

**Councillor questions:**

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

Local residents are naturally very concerned about the discharge of sewage into the sea around our coastline. Will you please invite Southern Water to give a briefing to all members of this council to set out what steps they are taking to avoid this happening in the future?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question Councillor Whybrow. As you are the Cabinet Member for the Environment and therefore the relevant Portfolio Holder, you may request that a Member Briefing be held and ask officers to assist you with arrangements. A further option would be to submit your suggestion as an item on the future Scrutiny work plan.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

None.

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

The Environment Agency have objected to planning application ref 21/1997/FH regarding the storm water outfall pipes for Princes Parade. They have also pointed out that a flood risk activity permit will be required and that this is unlikely to be granted for the current proposal. What are the implications of this for the Princes Parade project?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you Councillor Whybrow for your question. I am aware of the objection from the Environment Agency. However much of this relates to the need for further information. Our technical team are working with the Environment Agency in order to provide that information and we believe that this will be sufficient to satisfy their concerns. Of course planning permission has already been agreed for the discharge of the water into the canal. However this is not our preferred approach, nor do I believe it is the councillors preferred approach. I hope she will be encouraging her colleagues to support the discharge into the sea which is by far the most favourable solution.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

The Leader's answer only related to the objections of the Environment Agency, my question also related to the flood risk activity permit, could you please comment on that?

**ANSWER:**

The situation is ongoing and I believe it will be resolved.

**3. From Councillor Shoob to Councillor Wimble, Cabinet Member for the District Economy**

The Council recently announced "free" car parking in the lead up to Christmas. How is waiving charges for car parking compatible with the climate emergency?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you Councillor Shoob for your question. Free parking in the district's car parks and on-street pay and display bays has been agreed for the three Saturday's leading up to Christmas commencing on Saturday 4th December. This initiative is put in place to support local traders and encourage people to 'shop local' helping to boost the local economy in what has been a very difficult time. From the perspective of the climate emergency the initiative encourages the use of our local town centres potentially reducing longer car journeys to other towns and shopping centres outside of our district.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Will the council be subsidising those who do not have, or choose not to drive a car?

**ANSWER:**

I don't see how they can subsidise other ways of getting to the shops. It is something the council has done for many years, free parking to boost local trade.

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

Can the Leader tell us, what the value of the two stage design and build contract with BAM will be signed for?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question. For this project, a 'Two Stage Develop and Construct' procurement route was chosen. The contractor was procured through the Southern Construction Framework which is an OJEU compliant procurement route.

'Stage One' resulted in the appointment of BAM under a Pre-Construction Services Agreement to work with the Council's consultant team to develop the design and price the works.

'Stage Two' will see BAM tender the sub-contractor packages and confirm the total cost of the works. This process is underway the cost of the works is due to be confirmed this December and reported to Cabinet early next year.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Just to paraphrase, he doesn't know what the contract will be signed for, but if we assume that the £25m budget will not be exceeded, that compares poorly to the £16m required to build the same pool at Nichols Quarry.

Regarding the evasive answer at the last meeting on this topic - The S106 was for 1.6 hectares of land plus £3.2m in cash. That's been indexed, I think it's about £4.5m now. 1.6 hectares is just under 4 acres. I want to know not only what is happening to this land (I believe it is reverting to developer), and also why is this developer being so advantaged?

**ANSWER:**

I don't know that he is, but had I had prior knowledge of this question, I might have been able to give a reasonable answer. I will provide a written response.

*After the meeting, the following response was provided:*

*The land would revert to the land owner and would require planning permission.*

*Im not aware how the landowner has been advantaged. Land they own has been sterilised until such time as the Council makes a decision. Should this site not come forward as a leisure site the applicant still has to apply for a new use which would involve further costs and uncertainty.*

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

With the cold weather fast approaching can you please inform us of what SWEP protocols are in place this year and how many days at zero temperatures will our homeless suffer before we can offer a warm and safe roof over their head?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your enquiry regarding the Council' Severe Weather Emergency Protocol. Unlike many local authority areas in the Country, as in previous years, our Emergency arrangements to assist people who are rough sleeping are triggered when the temperature is predicted to be zero degrees Celsius or below, or where other extreme weather conditions are predicted throughout any one night time period.

