

Full Council – 19 February 2020

Responses to supplementary questions:

Public Questions

1. From Mrs Lawes to Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities

Following a briefing to district councillors in 2016/17 about Community Led Local Developments (CLLD). Now known as Folkestone Community works.

Councillors from the deprived wards of Harbour, East Folkestone and Central were assured that jobs would be created for long term unemployed. With the amount of funding so far distributed from Folkestone Community fund of £2.9 million to a number of New businesses.

Could you let me know how many long term unemployed have gained employment if any, and what type of employment ie: part time, full time or seasonal, zero hours minimum wage?

ANSWER:

Folkestone & Hythe District Council was successful in its bid to the England European Structural and Investment Funds Growth programme 2014 – 2020 to implement Folkestone Community Works (FCW) CLLD Programme and was awarded £2.49 million. This funding is and will be invested through open call projects during the lifetime of Folkestone Community Works. The programme is scheduled to run until December 2022. The Government has confirmed that 'under the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement the UK will continue to participate in the 2014-2020 ERDF Programme in England and other EU programmes until their closure'.

Folkestone Community Works aims to improve social and economic community cohesion in Broadmead, East Folkestone, Central Folkestone and Folkestone Harbour wards by funding projects that:

- Support unemployed and economically inactive residents of these wards on their journey back into the workforce
- Encourage residents to be entrepreneurial
- Support local businesses and start-ups to grow
- Strengthen the local economic base to provide new job opportunities

The programme has currently allocated £519,853 ESF funds to two projects which are currently running in the area. These projects are engaging with over 60 residents and the results so far up to Dec 2019 are that 2 long-term unemployed have moved into employment - 1 person found employment on a zero hour contract (permanent and above minimum wage) though the feedback is they have since been employed by Tesco's on a permanent contract, and 1 person is working regular shifts (above minimum wage) on a zero hour contract. In addition, a further 2 unemployed participants have moved into employment and 9 onto training or education courses. We are

expecting that to the end of 2022, these two projects will have supported over 111 residents into employment. We are planning to have another call for ESF projects to support residents in March 2020 as we have a further £455,147 ESF to allocate to employability projects in the programme.

The local business base is being supported through the several initiatives:

- A local SME Business Grant Scheme has awarded £168,000 of ERDF funding to 13 businesses of which one is classified as a new business i.e. operating for less than a year. A further call for applications is scheduled for the autumn 2020 as we have £281,901 ERDF funding still available for grants.
- Business support is now available to local businesses and start-ups through a project allocated £50,000 ERDF funding. This project is scheduled to support 66 businesses of which 33 will be classified as new. Each business will receive a minimum of 12 hours of free advice, in addition the project will assist 39 local residents who want to be entrepreneurs on to more enterprise ready. We are planning to have another Call for ERDF projects to support business and potential entrepreneurs in March 2020 as we have a further £174,22 ERDF to allocate to business support and entrepreneurial skills.
- A new business centre in the centre of Folkestone has been allocated £420,000 of ERDF funding which will increase the amount of modern office space in Folkestone by over 800sqm. A further £250,000 ERDF funding is to be allocated to support a Community Hub for Enterprise and Employability, once a project has been identified.

The delivery of Folkestone Community Works is overseen by the Folkestone Local Action Group (LAG), which is made up of representatives from the local private, voluntary, community and public sectors. This role includes reviewing applications and making recommendations to the Council on which applications to fund and monitoring the delivery of the programme. At each LAG meeting, members receive a presentation from the Programme Management Team on the delivery of the programme and individual projects.

The progress of funded projects is monitored through visits to them and a project claim process. The project claim process requires the project to report on the project progress, expenditure, and delivery of targets. Under the England European Structural and Investment Funds Growth programme 2014 – 2020 Regulations, projects are reimbursed for expenditure and are required to provide detailed evidence of the participants engaging with the projects and the outcomes. All expenditure is listed on a transaction list line by line with supporting evidence including invoices and bank statements showing defrayal. The Programme Management Team continually supports the funded projects to ensure they are collating the appropriate evidence and their project claims are correct. All project claims are checked and rechecked by the Programme Management Team prior to payment.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Is it possible to break down which wards have had some of the employment, and where they are?

ANSWER:

We do not collect information about the location of the employment or training venue that participants of the programme move in to, but we have information on the wards of residence of the participants themselves and this is as follows. All the long term unemployed participants that went into work are residents of the East Folkestone and Folkestone Harbour wards. Of the unemployed participants, those that went into work are residents of the East Folkestone and Folkestone Central wards and those that went into education and training are residents of East Folkestone and Folkestone Harbour wards.

Councillor questions**2. From Councillor Davison to Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Communities**

Please could the portfolio holder for communities give an update on her work to tackle our GP crisis?

ANSWER:

Firstly, I would say that the shortage of GP's is not a matter that we can control, it is the direct responsibility of NHS South Kent Coast Commissioning Group. However I know how important this issue is to our residents and we are keen to support our GPs. We are regularly engaging with the health sector on this matter and it is an issue that I have raised on many occasions: I did raise it at the last Kent Health & Wellbeing Board. In addition, I have been updated on the East Kent Medical School and the work they will be doing with new Graduate GP'S and Dr Bryant, Lead Clinician of the South Kent Coast CCG is extremely positive about this initiative. The School is currently oversubscribed for the intake in September this year: and from the start of the course, students will spend time out in GP Surgeries. Dr Bryant has said that evidence suggests, Students will remain in the area where they study and as a District there are ways in which we can also encourage students to remain in the area ie housing.

