinet Member can be arranged, leave it with me.

10. **From Councillor Prater to Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and special projects**

Would the Cabinet member for Housing provide the number of LGSR's (gas safety certificate tests) on our housing stock that EKH invoiced this council for in each of the financial years 2016-17, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019?

ANSWER

Information provided by East Kent Housing shows the following number of gas safety inspections (LGSRS) were completed and invoiced over the 3 year period from 2016-2019:

In 2017/18, 4459 LGSRS were completed and invoiced by our contractor.

In 2018/19, 3737 LGSRS were completed and invoiced by our contractor.

The information is not available for 2016/17 as this work relates to our previous contractor.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

The figures in 18/19 were less than in 17/18 – this does not stack up?

ANSWER:

The council's contract was currently up for renegotiation, and therefore certain information could not be released due to its commercial sensitivity. I will get the figures checked for you.

11. **From Councillor Fuller to Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and special projects**

Can the cabinet member for Housing confirm the full potential extent of this Council's financial legal liability (the fine we may face) now it has been uncovered that for a period of time there were hundreds of our properties not covered by an in date Gas Safety Certificate (LGSR)?

ANSWER:

At this time I am unable to fully respond to this question. I can confirm that the Council referred itself to the Social Housing Regulator and together with EKH is actively working with the Regulator. Members will be updated further on the outcome of this process once it has been completed.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Can you confirm that the actual amount of fine will be published?

ANSWER:

Yes, assuming that there is a fine.