

Full Council – 28 November 2018

Councillor questions:

**1. From Councillor Peacock to Councillor Pascoe, Cabinet Member for Property Management and Environmental Health**

Could the council please clarify their position in regard to bank maintenance along the RMC for which they are responsible for, from West Hythe Dam to the outfall at Seabrook? I understand that the weed cutter boat, hopefully modified to prevent further spillages of hydraulic fluid is still in use and that clearance of the footpath is still being done. However, residents, dog walkers, cyclists, horse riders etc are concerned about overhanging vegetation, over the whole bank from canal to bridleway not just alongside the paths, which also overhangs and in some areas impinges the passage of craft on to the waterway. Trees are regularly dying and falling across the banks or into the canal where they are left, or bits cut off and pulled to one side and left on the banks.

**ANSWER**

The RMC is managed in line with the RMC management plan.

Much of the canal is managed for the benefit of wildlife conservation with the exception of the stretch between Twiss Road bridge and Scanlon's Bridge, which is managed as a more formal public open space.

Trees are inspected biannually, however, tree maintenance is undertaken as and when necessary. Work has recently been undertaken to raise the canopies of the trees along the bridle path from Green Lane to West Hythe.

Fallen trees are cleared from the paths and their trunks pushed back in to the undergrowth to form habitats and allowed to decompose. Access issues on the south path between Scanlon's Bridge and West Hythe Dam prevents the extraction of timber and as such all debris is cut and stacked in habitat piles in such a way that it does not prevent access along the footpath.

Standing dead trees are retained, where safe to do so, as they provide high value habitat for a wide range of species.

The team based at the Twiss Road Depot are responsible for the day to day management of the RMC and undertake all management responsibilities including the cutting back of encroaching vegetation.

We are not currently aware of any issues whereby users are prevented access due to overgrown vegetation.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Are there any plans to re-introduce the green gym crew, who were involved in cutting back greenery, helping to enhance the views of Hythe Canal?

**ANSWER:**

I was not aware of the green gym gang, but will investigate and provide a written response.

**2. From Councillor Mrs Berry to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

As the Housing minister Kit Malthouse has told councils that they risk losing planning control if they fail to meet house building targets. If they drop below 85% of delivery they have to use an action plan. If they drop below 25% of delivery the government will take it out of their hands. Can Cllr Monk tell us what our % of the districts house building schedule we are on at present?

**ANSWER:**

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) introduces a new housing delivery test for English local planning authorities, to start in November 2018. To be updated every November, the test measures an authority's homes delivery record against its local housing requirement over the previous three years. The test requirements remain unchanged from the proposals published in March's draft version of the revised framework. The method for calculating the test results is set out in a "measurement handbook" published alongside the revised framework.

The new framework imposes the presumption in favour of sustainable development where the housing delivery test indicates that delivery of housing has been "substantially" below the housing requirement over the previous three years. This is defined as being below 75 per cent of the requirement. The framework explains that this would come into effect after transitional arrangements have ended in 2020. For the November 2018 delivery figures, the presumption in favour of sustainable development would apply where less than 25 per cent of the requirement has been delivered in the local authority area over the previous three years, rising to 45 per cent in 2019 and 75 per cent in 2020.

The NPPF states that if less than 95 per cent of the housing requirement has been delivered over the three-year period, the authority should prepare and publish an action plan to assess the causes of under-delivery and identify actions to increase delivery. Where less than 85 per cent of the requirement has been delivered, a 20 per cent buffer for under-delivery would be triggered. The government is set to implement the housing delivery test from the day following the publication of the housing delivery test results in November 2018. At the time of writing this clarification is still awaited, but a piece of research carried out by a leading Planning Consultancy ahead of the release of government information has suggested the District Council will pass the Housing Delivery Test in November 2018, i.e. be able to demonstrate a delivery rate of housing greater than 95% of its requirement.

**THERE WAS NO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION.**

**3. From Councillor Mrs Berry to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

Can Cllr Monk tell us what is happening to the repairs notice that is apparently being drawn up to serve on Church gate, and what is happening to the Building project as a whole?

**ANSWER:**

A report is being prepared for Planning & Licensing Committee on 18th December 2018 seeking authority to issue the Repairs Notice. The preparatory work includes specialist detailed input from the Council's appointed structural engineers, surveyors and listed building consultant following site inspections of the building's condition to identify essential repair works.

In terms of the development project as a whole, as of April 2018 both the planning permission and listed building consent for the change of use and conversion of the Leas Pavilion and the erection of flats on the site have expired. Planning officers have been working on safeguarding the building, which has included the serving of an Urgent Works Notice and has seen areas of failure to the main roof repaired and propping added to the front elevation of the building as a temporary solution to structural deterioration.

