

COUNCIL
24 JANUARY 2013
PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Report from: Neil Davies, Chief Executive

Author: Wayne Hemingway, Democratic Services Officer

Summary

To set out the public questions received for this meeting.

1. Background

1.1 Section 8.3 of the Council Rules, as laid out in the Council's constitution, sets out the rules for the receipt of public questions as follows:

- At any one meeting no person may submit more than two questions and no more than two questions may be asked on behalf of one organisation. Members of the public who have not submitted questions before will be given priority over those who have, and second questions will only be dealt with when all first questions have been dealt with. Any questions that have not been dealt with within the time limits will receive a written reply after the meeting.

1.2 The questions received for this meeting are set out in below in the order they were received, allowing for the rules above.

2. Public questions

2.1 **Sue Alexander of Lordswood will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Rodney Chambers the following question:**

All of Lordswood's links are with the Chatham and Aylesford Constituency. Therefore, I can see no point or purpose in Lordswood becoming part of the Gillingham and Rainham Constituency, please could you explain any advantages for the residents of Lordswood of this proposed move?

2.2 **Gareth Batts of Strood will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer the following question:**

Network Rail's replacement of its Darnley Arch bridge in December caused traffic chaos during the busiest period of the year for local Strood retailers

and other businesses. I understand that Network Rail only applied for the A228 road closure from 24 to 30 December. Network Rail was not responsible for the Traffic Management works beyond 3pm on 30 December. It was Medway Council who asked Network Rail's Traffic Management contractor to extend the road closures and diversions until 6 January to facilitate works for Southern Gas Networks.

Why did the Portfolio Holder allow this work to be undertaken at a time most likely to inflict maximum damage to Strood Town Centre's local economy and cause lengthy inconvenience for local people?

2.3 Kevin Banks of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following question:

How can the council justify a 28% rent increase over the 2 years 2012/2013 on allotment plots at Great South, when there have been over 100 break-ins on this site, and when the fence along Magpie Hall Road was condemned in 2000 and has not yet been replaced?

2.4 Lauren Wright of Walderslade will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Wicks, the following question:

Would the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services please explain why Medway's school performance has been so low over the past five years? Would he publish whatever action plan is in place to improve this and also establish what funding is available to our schools to help?

2.5 Andrew Millsom of Strood will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following question:

As part of their planning application, Morrisons signed up to an S106 agreement which contained two traffic improvement schemes, one of which was the widening of Cuxton Road under Darnley Bridge. This project was to be completed in conjunction with Network Rail (NWR). It now transpires that NWR have replaced the bridge and no widening has been undertaken.

Can the Portfolio Holder explain how this came to pass and what arrangements were in place between NWR and Medway Council Highways Department that permitted NWR to conduct the bridge span replacement without widening the road at the same time?

2.6 Paul Chaplin of Rainham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following question:

Can the Portfolio Holder please tell me that if considering Christmas free-parking in Medway in the forthcoming budget, could the Council consider putting a time-limit commitment in place in order to avoid commuters taking up the free parking to the detriment of local shoppers and local business owners?

2.7 Sue Groves MBE of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services, Councillor Brake, the following question:

Medway Council agreed the Labour motion on 18 October 2012 asking the council to set up and support a Medway Disabled Residents Forum, to enable disabled residents to have a collective voice and to act as a formal consultee when the Council proposes changes or improvements that affect this group. I am disappointed however by the lack of contact on this matter since that agreement was given.

Can the Portfolio Holder tell me what steps have been taken to set up the forum, who is the point of contact, when it is likely to be operational and how disabled residents will be invited to join?

2.8 Vivienne Parker of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following question:

Will expecting our poorest citizens to pay council tax push Medway back to the days of the poll tax when large numbers were sent to prison for non-payment?

2.9 Jonathan Primett of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services, Councillor Brake, the following question:

Given 29.3% of year 6 pupils in schools in Walderslade are considered obese according to the Medway Childhood Obesity Update in September 2012, does the Portfolio Holder support a majority, but not all it would seem, of his backbench Councillors that the Council has no role to play in restricting access and in managing licences for fast food outlets near to Primary and Secondary Schools?

2.10 Tony Jeacock of Rainham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following question:

Can the Portfolio Holder please tell me how much the Council took in car parking fees and traffic fines over the last financial year and how much of the profit was actually spent on upgrading and increasing parking facilities and local road improvements?

2.11 Sue Groves MBE of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Wicks, the following question:

Following the report showing that Medway primary schools are yet again amongst the lowest performing in the country, I gather that local MPs sought an urgent meeting to discuss the matter. Can you advise the outcome of that meeting and what plans are in place to address the issues going forward, to ensure our children get the best possible start to their education?

2.12 Jonathan Primett of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Wicks, the following question:

Can the Portfolio Holder please explain why, in light of Medway Primary Schools' abysmal ranking in OFSTED league tables, he has made no comment about this matter and why he has left a recently appointed director to deal with the questions regarding these poor results?"

Lead officer contact

Wayne Hemingway, Democratic Services Officer

T: 01634 332509

E: wayne.hemingway@medway.gov.uk

Background papers

None