

Full Council – 22 February 2017

Councillor questions:

1. **By Councillor Mrs Claire Jeffrey to Councillor Alan Ewart-James, Cabinet Member for Housing**

"How is SDC dealing with homelessness and working to prevent it?"

ANSWER:

The Housing Options team are working to prevent homelessness in a number of ways;

- Negotiate with landlords to enable customers to remain
- Liaised with housing benefits where this was not being paid in full or not in payment at all
- Maintain regular contact with customers
- Make contact with customers as soon as we become aware of properties that may become available that may be suitable for their needs.
- Complete personal budget forms to establish affordability and refer to agencies that can support with eg debt management, budgeting
- Pay off arrears where households have accrued arrears through no fault of their own and landlords are prepared to give them a new 12 month tenancy.
- Attending domestic abuse drop in service
- Liaison and signposting to the voluntary sector

The Housing Options Team had been restructured in July 2016. Since then, homelessness prevention had occurred for 260 households presenting as homeless.

Our Prevention Officers are making contact with customers who are served notice or who are threatened with homelessness within an average of 4 working days to discuss their housing situation and their options, offering advice and assistance and preparing personal housing plans with all information and advice offered.

Our Housing Options Officers carry out homeless assessments giving customers their options with advice and information that enables them to make informed decisions about how they would like to proceed. They also prevent homelessness where ever possible but most of their customers complete homeless applications and require temporary accommodation.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

What were the councils long term plans to continue to alleviate homelessness?

ANSWER:

The Housing Accommodation Officers are actively liaising with landlords to try and increase the number of properties that can be made available to sign post our customers to who may need to secure alternative accommodation in the private

rented sector. The team is currently developing a landlord task group to work with landlords to assist with issues with tenants and also to procure more properties.

The Social Lettings Agency provides an avenue where we can discharge our homeless duty and also prevent customers from becoming homeless by referring them to our Social Lettings Agency.

The Housing Options team is currently in the process of developing factsheets and advice and information pack to offer to customers that will assist them to be able to self help on a number of housing issues. We are also developing our website.

The Housing Strategy Manager and Housing Options Manager are also looking at how we can procure more suitable temporary and permanent accommodation in the district and are currently reviewing the allocations policy.

2. By Councillor Mrs Mary Lawes to Councillor David Monk, Leader of Council

“How many homes have been built in Hawkinge since 2002? Can you tell me what the population figures for Hawkinge are as of January 2017?”

ANSWER:

Council Tax records indicate that there have been 1,284 new properties in Hawkinge since 2002. This figure includes both residential ‘new build’ and ‘conversions’.

With regard to the population figures the most recent data is the 2015 mid-year estimates. The lowest level this data is produced at is by Ward. Hawkinge falls within the North Downs East Ward, which also includes other settlements such as Elham and Densole. The 2015 mid-year population estimate for the North Downs East Ward is 11,791.

The 2011 Census indicates that the population of the Parish of Hawkinge and Paddlesworth was just over 8,000.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Why had a Secondary School never been built in Hawkinge?

ANSWER:

The building of schools fell within Kent County Council’s remit, and therefore, this question should be directed to them.

3. By Councillor Mrs Mary Lawes to Councillor Stuart Peall, Cabinet Member for Environment

“Given that approval by the cabinet on 19 October 2016 for 2 extra cameras and Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN £300) in lower Dover Road ‘Pilot Scheme was

agreed'. Why have the new measures not been implemented? Should there not be a collaboration of various interested parties including residents and officers to try and come up with a solution that will solve most, if not all the issues affecting the pilot scheme".

ANSWER:

The Dover Road Bin Pilot came about as a result of working very closely with the Dover Road Residents' Associations and other groups. These collaborations resulted in an agreed programme, which has been implemented over the last 2 years and has led to vast improvements across the area. There have been a wide range of interventions that have been put in place.

This work has resulted in:

- Regular collections of waste and reporting of issues
- Daily cleansing
- Regular patrols by Environmental Enforcement Officers
- Ongoing engagement with residents and Businesses
- Installation of bins at key locations
- Trial of different types of bins to encourage recycling
- S46 Letters and education advise stepped up
- Immediate reporting of issues and cleansing and Large items are collected daily as/when required
- Specifically where 133 Dover Rd was an issue a new bin has been installed and this has pleased residents and commercial owners alike. Where bags were being dumped outside 133 Dover Road (the ex ambulance hall) a 660lt bin has been provided for waste collections on a weekly basis as there are 6 flats in this building and to provide bins for them all to recycle would mean 12 bins outside. Therefore the decision to do one medium size bin for collections weekly will cover their need and hopefully reduce the need for them to leave bags at any given time. They were all given an educational/warning letter as well so a notice can be issued if this carries on. In general the majority of Dover Road has been clear each time an officer has checked it.
- There has been no build up of waste where the camera was installed at Queens Alley
- CCTV cameras are due to go up in the next few weeks there has been a delay in receiving essential information from 3rd parties. However, columns are identified, forms for energy supply are being organised, commando sockets are on order and the installer is arranging dates for mounting cameras.
- OSC received a detailed report on 18th October 2016 outlining costs to date and provision was then made to purchase 2 additional wireless CCTV cameras (£20k was allocated by Cabinet for this additional resource).
- All deposited waste eg fly tipped waste around bins is sifted through to see if there is any evidence for prosecution. Where there have been opportunities for small fly tips enforcement and where a £300 fine could be applied, to date there has been no evidence to trace the owner of

the rubbish which would be required in order for an interview under caution to take place which is an essential part of the enforcement process.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

How often would cameras be monitored?

