

COUNCIL

25 JULY 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 **Peter Dickinson of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following:**

Currently aircraft with a flight path over the City Way end of the airport, fly very low, and loudly, at great noise inconvenience and safety risk to the residents of those areas.

Assuming a doubling of movements and a concentration of all flights into that area, it is likely that the noise and the risk and inconvenience will increase at least four fold.

Please can you answer specifically, what measures will be put in place to prevent this, ensuring that these rules are adhered too, and penalties

imposed for any and all breaches?

2.2 James Brewood of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

Why are negotiations taking place to renew the 25 year lease, to the Rochester Airport company, before appropriate development plans are fully agreed and authorised by all Council Members. No commitment should be given until after any new lease is signed, and then what proportion of this staggering sum will the lessee be contributing financially to benefit from this probably under estimated, staggering costing of £4.4 million pounds?

2.3 Keith Baldock of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:

How steep are the planes going to be on the flight path into the runway (at Rochester Airport)?

2.4 William McLennan of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

Will Councillor Jarrett confirm the new 25 year Airport lease will not be signed before Full Council approval of the Rochester Airport Masterplan and in compliance with the "Say No to Rochester Airport Masterplan" petition statement to stop the democratic process being undermined?

2.5 David Allen of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:

If the Rochester Airport Masterplan is implemented in its current design, local residents will experience higher noise, air pollution and danger with up to 50,000 air movements a year from a single runway. Homes on and near the flight path will drop in value if the stated aim of Medway Council to have a commercially viable airport is fulfilled. Will Councillor Chitty please tell us what compensation payments will be made to local residents and how the Airport Operator or Medway Council will pay them?

2.6 Sid Witham of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:

The Medway Council leaflet "Rochester Airport the future" states -"We want Rochester Airport to become a commercially viable airport." The August 2012 TPS Consultant report shows the cost of investment for a commercially viable Rochester Airport at over £11 million.

If Councillor Jane Chitty is to be believed and the airport and types of aircraft will stay similar as today, how are investors going to get a return on their investment without a significant increase in air traffic or pricing private club flyers out of the airfield?

2.7 Michael Mew of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

Medway Council have not looked at a range of options for the future use of the airfield land to determine best value for the community in monetary, environmental and jobs terms. It has ignored public safety and chosen a single option which was opposed by Conservative Councillors and public over a decade ago.

Will Councillor Jarrett tell everyone why this Conservative led Council have not undertaken their fiduciary duty correctly in determining the best use and value of the land for the community and its welfare?

2.8 Bernard Howell of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:

Medway Council were in receipt of the TPS Consultant document August 2012 which outlines a blueprint for a commercially viable Rochester Airport. The Medway Council leaflet "Rochester Airport the future" states, "We want Rochester Airport to become a commercially viable airport".

Would Councillor Chitty please explain why Medway Council have lied by omission and attempted to mislead the public repeatedly on what a commercial Rochester Airport may cost and look like in the future in Council exhibition material and propaganda leaflets?

2.9 Susan McLennan of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

The "To Let Rochester Airport Kent" tender document mirrors the current design of the Rochester Airport Masterplan which is almost identical to that of Labour led Medway Council commissioned W S Atkins consultant study December 2000, "Rochester Airfield review option 3."

Can Councillor Jarrett explain why he and his colleagues have now decided to support the configuration when it was stopped by a Conservative councillor led petition previously on safety grounds and the "Save our Green Space" campaign?

2.10 Michael Fowler of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:

When will Medway Council undertake a full and comprehensive flight risk and safety assessment, and how will Medway Council guarantee the safeguarding of the lives of residents living below the aircraft flight paths with the significant increase in air traffic?"

2.11 David Day of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

As a resident who lives directly under the flight path, what benefits do my family gain from bigger more frequent aircraft landing and taking off?

2.12 Lawrence Lucas of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:

Cabinet Supplementary agenda No1. Appendix 1, Agenda item 6, 9 July Cabinet meeting document states that the new concrete runway will be 25 metres wide and not significantly longer than the existing. If we are to believe the Council propaganda that the aircraft will be similar to existing and that the aircraft will take off quicker and be quieter, then the runway can be made shorter and save ratepayer money as a concrete runway is very expensive.

Would Councillor Chitty like to explain why the runway will be longer?

2.13 Patricia Lewis of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:

Do the Conservative councillors on Medway Council understand the residents surrounding Rochester Airport as a "trivial population" in the same way their Conservative colleague Boris Johnson referred to residents of the Isle of Grain in response to questions about the proposed airport on that site?

2.14 Stuart Taylor of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:

Why does the literature disseminated by Medway Council not provide true and complete information about the proposed Rochester Airport Masterplan and the costs involved?

2.15 Chris Sams of Gillingham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor O'Brien, the following:

Can the Portfolio Holder explain the decision to cut Woodlands nursery's budget by forty percent forcing them to remove "under 2s" spaces which is causing severe problems for would be working mothers, such as my wife, returning to work?

2.16 Martin Radford of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:

Will homeowners be compensated for the estimated loss of 35% on the value of their properties due to the Airport? This was supposed to be our retirement home but the peace and quiet we were expecting will be

shattered and we will have to move. Do any of the Councillors live on the flight path?

2.17 Jane Marsh of Lordswood will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

Will the Portfolio holder support the Lordswood residents in their campaign to oppose the proposed asbestos transfer station on North Dane Way? If so how? If not why not?

