

COUNCIL
15 OCTOBER 2015
PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Report from: Neil Davies, Chief Executive

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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

A Terry Bloomfield of Strood will ask the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships, Councillor Rodney Chambers OBE, the following question:

What is the Pentagon Tower (Mountbatten House) used for if it is empty, could it not be converted to housing rather than keep building new homes? Are rates being paid on it if it is empty?

B Neil Dean of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following question:

Does the Portfolio Holder think it is acceptable that an issue of antisocial behaviour which I have raised, for which a 14 day enforcement notice was

issued in February, has still not been resolved to date?

C Stephen Dyke of Strood will ask the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following question:

In 2008 Medway Council published its “Wildlife, Countryside and Open Spaces Strategy 2008-2016” in which Councillor Doe, as Portfolio Holder for Community Services, stated the following as the Council’s vision:

“By 2016 Medway will be characterised by and celebrated for its attractive, distinctive estuarine, downland, woodland and farmed countryside, its rich diversity of wildlife and its high quality open space network. These will be protected to meet the needs of local communities, to improve levels of customer satisfaction and usage, and improved for present and future generations to enjoy and use.”

This “strong vision” was to be placed “at the very heart of the current and future plans” of the Council, although I have noticed that many of the more ambitious headline outcomes in the strategy document seem to have been dropped in recent years. Also the Council’s website currently makes little reference to environmental or wildlife issues at all.

As the published Strategy only covers the period up to the end of next year, can Councillor Doe advise how close he thinks the Council is to making the quoted vision a reality, if that vision has indeed been placed at the heart of the Council’s plans, including in developing its new Local Plan, and if the Council will be producing a follow-up Wildlife, Countryside and Open Space Strategy, with public consultation, to cover the next few years?

D Fergus Tamsett of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Mackness, the following question:

Why does Councillor Mackness feel it is appropriate to reduce the transparency of the Council to the people of Medway by the proposed changes to the system for asking questions at a Council meeting?

E John Collins of Rochester will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following question:

Does Medway Council agree to hold a fair and balanced Community Governance Review consultation on the question of creating a Town Council for Rochester?

F Catherine Stephenson of Rochester will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following question:

Will Medway Council give due consideration to expanding the Community Governance Review to include other unparished parts of Medway such as Strood, Chatham, Gillingham and Rainham?

G John Castle of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Mackness, the following question:

Relating to the proposed changes to Public Questions. How will the Council determine the organisation on whose behalf a question is being submitted, many people represent multiple organisations, but might still be submitting a question as a resident of Medway?

H Paul Chaplin of Rainham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Mackness, the following question:

If 30 minutes is not long enough for public questions, is Medway too big for one administration? Does the Council agree that Town Councils would provide better access to democracy for residents?

I Vivienne Parker of Chatham will ask the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following question:

Are the Council going to start cutting down the mistletoe infesting the trees in City Way, Rochester, and Beechings Way, Rainham, and selling it over the Christmas period?

J Vanessa Roach of Rochester will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following question:

If the Council goes ahead with proposals to stop the public questioning the council through supplementary questions what increase in requests under the Freedom of Information Act does the Leader of the Council expect as a result and at what cost in financial terms?

K Tony Jeacock of Rainham will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following question:

Assuming the 'would-be-leader' of Medway Council gets his democracy-destroying proposal to end supplementary questions through, will the actual Leader endeavour to maintain some semblance of local democracy by allowing the public to ask questions at cabinet and/or sub-committee meetings instead, as in some other Councils, such as Oldham? If not, why not?

L Stephen Dyke of Strood will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following question:

The United Nations recently established 'Climate Action' as one of its Global Goals for the next fifteen years, including targets of strengthening resilience to climate-related hazards and integrating climate change measures into governmental policies, strategies and planning.

Therefore can Councillor Jarrett advise what measures his Council is taking, and planning, in order to protect the residents, environment and wildlife of the Medway Towns and its surrounding areas from the harmful effects of climate change?

M John Collins of Rochester will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following question:

Does Medway Council agree to abide by and respect the results of the Community Governance Review, particularly if it confirms there is support within the community for creating a Town Council for Rochester?

N Paul Chaplin of Rainham will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following question:

How much does Medway receive in grants from the EU?

O Vivienne Parker of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Business Management, Councillor Turpin, the following question:

What is the Council going to do to help the shop keepers on Twydall Green who are complaining that their rents and business rates are putting them out of business?

Lead officer contact

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Background papers

Council Rules, Constitution (Part 1, Chapter 4):

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/thecouncilanddemocracy/council/constitution.aspx>

Appendices

None