Very recently we addressed the closure of Park Farm surgery and were encouraged that new GP resource is coming into the District - I issued a briefing note on 4th February 2020 after the last Council Meeting, after a meeting the Leader and I had with Dr Bryant, Bill Millar, Director of Primary Care and our MP Damian Collins. Previous closures were also addressed at the time they were announced. The health service has been redesigning its services in order to ensure the most efficient use of GPs and this is also reflected in the note to members. We are also awaiting decisions from Primary Care on the Urgent Treatment Centres which will provide an additional source of care to residents.

Additionally, consultation regularly takes place between our Officers and the CCG with regard to large scale housing development and particularly with regard to Otterpool Park where we are looking at best practice examples for a Health Centre such as the Estuary View medical facility in Whitstable.

With my Officers I will continue to liaise with Dr Bryant and the Health Service.

The note to all members was as follows:

Note for Members on the Closure of Park Farm Surgery – From Councillor Mrs Jenny Hollingsbee

On Friday 31 January 2020 , with the Leader, I met Dr Jonathan Bryant Clinical Lead of the CCG and Bill Millar Director of Primary Care. Our MP, Damian Collins joined us.

Dr Bryant and Bill Millar were keen to inform us that all patients registered at the Park Farm Surgery would have a choice of Surgery to register with locally. They also informed us that they were beginning to recruit new GP's to the area and that Dr Banik will remain in the District.

We emphasised the need to ensure patients were informed as soon as possible and that the more vulnerable patients be supported. We were advised that sessions would be held, probably at Three Hills, to help all patients and to assist with registration. Dates to be announced, probably in the letter to residents. We also suggested that they use Academy FM and BBC Radio Kent to inform patients more widely, in addition to social media and other methods of communication. The District Council will also communicate information as it becomes available through our own channels and Damian Collins will use his weekly newspaper columns to also communicate the information to residents.

The following statement was released by the CCG on 3rd February 2020, which I hope you will find helpful.

Dr Banik has decided to close Park Farm Surgery in Folkestone on 31 March 2020. All of the patients that are registered at Park Farm Surgery will receive a letter from the NHS within the next two weeks explaining how they can register with another local GP practice. The letter will explain the arrangements the NHS has made with six local GP practices so all of Dr Banik's patients will have a choice of local GP practices to register with. The letter will also give details of registration events where patients will be able to register with their chosen GP practice. Even though Park Farm Surgery is closing there will be more appointments at GP surgeries available in Folkestone as all the GP practices will receive additional funding to see Dr Banik's patients when they take on new patients. Patients who don't register with a new GP practice after they receive their letter will receive an additional reminder before the end of March informing them how to register with a new GP practice. If patients don't register with a new GP practice before 31 March 2020, the NHS will allocate them to a local GP practice to make sure every patient currently registered at Park Farm Surgery knows who to contact should they need to make an appointment with a GP practice.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

I'm not sure if the briefing note has been disseminated more widely, to members of the public. Do you have any view on the claim that there are more GPs are

wanting to retire, and does it factor in population changes which mean that the ratio between GPs and the patient is actually lower now than it was previously?

ANSWER:

The CCG will soon be issuing a letter to all patients of Dr Banik setting out how they can register with other doctors, or if they don't register, they will be allocated another doctor. I will request the information on the other points you raised. All I can tell you is that Dr Bryant, I've had to ask him twice to say it, but more GPs are coming to this area.

I have considered your request and am now of the view that your query on GP numbers to patient ratio is one that you must direct to the CCG. The queries you are putting to us are the responsibility of the CCG and not the District Council. This is information that they hold and update and not information that the Council is responsible for.

3. From Councillor Davison to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council

Please could the leader of the council give an update on any work being carried out to prepare the district for the end of the Brexit transition period?

ANSWER:

Officers continue to work with key partners across Kent under the umbrella of the Kent Resilience Forum. Close links are also maintained with central government via MHCLG. The Council has carried out much work recently updating emergency plans and business continuity plans and procedures. These plans will be updated further as the position becomes clearer. Key officers across the council have been identified and training needs have been assessed with training plans in place. The Council has a nominated Brexit Officer who will continue to monitor and cascade information where appropriate. Our Communications Team continue to monitor information coming in and will use social media channels to cascade this information where appropriate. Our Economic Development Team continue to work with businesses across the District to ensure that they are as prepared as they can be. Key Officers are continuing to attend both Strategic and Tactical level meetings concerning contingency planning for any potential disruption across the county. As more information becomes available throughout this year, Officers will inform residents and report to Members.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

What work is being done in relation to food price rises?

ANSWER:

I don't know, but I will find out.

The District Council is not doing any work with regards to food price rises. This is not a District Council function and we would have no influence in such matters.

Officers have contacted the Kent Resilience Forum who have advised:

The issue of increasing food prices was raised before the potential no deal Brexit date of October too. It's on our KRF risk register but because increasing food prices would be a national issue, we would look to Government for mitigations for this. As far as I'm aware, nothing has been announced to date.