

Leader's Q&A session

Held at: Zoom - streamed live to Youtube.

Date: Wednesday, 16 December 2020

1. Questions from the public

1. From Mr G Kirby to Councillor Collier, Cabinet Member for Property Management and Grounds Maintenance

What specific and immediate initiatives is the Council starting to support the Kent County Council Plan Bee pollinator action plan launched in November this year?

ANSWER:

Thank you for your question.

- 1) In winter 2019 FHDC Grounds Maintenance instigated a meeting between KCC, the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and FHDC's contractor to discuss a reduction in grass cutting regimes in the New Romney Marsh area. It was agreed that 36 km of B roads would be piloted. The project has proved very successful with all parties, and the area covered under the new ecology management is now 70km.

The plan is:

70km continuous Bee Road network = 37 Bee Roads

Rural verge cutting delayed to autumn

3 year trial (commenced 2019)

Monitoring improvement to pollinator habitat and populations

Builds on project carried out by Bumblebee Conservation Trust

This is now being used as an example to other local authorities across the country.

- 2) Many initiatives were already in place before the launch:

- Minimal use of pesticides. Pesticide trial was planned for summer 2020 but was postponed due to Covid19.

- GM managers have been working on identifying areas owned by FHDC where cutting regimes can be reduced to help increase biodiversity and reduce all environmental impacts (cemeteries, parks and open spaces)
- The Coastal Park and Radnor Park has its own wildlife zone, meadow and bee border.
- The Royal Military Canal has been managed to increase the species count for the last 15 years. A biological survey will be carried out this coming summer to show the results of this management programme. The GM teams have been closely working with the Bumblebee and Butterfly and Moth Trusts and spent many volunteering hours planting moth, butterfly and bumble bee friendly habitat.
- Sedum matting has been trialled at the Coastal Park on the new operational depot roof, one of the many benefits is the provision of important microclimate for insects.
- Seasonal bedding is designed with pollinator friendly factor in mind (variety of pollen- rich single-petalled flowers for 'easy access', bright colours, different shapes and scent, prolonged flowering period)

The team are always open to discussing new initiatives and working with volunteers and other interested stakeholders wherever possible.

2. From Mr M Brophy to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council

Building a new leisure centre for Hythe at Martello Lakes has become far more viable due to a shortening of timescales when compared with Prince's Parade. There is increasing evidence that Prince's Parade is more complex, more expensive, under threat from flooding (particularly due to more frequent extreme weather events) and is overall a problematic site to develop. So I would like to ask the leader if he would instruct a proper investigation into the merits of the Martello Lakes site in preference to Prince's Parade considering recent changes in relevant factors.

ANSWER:

Thank you for your question.

In terms of the issue of the comparative timescales the Princes Parade scheme is now very well advanced. Planning permission for the scheme is in place, the Council owns the land and the appointment of a contractor and further work on the scheme, including site investigations, detailed design and other preparatory work can now take place during the course of next year with a view to construction commencing in 2022. Any scheme for Martello Lakes would need to go through a lengthy process before it got to such a similarly advanced stage.

On the issue of flood risk the site is classified as being at a very low risk of flooding within the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, the lowest category, and further measures have been incorporated into the design such

as all ground floor levels being at least 7.8 meters above sea level in order to further reduce any risk. More generally it is my view that the Princes Parade would deliver a range of benefits that the Martello Lakes option will not deliver including the cleaning up of a contaminated site, a new and useable public park, a widened promenade in a traffic free environment and the provision of both affordable and market housing. The site is also well located and accessible by a range of different travel modes including cycling, walking and public transport. For those reasons I do not consider that the Martello Lakes option needs to be given further consideration.

3. From A Dakin to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council

In light of the Prime Minister's commitment to preserving green spaces and wildlife habitats, will the council follow his example and withdraw the hugely unpopular plans for the development at Princes Parade?

ANSWER:

Thank you for your question.

I do not intend to withdraw the Princes Parade because, as set out in the answer to the previous question, it will deliver a range of benefits including bringing back into productive use a contaminated site and the provision of public parkland. In addition compensatory habitats for a range of species will be created within the substantial areas of green space to be retained and re-provided within the development. A detailed landscape and ecological management plan will protect the long-term value of these habitats, including foraging, shelter and breeding opportunities for protected species for example house sparrow boxes and reptile hibernacula.

2. Questions from Councillors

1. From Councillor J Martin to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council

Can the Leader tell me how many waivers for procurement standing orders have been signed during this administration to date?

ANSWER:

Thank you for your question.

The Contract Standing Orders allow exemption from normal procurement processes in specific circumstances, in specific circumstances, including:

- the work, supply or service or grant of service concession is required as a matter of urgency and a delay would be likely to lead to financial loss, personal injury or damage to property; or

- If the goods or materials to be purchased are available from only one manufacturer / supplier; or
- Where the work is of a specialist nature, the skill of the contractor is of primary importance, and the supply market has been tested and found to be limited; or
- Where the supply is for maintenance to existing IT equipment or software, including enhancements to current software, which can only be performed by the licensed developer or owner of the system.

Officers seeking an exemption must follow the waiver request process to document the justification for the exemption and obtain approval to proceed.

Between 2 May 2019 and 11 December 2020, a total of 48 waivers were approved.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

As you know, I have concerns regarding the procurement practises, but I am reassured by your commitment to open auditable and transparent processes. However, with the gargantuan amounts of money being spent by the council in pursuit of Otterpool Park, can you tell us what steps you are taking to ensure the procurement process is corruption free?