In addition to this, our local housing outreach services continue to work with anyone identified as rough sleeping to enable them to access accommodation and ensure that they have the appropriate support to ensure they are able to retain their accommodation going forward.

Over the coming winter period we will also be working closely with the Rainbow Centre and local churches as they provide the annual winter shelter service. We and other partners will support the project to enable the people assisted through

the shelter to access suitable long-term homes and support services where necessary.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Thank you – I believe that one night at this temperature would be hard, but I'm happy we do this in our district, as some authorities wait three nights. What were the numbers on the last homeless count, and when was it done, and did it include those at the Warren?

**ANSWER:**

I will provide a written response.

*Following the meeting, the following response was provided:*

*The most recent street homelessness count was completed in the district this month, on the night of 23 November (from the 11pm), into the early hours of 24th November (approximately until 2.30am). The Count covered all known sites in the district where people sleep rough, including the Warren area. Overall, the count found 8 people to be sleeping rough on that particular night. This is down from the 12 people identified in the 2020 count.*

*Going forward our Outreach Team will continue to work with these individuals to help them to access accommodation and the necessary support services that they require.*

**6. From Councillor Meade to Councillor Monk, Leader of the Council**

Given that the council has borrowed a very large sum of money to build/create the new garden town Otterpool, but as yet we are not in the position to break ground, could you please provide us with the total amount of expenditure since December 2015 by the District Council and Otterpool Park LLP to progress the development including all land/property purchases, consultant and legal fees paid, travel costs / expenses, and any other loans / expenditure including inter authority loans?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question. The Council's direct expenditure on the Otterpool Park Garden Town development, which includes spend by Otterpool Park LLP, since December 2015 until 31 October 2021 is £51,302,862.

This is broken down into capital expenditure of £46,556,616 and revenue expenditure of £6,045,412.

During this period the Council has received £4,466,000 in government grant funding towards the costs incurred meaning the net cost to the Council is £46,836,862.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

What profit are we expecting from Otterpool for the residents who are paying all the interest charges going forward, and are we looking at buying any extra land?

**ANSWER:**

I welcome this question, because we have to find space to put all the houses that the government demands of us. Don't believe Michael Gove's algorithm means anything positive. As far as I've managed to ascertain, it means that the numbers will go up in most areas, including ours. With conservative figures, as we stand at the moment, repaying all that we have spent so far, we will come out with about £193m on top.

**7. From Councillor Keen to Councillor Field, Cabinet Member for Transport and Digital Transformation**

With more people visiting the harbour area of Folkestone once again we have issues with car parking and residents are once again struggling to find space on Marine Parade and the Stade. Local hotels and Air B&B are advising visitors to park in the road as parking charges are suspended from 6pm. So consequently if visitors park at 1pm and pay for 5 hours parking they can stay in the space until the next day. Residents are being forced to park further afield and this is causing a great deal of anger. It is evident with more and more CPZ parking that we require more car parking in the area in order to encourage people to visit and spend in our local economy. People will not come to Folkestone if there is not adequate parking (one of the two private car parks are closed over the winter). What plans do we have as a council to provide parking for visitors?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question Councillor Keen. We do recognise that there is significant pressure on parking at peak times in some parts of the district. As part of the Place Plan, we will be reviewing all car parking in the town centre and Folkestone harbour areas. A new parking strategy will consider how we can optimise spaces through better promotion of the facilities available for visitors, and make use of technology to improve the facilities.

We will also continue to have talks with the Folkestone Harbour Company to open their car parks during busy periods and consider proposals put forward by members of the public.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Are you prepared to withdraw the suspension so that parking charges are the same as the summer, so the residents in that area can at least park near their homes on cold winter evenings?

**ANSWER:**

I will reflect on that and provide a response in writing.

