

**Full Council – 18 December 2019**

**Councillor questions:**

**1. From Councillor Keen to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

The beach huts as we know are going to be given a face lift in 2020 could you please explain why (unless work is going to be started on the 5th Jan) the tenants are being rushed to move their possessions out? A stay of execution was requested and each and everyone of these long term tenants have been refused extra time. Making it very difficult for them at this time of year. Would it really hurt us as a council to give the tenants extra time despite their lease running out.

**ANSWER:**

The leases of the beach chalets come to an end on 4th January 2020. The project to refurbish and replace the chalets is scheduled to commence in the first quarter of 2020. Therefore regaining vacant possession of the chalets in January at the expiry of the 52 chalet leases provides the Council with the certainty it needs to progress the project as soon as it is able to at the start of the year. Otherwise the Council would need to negotiate new leases for the tenants for a short space of time only until the works commence. This would not be practical, would be an inefficient use of time and resources, and could potentially lead to project delays. Tenants have been asked to contact the Council through [beach.chalets@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:beach.chalets@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk) if they have any queries over vacating their premises on time. To date, numerous queries have been received and in some instances tenants have been granted additional time at the start of January during which they can remove all of their chalet possessions.”

**THERE WAS NO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION.**

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

Could you explain to us why there is only a Conservative member on the Community Safety Committee surely now there is an opposition there should be members from all political parties? Community safety and the issues faced by our constituents are an issue for all of us and therefore our voice to should be heard.

**ANSWER:**

The Community Safety Unit (CSU) meets weekly as a confidential meeting of key partners.

The CSU is the delivery arm of the statutory Folkestone & Hythe Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

Cllr Hollingsbee attends as the Council's lead for Community Safety and as part of her portfolio holder functions. There are other requirements that mean the

portfolio holder is required to be fully sighted on matters being addressed by the CSP and the CSU.

The information shared at CSU is highly confidential & shared on a need to know basis & with key partners in order to meet the Kent & Medway Information Sharing Protocol

As the Portfolio Holder Cllr Hollingsbee has a number of key roles that mean she needs to be fully sighted on both CSU and CSP matters. These include the needs to liaise with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) when the PCC asks for views on matters from portfolio holders as well as attendance at key meetings eg The Police and Crime Panel.

There are many ways on which members can share their voice on community safety matters some of which are listed below:

- Raise matters direct with the portfolio holder
- Be involved in key residents / neighbourhood meetings – Cllr drop in sessions have been arranged first one being 9<sup>th</sup> January. Also Local Engagement meetings (LEMs) are being set up for all wards.
- Report issues either through 101 or online
- Utilise the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that acts as the Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny once a year and hears of the Community Safety Plan, priorities and other key issues.

### **THERE WAS NO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION.**

#### **3. From Councillor Davison to Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities**

The monthly one stop shop in Lydd which supports people experiencing domestic violence is currently suspended and the weekly Folkestone service is turning people away because of a shortage of professionals. Please can you give a commitment that as a council we will do everything we can to ensure these services are properly funded and supported to make sure people who desperately need help in our local community get it?

#### **ANSWER:**

We are aware the monthly One Stop Shop (OSS) for Lydd is currently suspended and this is due to a shortage in the availability of professionals from ALL services, excluding HomeStart who coordinate and run OSS for our district.

The Folkestone OSS has at times had to turn clients away. We agree that as a Council this is not acceptable as a form of support for victims of Domestic Abuse in our district and have been liaising with HomeStart. All OSS's are run as an add on to all professionals days jobs and does require the commitment from services for their staff to attend.

Our Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has addressed this previously and it is an agenda item for our full CSP meeting in January where we will be again

asking all services to provide professionals to attend the OSS along with a backup, where resources permit.

As a Council we are very committed to support all domestic abuse services in the district. We currently commission the OSS through our Police and Crime Commissioner Community Safety funds. These funds provide the HomeStart support worker to run the OSS as well as the printing of all OSS posters and OSS DA cards. The funding also includes the collation of all information and statistics which are provided to us for our Strategic Assessment and forms the basis of the yearly Community Safety Partnership Plan as well as to the overall Kent & Medway DA group. We also fund along with the other districts the Rising Sun IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor).

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

I'm pleased to hear that it is an item for the CSP meeting in January. It would be helpful to receive a report back following this discussion?

**ANSWER:**

I'm sure I can confirm that a report will come back to you.

**4. From Councillor Davison to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

Saving our planet is the most urgent issue we face. What practical steps has the leadership of the district council taken since we declared a climate emergency in July 2019?