**THERE WAS NO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION.**

**4. From Councillor Peacock to Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities**

How is the Council helping to reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour in the district?

**ANSWER:**

Reducing the impact of anti-social behaviour is a corporate priority for the Council and we continue to work closely with partner agencies, including Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS).

The Council hosts a weekly Community Safety Unit meeting attended by a range of partners, who work together to actively tackle anti-social behaviour and environmental crime affecting the community.

It recently initiated two new multi-agency initiatives, Op Ariel and Op Lion. Op Ariel provides a high visibility presence of partners, including Folkestone & Hythe District Council, Kent Police, Children's Services, KRFS and the Forward Trust, who come together to undertake engagement with the community and businesses, helping to support and signpost vulnerable people to local services. Together, partners enforce against anti-social behaviour (ASB) using the Public Spaces Protection Order, providing warnings and serving enforcement notices to help tackle the negative impact ASB can have.

OP Lion covers targeted areas within the district linked to hotspot areas of high crime and ASB. This is a task force approach where partners work together, undertaking local door knocks to find out the needs and concerns of

residents in their local area. Any information shared is passed to the relevant agencies, often actioned on the day and referrals such as crime, housing or safeguarding concerns are taken as appropriate.

The Council continues to support local services, providing grant funding to Citizens Advice, Urban Pastors, Mediation and many other local agencies and community groups, as well as supporting the delivery of young persons and school-based projects such as Shape, Safety in Action and an Annual Youth Conference.

More recently, the Council has launched its public consultation on its revised Public Spaces Protection Order, proposing 7 new measures to help tackle ASB and an increase in its geographical reach across the district to include Hythe, Hawkinge and Lydd amongst others.

The proposed PSPO was not designed to target the homeless. A recent overnight count showed that the council was the lowest district for homelessness in Kent. I wish to thank the officers for their hard work.

**THERE WAS NO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION.**

**5. From Councillor Mrs Wheeler to Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities**

Does the Council have any involvement in supporting the Armed Forces in the district and what has been delivered over the past 12 months?

**ANSWER:**

Over the last 12 months the AF champion and AF lead officer have worked together as advocates for the AF community both within council and with external partners. The AF community includes serving personnel, reservists, veterans and their families.

Our work with the Gurkha Community in Cheriton contributed to the Customer Service Excellence compliance plus awards this year which recognises that we are going above and beyond what is expected of us in that particular discipline.

Other areas where the council has supported the AF community are:

**Royal Gurkha Rifles**

We have built excellent relationship with 1RGR since they relocated here from Brunei in summer 2017. Specifically we have:

- supported 1RGR with the move to Shorncliffe
- addressed concerns around military families being targets for break-ins (CCTV)
- attended the 1RGR Family Information day 6<sup>th</sup> September 2017 to provide information on council services
- supported the Gurkha Soldiers Christmas party in 2017 (and been invited back this year)

- helped to organise the Family Health Fair event on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2018 and funded the Health Check bus
- and we are currently organising an Education Briefing for the soldiers to be held 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018

**To build our knowledge and networks we attended the following events and training:**

- Armed Forces Champions and Covenant Officers Training events
- Kent & Medway Civilian Military Partnership Board meetings (twice a year)
- Met with AF lead officers from East Kent authorities
- The 5<sup>th</sup> K&M Civilian Military Covenant Conference
- The SERFCA awards ceremony and Army Engagement event in Dover
- Participated in a workshop on development of a Nepalese Healthcare Toolkit

**To support the Armed Forces community, the council has:**

- Organised the venue for the **4<sup>th</sup> Annual Kent & Medway Civilian Military Covenant Conference** at the LCH in March 2017
- Helped to organise a veteran support event at Dungeness in partnership with RBLi in November 2017
- Organised Armed Forces Network Mental Health First Aid training for staff and partners at the Civic Centre in June 2018
- Provided a venue for a Nepalese Mental Health workshop at Civic Centre in September 2018
- Held the Armed Forces Day flag raising ceremony at Civic Centre on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2018
- Held a Staff Dress Down Day to raise funds for a Veterans lunch on Remembrance Day 2017
- Organised a BBQ for the Nepalese Veterans in the Coastal Park as a thank you for all their help in carrying out over 20 litter picks in the last few years.