2.18 Alan Collins of Gillingham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

Now that Medway Council has an empty property in Building No. 4 Riverside, formerly the RAFA Club, what plans have the council got for its future use?

2.19 Vivienne Parker of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:

Given there have been so many serious accidents at the junction of Beresford Avenue and Pattens Lane, Rochester involving young children, when is the Council going to extend the double yellow lines at the junction and stop people parking right across the pavement forcing pedestrians to walk into the middle of the road?

2.20 Jonathan Primmatt of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:

Outside Oaklands Primary School in Weedswood, bollards were erected on the corner of Weedswood Road and Gorse Avenue to stop inconsiderate parents parking on the pavement and as a result blocking both the pavement itself, and the view of pedestrians looking to cross this busy road safely. These bollards have made no difference however as they have been erected in positions that allow cars to drive straight between them and carry on parking on the pavement. These bollards have been installed at considerable expense to the council yet serve no purpose whatsoever.

Can the Portfolio Holder confirm what quality-control measures are followed to check that contractors carrying out work on behalf of the council, complete it to a competent standard, and that the work fulfils the purpose for which it was initially instructed?

2.21 Derek Munton of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer the following:

Every day there is a traffic problem in City Way as it joins Horsted Way. Crashes are common. It will get worse because of development in the vicinity. What action is being taken to ensure the traffic system will be improved to accommodate existing and future development on this critical

junction?

2.22 Paul Chaplin of Rainham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services, Councillor Brake, the following:

In light of recent publicity about attendance levels at A&E departments, which have reached their highest ever levels across the country, how does the council think the proposed merger between Medway Maritime hospital and Dartford's Darent Valley hospital will affect services to local people?

Can the council give any guarantees that essential services such as A&E and maternity, to name a couple, will still be available locally after the merger?

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

Having taken over £76,000 in traffic fines from over 28,000 confused drivers sucked through poor signage into the restricted area of the "like it or lump it" bus station, clearly worsened by the sudden further changes introduced in March, would the Portfolio Holder consider in fairness reimbursing those even more confused drivers caught during that subsequently well-reported 4 weeks peak period? If not, why not?

2.24 Lauren Wright of Chatham will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Rodney Chambers, the following:

Are the residents of Grain trivial?

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

Will the Council support the Make Care Fair campaign, which aims to end 15 minute care visits as they do not allow enough time to deliver good quality care and support, and what assurances can the Council give that they will opt for quality in such contracts rather than cost-cutting?

2.26 William McLennan of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

Councillor Jarrett and Chitty seem to think they will be absolved of responsibility for any deaths if the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) approve the site despite being party to agreeing the concentration of flights onto one runway pointing to homes, school and elderly nursing centres.

Would Councillor Jarrett like to tell me what they would say to my children if a stricken aircraft hit my home and killed my wife and I?

2.27 David Allen of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:

Cabinet Supplementary agenda No1. Appendix 1, agenda item 6, 9 July Cabinet meeting states that Rochester Airport Ltd has indicated that the airfield handles 35,000 air movements per year.

Can Councillor Chitty tell us how Medway Council know the figure is accurate given the refusal of Rochester Airport Ltd to work with W S Atkins consultants in 2000 and the figure may therefore be unreliable and inflated?

2.28 Sid Witham of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

At the 9 July Cabinet meeting Councillor Jarrett stated that a "Do nothing" with the airport was not an option. Given that everyone knows the airfield and flying club has not been financially viable for years yet tolerated by the public, why cannot the buildings be renovated for a small sum of ratepayers' money and the airfield left in its current configuration. If you want to create jobs and retain community green space then you should look at the entire land use?

2.29 Patricia Lewis of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:

Given that the Conservative Councillors were in complete opposition to the expansion of Rochester Airport when put forward as a proposal by the then Labour led council, how can we trust them when they claim that the expansion will have minimal impact on the local residents quality of life?

2.30 Michael Mew of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Deputy Leader, Councillor Jarrett, the following:

With such a high level of investment in Rochester airfield of ratepayers' money and possibly low financial liability of the new operator, are Medway Council going to stipulate that a professional and qualified Medway officer be appointed to the Board of Directors to oversee financial controls and spend?

2.31 Vivienne Parker of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chitty, the following:

Given that the Local Plan has been rejected by the Planning Inspectorate, what is going to happen next?

2.32 Jonathan Primmatt of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:

Inconsiderate and dangerous parking outside schools seems to be an ever increasing problem. Whilst the Council does deploy the CCTV car to these schools, it is having little or no effect as the car arrives early and is therefore spotted by those who park illegally on a daily basis and on that particular occasion, they park within the law.

At my daughter's school, it is the same cars, day-in and day-out, and if they can park dangerously and avoid a 50-yard walk, they will do so.

Will the Portfolio Holder consider more effective parking enforcement outside schools, such as foot-patrols from parking wardens or the deployment of the CCTV car later in the afternoon where it can actually catch those who have parked badly, as opposed to simply deterring them from doing so on just a sole occasion.

2.33 Lauren Wright of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor O'Brien, the following:

What have you learned from your visits to the schools of Medway, and discussions with their staff, governors, parents and pupils, so far?

Lead officer contact

Wayne Hemingway, Democratic Services Officer

T: 01634 332509

E: wayne.hemingway@medway.gov.uk

Background papers

None