

Council – 21 June 2023

Councillor Questions:

1. From Councillor Meade to Councillor Speakman, Cabinet Member for Assets and Operations

During Summer months we find the Stade and the Leas literally drowning in litter. I previously requested that extra bins and collections take place but could the Cabinet Member please look at arranging extra litter enforcement officers to patrol during the areas busiest times please?

ANSWER:

Thank you for your question.

As a resident who lives near to the promenade, I am personally interested in how it looks, the level of service we receive from the contractors and minimising impact of litter on the wider environment.

In answer to your question about extra litter enforcement, I know that the Environmental Enforcement Officers are already deployed over the summer weekends and additional staff have been employed. I will certainly discuss where these patrols take place and if there can be more focus on the harbour.

Looking forward to the summer, I will continue to be working closely with officers to ensure that the contract is robustly monitored and where we can redeploy resources to meet seasonal demands this will done. I would also emphasise our regular public messaging and signage that if a litter bin is full to please take your litter home.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Going forward with your conversations with Veolia, can we look at increased litter pick ups as well from the bins? We are seeing visitors bring black sacks with them, and just dumping them next to the litter bins rather than taking them home. It can look like Armageddon sometimes after an event.

ANSWER:

The weekend before last, I went around first thing in the morning and it looked like a bomb site. I totally accept what you are saying, and I don't like it any more than you do, and we are looking closely at the tracking information to check that collections are happening later in the evenings as they should be.

2. From Councillor Meade to Councillor P Blakemore, Cabinet Member for Transport, Regulatory Services and Building Control

Some areas of the district seem to be becoming the dog poo capital of Kent. Can the new cabinet member please look into launching a strong public

campaign reminding the admittedly small number of irresponsible dog owners who do not clear up after their pets, of the dangers to children from dog mess and that in fact it is a finable offence?

ANSWER:

Thank you for your question.

As a responsible dog owner, I agree wholeheartedly that dog fouling is completely unacceptable, a potential hazard to health and offenders should be held to account.

In terms of action on this issue, I know that last year the council updated and renewed its Dog Control Public Space Protection Order. This is enforced through patrolling by the Environmental Enforcement Team. The council has also previously conducted publicity campaigns around dog fouling and indeed a new campaign 'Paws for Thought' is launching this week and the Enforcement Team will be running an event on Sunny Sands on Friday to publicise the campaign. Rest assured, I will be working with the Regulatory Services Team to keep attention on this issue and to make sure irresponsible dog owners have no excuse for dog fouling.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Could we spread the word in schools as well? Children will report back to their parents too. It's not just the beaches, it's alleyways where children walk to school. Any work you can do will be gratefully received.

ANSWER:

I completely understand it's important to get the message across to young people. The Enforcement Team have shared with me that it won't just be beaches but other hot spots in the district to spread the message. I will make sure it is particularly aimed at young people.

3. From Councillor Meade to Councillor J Martin, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Otterpool Park and Planning Policy

Now that Princes Parade has been saved from development can we please have an update on actions, in particular when the hideous hoardings will be removed?

ANSWER:

Councillor Meade, thank you for your very current and important question, and as you know, it's a topic close to my heart.

Following the ground investigations carried out for the Princes Parade development, the council now have a better understanding of the contamination present within the buried landfill material. As such, the site

cannot be simply reopened to the public, as the council has a duty of care to protect residents and visitors to Princes Parade from coming into direct contact with the contaminants.

At this time, I can give you no definitive date for the removal of the hoarding can be given. Officers will present a report to Cabinet in July outlining the resources required to establish what work the council needs to undertake to make the site safe and remove the hoarding. Please note that, I am counting the days.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Can we work with local schools and consult young people, given then an opportunity to contribute ideas for what they would like to see on Princes Parade?

ANSWER:

Yes, yes, and yes to your three questions. The paper that I refer to will also include next steps in terms of opening the consultation for a potential park land and open space. I'm reluctant to say the word 'park' because that very much depends on the density of the contaminates in particular areas. Certainly rewilding, open space, and the key thing is to get views across the space, so we will get the hoardings down and replace with a lower level fence, so that people can see across the site.

4. **From Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee to Councillor J Martin, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Otterpool Park and Planning Policy**

As Labour Group Members now hold Chairman of the Council, chair and Vice Chair of Planning and Licensing, chair of Audit & Governance and Chair of Personnel, and Cabinet is made up of Greens and Lib Dems, could you please tell us who is running this administration?

ANSWER:

Thank you for your excellent question Councillor Hollingsbee. My simple answer to your question, who is running this administration? The answer is emphatically me! I do so however, with the great support of my deputy leader Councillor Prater, my coalition cabinet and with the cooperation of our friends in the Labour group. For too long party politics has got in the way of efficient running of this Council. I hope to begin an era of more inclusive cooperative politics.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

So, is this a three colour coalition?

ANSWER

Sadly, this is a two colour coalition. However, you will see later on the agenda, Councillor Prater is proposing a motion to move to a Committee system of governance, which again reinforces my hope and ambition for a more inclusive kind of politics.

5. **From Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee to Councillor J Martin, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Otterpool Park and Planning Policy**

On 4 April 2023, all opposition party members at the time (Green, Lib Dem and Labour) voted against the Otterpool Park new Garden Town planning application. Will this project go ahead or will this be cancelled like Princes Parade?

ANSWER:

Another excellent question, thank you Councillor Hollingsbee. I was indeed, one of the Councillors who voted against the grant of planning permission for Otterpool Park but you will recall from what I said at the committee meeting, the Otterpool Park garden village should be greener, more sustainable and have greater bio diversity. It now falls to me to deliver what I clearly stated at the committee meeting, and that is my intention. It is impossible to cancel Otterpool Park. If the land was sold, it would be sold with planning permission for 8,500 homes and would almost inevitably be developed by others. If we retained the land and chose not to develop it, the Council would be so far in debt we would be bankrupt, like Woking or Croydon.

This administration is fully committed to transparency and scrutiny for all key decisions as Otterpool Park moves into its delivery phase. We will ensure that Members are able to take fully informed decisions and work proactively with Otterpool Park LLP, partners and stakeholders to deliver a high-quality new garden village of which we can all be proud.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Can I ask that this be done at pace, and there is not delay after delay which will increase costs and make it unaffordable?

ANSWER:

I can state that half of every day that I've spent as Leader has been involving discussions on Otterpool Park. There are multiple decisions to be made. There are areas that need to be accelerated and where actions need to be taken, and I will do my utmost to move these things forward as quickly as I can.

6. **From Councillor Cooper to Councillor J Martin, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Otterpool Park and Planning Policy**

Will the council work with me to address the eyesore which is the former Sands Motel on A259 in St Marys Bay, including potential options for

enforcement and/or compulsory purchase; as well as other any other action needed to bring the land back into use for the benefit of the whole community, visitors to the Marsh and to improve its visual impact?

ANSWER:

Thank you Councillor Cooper for your question. I have huge sympathy for local residents who rightly want the site finished and adding value to the St Mary's Bay area. The situation at the site of the former Sands Motel is very unfortunate and I am happy to further explore with officers what options are open to the council. Having had initial discussions with officers it is however clear that the issues involved are complex and need careful thought. I will provide an update for you as soon as possible, in consultation with you, and following further consideration by officers.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

None.