**Other support provided includes:**

- supported Covenant grant application from Nepalese community for laptops which was successful
- facilitated the refurbishment of Shepway Cross War Memorial
- donated Free Use Days (FUDs) at the LCH for Folkestone Town Council Armed Forces Day event 2017, The Gurkha Memorial Fund Dinner Dance, Youth Festival of Remembrance in 2017 and 2018
- Community chest grants for Armed Forces related community groups including Folkestone & Hythe Cadets, KMCF and Kent Military Community Choir and the Shorncliffe Nursery

**The council ran a grant scheme to support local projects to mark the centenary of the end of WW1.**

The WW1 grant scheme funded 17 local projects to an amount of £46k including:

- Step Short WW1 event on the Leas in July 2018
- Refurbishment of Hythe War Memorial
- Battles Over events across the district
- There But Not There installations

### **Forces Employer**

To demonstrate that we are a Forces Friendly employer, we applied for and were awarded the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Bronze Award (see appendix)

We have also started a networking group with staff who are members of the AF community.

### **Ongoing Communications**

- Maintaining the AF pages on our website with relevant information
- Signposting veterans to relevant agencies and providing advice to agencies on various ways to reach out to the AF community
- Dealing with individual cases referred from outside agencies (eg DWP) and internal (eg telephone translation service for Nepalese customer at reception).
- Unfortunately, the Drop In service run by SSAFA has ceased due to a change in the way the service operates but we have put in place a referral form system to replace it

### **Policy**

We have adopted the Veterans Funerals and Bereavement Support policy (see attached)

We continue to monitor and review the Council's Policies to ensure that they are fully in line with the requirements of the Armed Forces Covenant and best practice.

### **Possible Actions for 2019/20**

- Forces Connect SE training for customer facing staff (f2f and e-learning) and members
- 3Pw'RR (Reserves) presentation to council staff
- Explore using RBLi factory as our preferred supplier for our street signs and other signage requirements
- Continue to champion the Armed Forces community with regard to future developments eg discounts at new leisure centre and facilities for disabled veterans, housing for veterans
- Explore introducing a guaranteed interview scheme for ex Armed Forces if they meet basic criteria for suitable job vacancies
- Apply for Silver DERS award

I would like to pass my thanks to Alex Sansom for all her work with the armed forces.

**THERE WAS NO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION.**

## **6. From Councillor Mrs Lawes to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

At the Core Strategy review brought to Overview and Scrutiny committee on 13 November 2018, I asked why there was no plans for the older people in the District and got no reply.

So I will ask again, where do older people fit into the district now and in the future?

**ANSWER:**

The Core Strategy Review acknowledges that the Folkestone and Hythe district has a comparatively higher elderly population, with the added appeal of the coast to retirees providing a continued attraction. The council's planning strategy needs to follow national policy set by the National Planning Policy Framework and will help ensure the choice of good-quality residential accommodation is maximised within individual neighbourhoods and villages, with a mix of housing size, type and tenure, whilst assisting in meeting the essential needs of vulnerable local social groups and providing more properties that allow people to remain living independently.

The Core Strategy Review includes provision for homes for the elderly as part of the new garden settlement in Policy SS6 and also as part of the amended policy for Sellindge in CSD9. Facilities for the elderly are also included as part of policy SS8 for the new garden settlement. These developments form the majority of all development over the Core Strategy Review plan period. The emerging Places and Policies Local Plan will also apply to all developments when it is adopted. Policy HB3 of the Places and Policies Local Plan requires a minimum of 20% of major new build developments to meet accessible and adaptable homes standards to allow people to remain in their homes and adapt them as they get older.

The Council's Healthier Housing Strategy sets out the Council's commitment to help older people to access appropriate accommodation in the community and to enable them to continue to live independently. The Council is also committed to exploring the options for delivering a further extra care housing scheme in the district to provide for the needs of older people with higher levels of support needs.

To support the Council's planning and housing policies, we continue to work with Kent County Council, who have statutory responsibility to fund people who are eligible for care services, alongside oversight of the 'Kent Accommodation Strategy for Adult Social Care', which provides the strategic direction for adult social care, including older persons supported accommodation. The development of this Accommodation Strategy complements the district's housing strategy, ensuring all future provision, including older persons supported accommodation, is delivered, co-ordinated, mapped and sustainable.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Does the Council plan on building new homes? Care homes are closing and services for elderly are poor.

**ANSWER:**

I have already answered your question in my earlier response.

- 7. From Councillor Mrs Lawes to Councillor Mrs Ann Berry, Cabinet Member for Transport**

I have spoken to Stagecoach Buses about reinstating buses to Holland Avenue, which were withdrawn in the June service cuts at Stagecoach buses. They say, they cannot run buses because of parked cars. I had also asked the question at the QBP meeting on 24 August at FHDC.

Can you tell me what, if anything, is being done to control parking within Holland Avenue in order to restore bus services, that would alleviate the hardship and isolation these vulnerable people are suffering?

**ANSWER:**

Stagecoach are going to work out if costs are feasible to reinstate the service to Hollands Avenue. If it is, they will give us details of proposed timetables so that FHDC can work out potential parking restriction requirements to minimise disruption to residents, whilst still allowing the buses to manoeuvre. FHDC can then present proposals either to JTB or directly to the Cabinet Member for Transportation to agree the public consultation.

