

## Leader's Q&A session

Held at: Zoom - to be streamed live to Youtube.

Date: Wednesday, 28 October 2020

### 3. Questions from the public

#### 1. From Mrs C Cooper to Councillor Wimble, Cabinet Member for the District Economy

A new cafe has recently opened in Lydd but there are many shops that are closed.

With many more people working from home and wanting to shop locally what are the District Councils plans to regenerate the high streets in Lydd, New Romney and Dymchurch?

#### **ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

FHDC is committed to supporting the high streets across the district, including those in Lydd, New Romney and Dymchurch. During 2019 the council

In addition to this initiative, FHDC is also supporting the Romney Marsh Partnership to develop new projects for submission to the Magnox Socio-economic fund. One of these is potentially around enhancing the Dymchurch, Lydd and New Romney high streets, alongside funding from FHDC.

I am very aware of Brew at 32, a new business in the high street, and in Lydd, Kerry's kitchen. We can't make people open their businesses, but we will do all we can to support these businesses.

#### 2. From Mr B Rylands to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council

Will the council allow members of the public to fish the lake at Folkestone Racecourse and have it monitored by its water bailiff?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

The detail of this has not been worked through yet but it is the intention that the lake will be available for public use for a range of leisure activities as part of the first phase of the proposed development. Access is restricted at the moment, so we will have to wait until we get further along in the plan.

**4. Questions from Councillors**

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

Please can the leader of the council give an update on the promised review of how markets can contribute to the commercial life of the district, including the role of Folkestone's town centre market?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

The Council is undertaking a review of current market operations alongside the development of a Place Plan for Folkestone. This review will outline a range of potential improvements, recognising that markets can play a role in creating successful town centres. Early October this year saw the introduction of a six month trial of a monthly Vegan Veganism market in Guildhall Street, delivered in partnership with Kent Food Hubs, and feedback from this will help inform future market development opportunities.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

The National Market Traders Federation says that the majority of traders weren't able to access the COVID discretionary grant scheme from earlier this year because it related to traders with fixed building costs, rather than those trading on the street. This meant that our own traders in Folkestone town centre missed out. What support, both financial and practical can we offer to traders, as a matter of urgency at this time? Could we look at things like adjusted rents, access to further grants, and practical ways to bring publicity and support to the market?

**ANSWER:**

I will talk to the team and report back to you with a full answer. I do know that anyone based within the district did have the ability to apply for

additional funds outside the strict guidelines, for properties that automatically received rates grants.

*After the meeting, the following response was given:*

*As part of the review that the council is undertaking of current market operations, consideration will be given to the financial and practical support that could be offered to traders in recognition of the role that markets can play in creating successful town centres. The council has been regularly communicating and promoting the new Vegan market in Folkestone on social media and through other forms of communication and will continue to do so.*

**2. From Councillor Meade to Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities**

With the colder weather and people still having to sleep rough on our streets can the Council please confirm that SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Plan) will be kept to one day of freezing weather this year and not the previous three days?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

I can confirm that the SWEP arrangements have not changed since last year, and will be kept to one day of freezing weather or below.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

When will we be doing the rough sleeper count this year?

**ANSWER**

I believe it is November, I will confirm later.

*Following the meeting, Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee confirmed the date as Tuesday 24 November 2020.*

**3. From Councillor Meade to Councillor Collier, Cabinet Member for Property Management & Grounds Maintenance**

On visiting some of our local play parks various equipment has been removed, I am assuming due to COVID distancing. However some of the equipment makes no sense for example only 1 swing out of four (two swings either end of the frame would have sufficed) in Canterbury rec, the removal of goalposts in Morehall, George Gurr gates locked and other around our district experiencing similar. Can you please confirm when this equipment will be reinstated and access to some of the parks reopened

given that children are mixing in schools and should be under adult supervision in the parks whilst they play enforcing self-distancing?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

The council have implemented a number of measures in line with government guidance for the safe operations of play areas and outdoor gyms, which does include the removal of swings. The specific points raised relate to reactive maintenance issues, as opposed to Covid control measures. An extra swing will be put back up at Canterbury Road recreation ground this week. Morehall Recreation goal posts were taken away in the summer for refurbishing and are waiting on a set of replacement ground sockets, these are due for delivery next week.