*After the meeting, the following response was provided:*

*We've now had discussions with the developers. The suspensions are required until the end of June 2022. However, if works are not being carried out over the weekends and Christmas, the barriers protecting 10 of the 26 spaces will be removed to allow residents to park. We hope this will assist in alleviating the parking difficulties some of the residents are experiencing in the area. We will be reviewing the suspensions again in March.*

**8. From Councillor Keen to Councillor Field, Cabinet Member for Transport and Digital Transformation**

The newly Introduced CPZ G1 has caused a lot of issues for residents in Radnor Bridge Road and East Cliff Gardens and this is apparently soon to be reviewed. Can I ask when this review is likely to take place? The entire zone with the exception of Dyke Road has no provision for short term visitors and it is causing problems for trades people attending the properties to give quotes for maintenance work. All the residents who live in G1 should be given the same ability to allow visitor's a one hour free parking slot when this is available to most other residents in CPZ area of Folkestone.

**ANSWER:**

Thanks again for your question Councillor Keen. As you may have seen on the published report on the analysis of the public consultation for this scheme, the vast majority of residents had indicated they would prefer 'permit holders only' parking, hence the decision to implement these restrictions. However, we will soon be proposing an extension of the zone to include further roads in a draft amendment traffic regulation order. In view of the recent comments received, officers will also seek in this amendment to introduce limited waiting bays in some of the roads in G1. The statutory consultation on this will start on the 3rd December 2021.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

None.

**9. From Councillor Keen to Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing and Special Projects**

A number of residents who own properties in Rossendale Court have bought issues to me that they have had with EKH and now with FHDC regarding leasehold/shared ownership properties in Folkestone. Could you please explain how maintenance charges are applied, what is included, and how work is quoted for?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you Councillor Keen for your question.

The repairing responsibilities are contained within the leases for the leasehold properties. The leases also set out how costs are apportioned. There are two parts of the lease which identify the lessors and lessees responsibilities. The reserved parts of the building/estate, are those parts retained by the freeholder (FHDC), and the demised parts, which are the parts the leaseholder is solely responsible for. Not all leases are the same, therefore, I cannot provide a definitive answer regarding all the leasehold properties at Rossendale Court or other leasehold/shared ownership properties.

Leaseholders are charged a proportion of the cost of works/maintenance/management of the reserved parts, which can include grounds maintenance, general repairs, specialist repairs (for example door entry), major works (term used for large ticket expenditure items like roof replacement), buildings insurance, and management. All contracts that we (FHDC) enter into are subject to S20 (S20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, as amended) consultation requirements. Some of those contracts would be for qualifying works (standalone one off works) and some would be qualifying long term agreements (contracts lasting over 12 months). The S20 process is undertaken through a few different stages, whereby leaseholders have the right to make observations. Leaseholders also have the right to nominate a contractor depending on the type of contract. Once a contractor is appointed, they will then undertake the works that they are contracted to undertake. However, if the cost of a particular piece of work undertaken under a qualifying long term agreement is over £250.00 (£250.00 per annum to any one leaseholder within the building), then a further S20 notice is served, which the leaseholder has the right to make observations towards. Currently, general repairs are undertaken by Mears.

The leasehold management senior specialist will be holding “getting to know your lease” training sessions, for both leaseholders and shared owners towards the middle of next year. The sessions are designed to increase the leaseholders understanding of their leases including the responsibilities contained therein. It is a complicated subject, and we are trying to help leaseholders understand it. If anyone needs help, they should approach us and we will help them.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Would it be possible for me to attend those sessions please, so I can help residents in debt?

**ANSWER:**

Absolutely, I think I ought to go myself, it is a complicated subject.

**10. From Councillor Keen to Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing and Special Projects**

In respect of leasehold/shared ownership properties, a further issue that concerned me was the fact that none of the chimneys are capped which has led in the past to birds falling down the chimney which I then understand the tenants have to pay a proportion of the cost to have the bird removed. Why do we not cap or cage the chimneys?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you Councillor Keen for your question. Historically, it appears to have been EKH policy not to cap or fit cowls to chimneys presumably due to cost. We will carry out a review across the portfolio of blocks to confirm where FHDC have a responsibility for this work liaising with Leasehold Services. Where this is confirmed to be the responsibility of FHDC an assessment of the necessity will be made on an individual basis. However, consideration will be given to a programme of retrofitting cowls/capping as part of any future roofing works programme.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

None.

