

Council – 26 October 2016

QUESTION 1

QUESTION

From Nick Southgate to Councillor David Monk, Leader of the Council

Given the change in national Tory policy away from an austerity agenda can you highlight who has been hardest hit by this policy of austerity and what moves you will be making to ameliorate its consequences?

ANSWER:

We have all been hit by the austerity measures that had to be introduced due to the disastrous fiscal policies of the last Labour government. I would remind you of the note left by Liam Byrne “I am afraid to tell you that there is no money left”.

As to what we can do to ameliorate its consequences, because of our astute financial management, we can and will continue to pursue our policies which seek to make Shepway a vibrant place where people have a good quality of life, where businesses wish to invest and where there are homes available across all sectors.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

Given that the Labour Party has lost its voice for austerity in the district and that there is 41% child poverty in Folkestone, what is the Council doing about this suffering and how will it be annihilated?

SUPPLEMENTARY ANSWER

A written response will be given.
The response provided following the meeting is shown below.

Kent County Council (KCC) has a statutory duty under the Child Poverty Act 2010 to set out Kent’s strategic priorities for tackling child poverty. Child poverty is a multi-faceted and complex issue which is not only about low income, but also low aspirations and limited opportunities that reduce wellbeing and prevent children from achieving their full potential.

At a local level, the Council enhances KCC’s statutory duty by developing local initiatives, recognising that children are part of a family, which in turn is part of a community, and the circumstances of both will directly affect outcomes for children.

This includes the establishment of a Local Children’s Partnership Group and Shepway Welfare and Employment Board, delivery of the Troubled Families programme supporting the most complex families and the development of a

Community Lead Learning Development funding bid in partnership with the Folkestone community.

These projects acknowledge the wider economic factors affecting family circumstance and support the County Council's statutory role in mitigating the effects of child poverty and tackling its root causes, where this is possible to do.

QUESTION

From David Plumstead to Councillor David Monk, Leader of the Council

On 13th January 2016 report A/15/20 was presented to Council in which the Councillors were advised of the Chief Executive's use of urgent powers to purchase farmland for the sum of approximately £5 million within the area now referred to as Otterpool Park. In exercising his urgent powers to make a bid to purchase the land, the Chief Executive consulted with the Leader and Chairman of the Council, and also noted that the Monitoring Officer had consulted with the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee.

Can the Leader please advise this meeting of the exact dates when the following sequence of actions took place and whether the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee gave his consent as required by the Constitution:

1. Date of consultation with the Leader
2. Date of consultation with the Chairman of Council
3. Date of consultation with the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee
4. Date consent given by Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee for the decision to be taken as a matter of urgency
5. Date of submission of the bid to purchase the land.

ANSWER:

Council officers noted that the land was available for purchase on 7 October 2015 with the closing date for tenders being noon Friday 20 November 2015. Between the land being put up for sale and the date for the submission of the tender the Chief Executive had several conversations with me. The exact date of these conversations has not been recorded. I was fully aware of the proposals.

During this period the consent of the Chairman of Council was not required. However, the Monitoring Officer did consult the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny on 9 December 2015 who gave his consent to the urgent decision. At the time it was envisaged that the decision would be taken by Cabinet but it proved not possible to do this.

Finally, as I have said the date for the submission of the bid was 20th November 2015.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

Can the Leader, in conjunction with the Chief Executive, explain the use of urgency powers as the decision contravenes Part 4 Clause 4.2 that consent is required by the

Overview and Scrutiny committee Chairman, why was approval not sought prior to 20th November (when the bid was put in). Where is the evidence for this and can he provide it?

SUPPLEMENTARY ANSWER

The Leader informed that he was fully satisfied with the procedures carried out and if he could provide any evidence he would do so.