Letter drops will be arranged by KCC/Stagecoach to advise residents that if problems persist, the service will be withdrawn completely.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Is it correct that FHDC will look into the problem?

**ANSWER:**

Yes, the council were looking at the problem, but Stagecoach wanted to ensure that the route was viable. If residents continued to park incorrectly, bus drivers were forced to make an illegal move. Stagecoach were looking at costs, and FHDC would follow up this issue with them.

**8. From Councillor Mrs Sacre to Councillor Goddard, Chairman of the Planning and Licensing Committee**

I am in communication with Moat Homes Ltd which has continued for over 2 years vis a vis their properties in Pilgrim Spring. I have voiced my concern for consideration to be given when rebuilding on the site of the high rise flats which are at present being demolished, as there is a natural water spring in very close proximity to the site. It would appear to be the cause of the flats being made uninhabitable due to severe damp. How may we ensure any future residential development on this site is constructed with sensitivity to the natural water spring (a wildlife area was originally planned by Moat), or a reservoir to serve our local community?

**ANSWER:**

This is a matter that will be dealt with through the planning application for any redevelopment of the site.

The Council is aware that Moat Homes are currently demolishing its existing housing stock on the Pilgrim Spring site. Any future redevelopment of the site, would be considered and dealt with through the planning application process.

**THERE WAS NO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION.**

**9. From Councillor Mrs Sacre to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

While working for the probation service, in a former life, I visited Council house tenants, the salt of the earth indeed; however, it has come to my notice that our strategy of mixed housing is not socially beneficial. There is an acceptable divide between local authority tenants/affordable home owners/professional business families and wealthy residents. Much disharmony is resulting from living in close proximity to one another, which is having a disturbing negative impact on our communities. Can we readdress our planning strategy thus for our part, addressing any possible cause of social disharmony (this may be a suitable topic for Overview and Scrutiny to consider)?

**ANSWER:**

National research carried out in 2016 by the NHBC Foundation (the research arm of the National House-Building Council), with Homes England found that pepper-potting good-quality social units throughout a mixed-tenure scheme – rather than segregating social and private homes – does not reduce property prices and also improves an area’s social cohesion. Researchers found that developments which separate social and private housing suffer from higher rates of “negative feelings and division”. They also found that high levels of privately rented properties can damage community cohesion because of the faster turnover of residents and poor maintenance record of absentee landlords. The research further showed that the assumption that people of different economic or social status should be housed in separate locations had led to extensive problems of deprivation and social exclusion on ‘sink’ estates.

The council’s planning strategy needs to follow national policy set by the National Planning Policy Framework. This contains a section on ‘Promoting healthy and safe communities’ which sets out that planning policies should “promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments ... connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages”. The expectation of national policy is that affordable housing should be provided on site with developments for market homes, unless off-site provision can be robustly justified and it would help create mixed and balanced communities.

The Council’s planning and housing policies support that house builders and social landlords should consider a wider range of house types and sizes to stabilise neighbourhoods, which in turn helps encourage tenants to buy, or those in apartments to move into family housing without leaving the area. Careful planning and good design continues to ensure the creation of successful communities, where integrated housing helps to increase social cohesion and does not negatively affect house prices when associated with good standards.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Could the ward Councillor for Hawkinge look into this more deeply?

**ANSWER:**

No, we reject that proposition.

**10. From Councillor Meyers to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

I have been informed that the review of the Emergency plan has now been completed and it is ready to go to the Corporate Leadership team. When it does may I request that specific attention is paid to the emergency escape route from Dymchurch in the event of inundation or other disaster? The route follows the Eastbridge road which has been reduced to a single lane in places because it has collapsed into the drainage dyke and I would ask Folkestone & Hythe District council bring pressure to bear on KCC and Highways to effect repairs expediently.

**ANSWER:**

The road network is overseen by Kent County Council. The Emergency Planning Officer put the question regarding the emergency escape route from Dymchurch to the District Manager and the following response was received:-

I appreciate the views that have been expressed about the status of this road, but it is in the end a C class, minor road which is similar to many roads across the county that may be used as diversion routes. In prioritising our finite resource on road maintenance, we use a combination of road classification, maintenance hierarchy and local needs. Given contracting resource over recent years, we have found it increasingly difficult to resource addressing failures like this one. It is difficult to see that getting any better given when we know about future reductions in Government grant.

We have and continue to monitor Eastbridge Road and can confirm for the past 30 months there has been no significant movement in the embankment.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Is there any alternative to give residents reassurance that we can get the repairs done, if not expediently?

**ANSWER:**

I will use my endeavours, along with KCC's to see if I can influence this situation.