**11. From Councillor Davison to Councillor Prater, Cabinet Member for Revenues, Benefits, Anti-Fraud and Corruption**

Kent County Council has been allocated more than £11 million to support residents via the government's winter household support fund. County Councils are expected to work together with District Councils to provide support. Can you provide information on how people can access this funding in our district?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you Councillor Davison for your question.

You are of course right: Kent County Council has received additional funding of £11,065,000 in Household Support Fund.

The Household Support fund must be used by 31 March 2022 and is for the purpose of supporting households who would otherwise struggle to buy food or pay essential utility bills or meet other essential living costs or housing costs. Eligible spend includes food, energy and water payment support. It also includes essentials linked to energy and water such as sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, boiler service/repair and purchase of equipment including fridges, freezers, ovens, etc. It can also help support housing costs in essential cases of genuine emergency but only once other avenues such as Discretionary Housing Payments have been explored. The funding should also support the

administration of the scheme. At least 50% of the funding must be used for vulnerable households with children.

Your question was exceptionally well timed, because on Monday 22 November Kent County Council published their decision regarding the Household Support Grant. Elements of the funding have been committed to:

- £4.5m to support families that receive free school meals during the holidays in the periods up to 31 March 2022.
- £2.5m to support KCC services such as the Kent Support and Assistance Service (KSAS) to distribute the funds to households that need essentials.
- The remaining £4,065,000 is to be allocated for households that need support with energy and water and essentials.

Of this remaining £4.065m, this funding should be devolved to the District and Borough Councils but amounts have not been confirmed. KCC have announced that devolved funded would be based around the previously agreed methodology which allocated 50% according to population, 25% for deprivation and 25% for the prevalence of Covid. In breaking news, we have heard this afternoon from KCC that we will be notified next week what that methodology will lead our actual allocation of that funding will be.

Free School meals vouchers and KSAS are managed and operated by Kent County Council and information can be accessed from their website. When Folkestone & Hythe District Council have had our funding confirmed a decision will be made on how to allocate the money, its policies and administration. Details of that scheme will be shared as soon as possible, both to Councillors and residents.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

In terms of making those decisions on how money will be used locally, I would like information around how it will be distributed, and if via local organisations, what those organisations will be and what the distribution of funding will be?

#### **ANSWER:**

The scheme is not designed yet. You will know that there is a large amount of information available about financial support for local residents, and I would expect it to be there, and based on the individual's families and their needs, and to support the poorest who need the most support immediately. Until we get the full information, I can't provide this information I'm afraid.

#### **12. From Councillor Davison to Councillor Peall, Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Regulatory Services, Waste and Building Control**

What steps are being taken to ensure the Leas pavilion does not suffer further damage as a result of the impending winter weather?

#### **ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question. The responsibility for protecting the building from damage remains that of the owner.

The developer has, we understand, spent the last year surveying and recording the historic internal features of the building - in discussion with the Council's Conversation Consultant and Historic England - to plan for the buildings restoration as part of the project.

The developer has submitted applications for the discharge of pre-commencement conditions and officers are working proactively to see these discharged as expediently as possible. All parties are aiming to resolve this element before the end of the year.

The developer has confirmed that their tender process for a main contractor has now been completed and that they are in the process of selecting the final main contractor with the intention of an early 2022 commencement on site.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Has there been any onsite monitoring by the council in terms of the progress made and protections in place?

**ANSWER:**

I will need to check this with officers and will provide a written response.

*Following the meeting, the following response was provided:*

*No there hasn't, but we are aware that the Council's Conservation consultant and Historic England have visited the site and are in close dialogue with the applicant regarding the buildings condition and the works required to restore.*

**Question 13 was rejected by the Chairman at the meeting, and was therefore not put or answered.**