George Gurr Crescent requires the rocking item to be removed and ground made safe prior to re-opening and we will endeavour to undertake these works as soon as possible.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

None.

**1. From Councillor McConville to Councillor Wimble, Cabinet Member for the District Economy**

With the decision by Canterbury Council earlier this month to stop its Mountfield Park development due to water quality issues at the Stodmarsh Nature Reserve. What impact could the issues with Stodmarsh and the surrounding East Stour catchment area have upon the Otterpool development?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

It is our understanding that Mountfield Park development has not been stopped but is clarifying its position in respect of Stodmarsh.

The Otterpool Park Planning application includes proposals to mitigate any potential impact on the Stodmarsh SPA, within the boundaries of the application site. One means of mitigating the developments impact on Stodmarsh is to take land out of active agricultural use, which contributes significantly to the level of Phosphates and Nitrates in the local ecosystem – harmful to the Stodmarsh SPA.

A key component of the planning policy and aims of the development has always been the provision of a significant amount of green infrastructure which would take the land out of agricultural use. Through the change of

land use and other technical solutions we do not believe that the issues with Stodmarsh and the surrounding East Stour catchment area would have any impact on the proposals. More accurately we do not consider that the Otterpool Park development would have a harmful impact on Stodmarsh – in fact the proposals represent the opportunity for Otterpool Park to be an exemplar development in this regard able to do what other significant developments have not yet done or could do.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

In light of the Environmental Agency report specifically relating to the high levels of mercury and its components, is there any actions by the council with regard to Natural England's report of July this year, which looks to bring in a nutrient neutrality approach to the Otterpool Park development?

**ANSWER:**

The position at Otterpool Park, and across the Core Strategy Review responds to the report directly to the recent advice from Natural England. Officers are working with Natural England and the promoters of the development and the Otterpool planning application includes proposals to mitigate any potential impact on the Stodmarsh SPA, within the boundaries of the site. In short Otterpool Park has an environmental solution to address the Natural England advice note.

4. **From Councillor Keen to Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Special Projects**

Over the last week I have had a number of calls from residents that live on Marine Parade and Marine Crescent complaining about a number of issues, including suspension of parking spaces, closure of footpaths, speeding of construction traffic, dust from building works and confusing suspension notices.

We have a duty of care to these residents, to make sure that despite the development that their quality of life is not impacted.

As the local council can we please do something to improve the lives of the residents that live near the Sea Front Development?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question.

The seafront development works have necessitated the suspension of around 24 parking spaces along seaward side of Lower Sandgate Road. The works have been staggered to minimise the loss of spaces. The suspension of 7 spaces in Marine Crescent is for electrical works, which should be completed on the 10th November.

To ease the pressure on on-street parking, officers have been in discussions with the Folkestone Harbour Company, and they've now agreed to allow residents to use their car park in the Folkestone harbour arm. Residents are being asked whether they will be interested in using this facility, and for those saying yes, they will be allowed free parking in the car park until the 10th November.

I have also asked for penalty charge notices issued to residents parked in suspended bays to be cancelled.

Further to this, officers are working with the Folkestone Harbour Company on other solutions to alleviate parking pressures throughout the duration of the development works.

With regard to the concerns raised about dust, Councillor Peall has already responded to this point at a previous Leader's Q&A session, the details of which can be found on the council's website. Please raise any continued concerns could I ask you to take them up directly with the Environmental Protection team?

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

What can we do as a council to make the lives of affected residents better?

**ANSWER:**

Officers are working with the Harbour Company to try to alleviate these pressures throughout the duration of the works. There will be disturbances, which we are trying to minimise these issues, but there is a limit as to what we can do.