ANSWER:

We take this potential matter seriously and the council has very strong anti-corruption policies in place. In light of your concerns, I will personally take it on myself to double check that they are as strong as they could be.

~~2. From Councillor Treloar to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council~~

~~When selecting the master planners and architecture firm for Otterpool, did the council specifically look for firms with experience designing zero-carbon dwellings and settlements and use this as a selection criteria?~~

THIS QUESTION WAS NOT ANSWERED, AS THE QUESTIONER WAS NOT PRESENT AT THE MEETING.

~~3. From Councillor Treloar to Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities~~

~~Whilst I appreciate that the questions relating to Napier Barracks on the council's website came directly from the community, they are unduly weighted towards a tone that amplifies and perpetuates fear and prejudice — those with the most extreme views often shout the loudest. Can the council please revise this page and provide a more sensible list~~

~~of questions/answers/statements that allay reasonable concerns in a way that doesn't amplify fear and demonstrates the council's responsibility to be a calm, collected, caring and compassionate voice in the community?~~

THIS QUESTION WAS NOT ANSWERED, AS THE QUESTIONER WAS NOT PRESENT AT THE MEETING.

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

To confirm the council's commitment to reducing our own greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2030 and to working with our residents and businesses to bring our wider communities' emissions in line with net zero as soon as possible would you agree to sign up as a member of UK100?

[\(UK100 | An ambitious network of 100+ UK local authorities | UK100\)](#)

ANSWER:

Thank you for your question. I have no objections to this, but would like officers to do a little more investigation. It is within your remit, so I will leave that with you, to bring forward with your Carbon Action Plan next year.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

None.

5. From Councillor Meade to Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Special Projects

I have had some concerned residents in our council Warden supported housing (Where at present more than 40% of the residents are self-isolating as elderly or vulnerable, due to Covid) raising an issue regarding the Warden never wearing a face mask when dealing with residents - they find this very frightening. Could you please clarify what advice the Council has given its Supported Housing Warden's regarding interaction with elderly / vulnerable residents please?

ANSWER:

Thank you for your question Councillor Meade, I agree that we must all follow the guidelines and I can assure you that All Independent Living Managers (ILMs) who work in the sheltered schemes have been specifically told that face masks must be worn at all times. The Housing Services Manager, will instruct them all again. There is an ILM, however, who has a medical condition and is unable to wear a mask on occasions. When this occurs, she is instructed to be doubly vigilant in respecting of social distancing.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

None.

6. From Councillor Meade to Councillor Collier, Cabinet Member for Property Management and Grounds Maintenance

Earlier this year the District Council agreed to maintain the hanging flowers troughs along the dual carriage way that runs parallel with Fleming Way in East Folkestone. It brightened the whole area but now I am being informed that District are finding it too hard to maintain these troughs and they have been emptied and are standing bare. For information there is a slip road either side of the dual carriageway where it is easy to park and gain direct access to the troughs. Can you please clarify whether these troughs will be replanted (as are part paid for by Folkestone Town Council) in keeping with the rest of Folkestone's flowers troughs including the Roundabout fencing troughs at the roundabout just down from the Civic Centre where it is more difficult to park or is East Folkestone going to be neglected in raising the living environment for their residents?

ANSWER:

Thank you Councillor Meade for your question. Folkestone Town Council requested last spring for the troughs along the dual carriage way parallel with Fleming Way to be planted for the summer. FHDC committed to 6 of these outside of the normal grounds maintenance agreement with FTC and its normal program of works. This was funded entirely by FHDC. The council is willing to continue planting these if FTC provide funding.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

I believe the town clerk was willing to do that, so if we could get that together, that would be good.

ANSWER:

Thank you.

7. From Councillor Davison to Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities

Please could we have an update on the roll-out of the Covid-19 vaccine via our GP surgeries?

ANSWER:

Thank you for your question.

We are aware that there will be a process for vaccinations whereby the elderly and others (NHS workers etc) will be vaccinated first. As soon as we receive more detailed information from the health sector we will share it with you. GPs will be contacting people in priority order and the NHS is asking the public to wait until they are asked to attend for their vaccination. The public are being urged not to ring their surgery to ask about the vaccination programme as that will increase pressure on already busy telephone lines. There is further information on Kent and Medway CCG website.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

There was a list of practises in Kent that have access to the vaccine published yesterday in a local newspaper article, and there were no surgeries listed in our district. What steps are being taken to engage with the CCG to ensure swift provision for the district, and capacity to deliver it?

ANSWER:

We are in conversations with the CCG, and we meet with them weekly. I am aware of this list. I understand surgeries in the district have been approached, but nothing has been confirmed as yet.

8. From Councillor Davison to Councillor Collier, Cabinet Member for Property Management and Grounds Maintenance

How will selling off Folkestone indoor bowls club on Cheriton Road contribute directly to the residents it serves?

ANSWER:

Thank you for your question Councillor Davison. Officers are currently exploring the possibility of alternative uses for the Cheriton Road bowls club site to create a possible revenue stream for the Council. Any potential site disposal will be thoroughly considered by Cabinet along with sites for an alternative bowls facility. The Directors from the Folkestone Indoor Bowls Club have been consulted throughout the process so far and are supportive of potential plans.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

I wanted to ask if the site is sold, what guarantees can you give to replicate the size and range of facilities currently available at the site, and what proposals have been discussed for the future use of that land?

ANSWER:

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I think that the logic behind what we are seeking to achieve is a situation where the council is maximising it's assets and at the same time, and more importantly, ensure that there is no reduction in the amenities available to the people of FHDC. You can rest assured that the alternative facility, one planned in more detail, will ensure that facilities provided will be no less than what is provided at the present time.