ANSWER:

The CCTV cameras are monitored by the lifeline team, and if a particular issue was noticed, this would be highlighted for the enforcement process.

4. By Councillor Mrs Mary Lawes to Councillor David Monk, Leader of Council.

“Can you tell me how much it will cost to build the new leisure centre at Princes Parade? How many houses will be needed to be sold in order to 'wash it's face', as quoted in the cabinet meeting on 7 February 2017?”

ANSWER:

At its meeting on 7th February Cabinet decided:

“That, should planning permission be granted, then the full business case and financial appraisal should be considered by Cabinet prior to any building work commencing.”

The questions will be addressed at that time.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

How was the 'wash its face' statement made?

ANSWER:

The costs will not be known until it is clear exactly what is to be built.

5. By Councillor Len Laws to Councillor David Monk, Leader of the Council

“I have been informed by the Head of Planning that no Brownfield Sites Register has been compiled because it is not compulsory . Are there plans in place to produce one for Shepway Council if so when?”

ANSWER:

The District Council is planning to publish a Brownfield Land Register but we are still waiting for guidance from the Government following the pilot schemes that were undertaken last year.

It is still not clear when they will become compulsory but the Government's recent White Paper 'Fixing our Broken Housing Market' indicates that local authorities will need to '...prepare and maintain these ... from this spring'. The District Council will prepare and publish the Brownfield Register as soon as the guidance is made available.

In Councillor Sacre's absence, it was agreed that questions 6, 7 and 8 will be deferred, and a written response provided to Councillor Sacre separately.

6. By Councillor Mrs Carol Sacre to Councillor David Monk, Leader of the Council

"We are very aware of the current pressure on our NHS resources through bed-blocking. Should we in Shepway not play our part and would it surely be beneficial to utilise the original Royal Victoria Hospital in Radnor Park Avenue, Folkestone, which it may be recalled, was funded and built by those citizens local to Folkestone as a hospital. For the present time, to continue to serve Shepway residents as a short term convalescent centre, thereby releasing those much needed Hospital beds at the William Harvey Hospital, the Kent and Canterbury Hospital and Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital?"

ANSWER:

Bed blocking occurs when someone is medically fit to be discharged, but care has not yet been organised to help them outside hospital. Problems at the hospital front door are linked to delays at the back door. In Kent (and across the country), this is because a shortage of Kent County Council (KCC) social care beds has created an 'exit block' in hospitals, meaning patients who no longer need to be in hospital can't be discharged, because there is simply nowhere for them to go.

Kent County Council has the statutory responsibility for adult social care in Kent. However, due to ongoing cuts in spending on adult social care, it means people have to wait longer for home care packages or nursing home places, leading to an increase of hospital bed-blocking.

This current government is pushing for greater integration between the NHS and social care, underlining the importance of joined-up care within the NHS and the dependence of hospitals on well-functioning social care services – particularly for older people living at home. This joint work is being championed locally by the South Kent Coast Health and Wellbeing Board through the development of an Integrated Accountable Commissioning Organisation in partnership between the NHS, KCC Social Care and district/borough councils.

Based on an assessment of local need by the NHS, the Royal Victoria Hospital, Folkestone transformed into a community hospital offering a range of local services, including a minor injuries unit with a walk-in centre, an outpatients department, a specialist gynaecological and urological outpatient department, diagnostic services, and mental health services.

Therefore, to provide a short term convalescent centre would come at a cost and as there is no additional budget for either the NHS or KCC Social Care, who are already buckling under financial constraints, it is difficult to understand how this could be realised in practice.

7. By Councillor Mrs Carol Sacre to Councillor David Monk, Leader of the Council

“Who was and is responsible for the public toilets (which have been closed for some considerable time), located in Folkestone bus station? I have not been given a conclusive response from those parties I felt would have the answer”.

ANSWER:

The toilets at Bouverie Square are part of the Bouverie Place development and are managed by their team.

Planning consent granted for the Bouverie Place retail development (reference Y04/0416/SH) included conditions requiring the provision of public toilets. The condition reads as follows:

Condition 28: The public toilet facilities indicated on the approved drawings shall be constructed and made available for public use in accordance with an agreed management plan, including times of opening, prior to the first public opening of the foodstore unless the Local Planning Authority gives its prior written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure provision of appropriate public toilet facilities in accordance with Shepway District Local Plan policies INT1 and FTC1 and Shepway District Local Plan Review (Revised Deposit Draft) policies INT1 and FTC1.

Bouverie Place Centre management have managed the public toilets and report that they are subject to significant vandalism and misuse. It has resulted in the public toilets having to be closed and repairs being carried out frequently at significant cost. The Centre Management report that there have also been incidences of the toilets having been used for drug taking with the paraphernalia left behind being a significant danger to the public and the Centre’s employees. The toilets are currently closed and the Centre indicate they will be seeking a meeting with the Planning Authority to discuss the situation and find a way forward.

8. By Councillor Mrs Carol Sacre to Councillor David Monk, Leader of the Council

“I understand from Moat Homes Ltd of Dartford, who own the High rise flats in Pilgrim Spring, they will be demolished, (there are 6 remaining families who own their flats). Are you planning to rebuild as a joint venture with Moat Homes Ltd, and possibly Roger de Haan, luxury apartments on that site?”

ANSWER:

The Council has no such plans.