**ANSWER:**

The Climate Emergency and Ecological Emergency Working Group, formed of councillors from each political group plus the independent member met on the 18<sup>th</sup> October. A range of topics including the council's own working practices and how we might work with the community were discussed. The group also raised a number of initial ideas and potential actions regarding issues such as energy use, transport, tree planting, flooding and new housing development. These actions are currently being researched. The next meeting of the working group is scheduled for 7<sup>th</sup> January where those action points will be discussed along with the production of both an action plan and a long term Climate Change Strategy.

An officer has also been seconded to work specifically with the working party and to drive forward work on the action plan and the long term strategy. We will also work with a wide range of organisations including the County Council to progress this work.

The Council has also been undertaking a number of actions and these include:

- Working with KCC to provide charging points for electrical vehicles in the district including one at the Civic Centre.
- The production of a Green Infrastructure Strategy to mitigate and improve the resilience of the District's environment to climate change.

- We plant around 100 semi-mature trees a year with focus on broad canopy trees for carbon uptake.
- Working with staff to review the Civic Centre's recycling (this includes tenants as well as the Council) and staff transport – e.g. there is a cycling to work scheme. Staff have also taken part in K.C.C.'s activmob survey which encourages non car travel to work.
- Planting wildflower meadows and managing land to promote biodiversity e.g. churchyards.
- Reducing strimmer and pesticide application around trees and obstacles where suitable.
- Following Full Council's resolution to move to being pesticide free officers have met with members to discuss trialling alternatives to pesticides. The scope of this is being worked on in the New Year and will be reported to the working group in the spring.
- Rural grass verges on the Marsh are now managed for wildlife only being cut on one occasion per year.
- Battery operated grounds maintenance equipment being purchased where suitable to replace petrol powered equipment.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Are you looking at convening a citizen's assembly to discuss these issues?

**ANSWER:**

I am sure the Committee will take this suggestion on board and consider this idea.

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

Are you aware of the Hope bus project and can we bring one to Folkestone, where homelessness has doubled since 2010?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question, firstly it is not true that rough sleepers in Folkestone and Hythe District have doubled since 2010. Our records show that there were 9 in 2010 and as you heard earlier there were 10 in the November count. We continue to strive to reduce this number.

I am aware of the recently launched HOPE scheme in South Wales, which, has converted a double decker bus to provide temporary accommodation for up to 12 people. I understand this project was set up and run by volunteers and wish it every success, sadly a similar project set up by volunteers in Portsmouth suffered repeat vandalism and their bus has been passed to Sussex Homeless

support in Brighton. I sincerely hope that both the Newport and Brighton schemes do not suffer the same abuse and will be interested in the outcomes.

We should of course look at all solutions to prevent homelessness and this Council recognises the importance of providing emergency accommodation for people sleeping rough in the District. Members will be aware that through the commitment of local volunteers and funding from a range of partners, including the Council, the Folkestone Churches Winter shelter provides accommodation for 13 homeless people each night during the winter period.(referring to an earlier public question the head count was 10 on 19th November) We are also working in partnership with Sanctuary Housing and Porchlight to provide an outreach service to engage with people who are rough sleeping in the district, enabling them to access housing and support services so that they are able to move to a more settled way of life. Over the last year, the outreach service has helped a number of people to access accommodation and support, while we are also assisting the Folkestone Rainbow Centre to move people on from the winter shelter into settled housing. . Going forward it is vital that we work closely with our partners to monitor the services that we are providing in the district to ensure that they are as effective as possible in prevention and reduction of the numbers of people sleeping rough in the District, including people who are the most entrenched rough sleepers.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

What practical steps will we take to address this emergency?

**ANSWER:**

I have already clarified the practical steps we are taking with partners in my answer. We will wait to see if the Hope bus project is a success, and if you have any further suggestions in the meantime, I would be happy to hear them and take them forward.

**6. From Councillor McConville to Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Special Projects**

In light of the decision to remove the tenant representatives from the EKH board, how will tenants now have a role in the governance of their own housing?

**ANSWER:**

In view of the findings of the independent Pennington Report, the Council and its East Kent Council partners have taken urgent action to take direct control of EKH, including dismissing all members of the EKH Board. We remain fully committed to working with and communicating with tenants, leaseholders and the staff at EKH in order to improve services and to further progress the compliance works that are being completed across the Council's housing stock. Going forward, Tenants and Leaseholders, including the Shepway Tenants and Leaseholders Board will continue to be central to the Council's Housing Service.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

I would hope for further communications on this matter?

**ANSWER:**

Of course, I am happy to work together on this issue.