

## Members' Questions

### **Question A – Councillor Van Dyke will ask the Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services, Councillor Brake, the following:**

The Department for Health and Social Care has instructed hospital trusts to reintroduce parking charges for hospital staff after withdrawing the subsidy paid to Trusts during the pandemic when charges for staff were waived. Medway Maritime Hospital faces a recruitment crisis and the threat of industrial action because staff salaries are not keeping up with the cost of living.

Will the Portfolio Holder show his support for our local NHS staff by joining me in writing to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care demanding that car parking charges for hospital staff are abolished with immediate effect?

### **Question B – Councillor Hubbard will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services – Lead Member (statutory responsibility), Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, the following:**

It is the view of many that the new Maritime Academy should have been located on Strood Riverside, a town centre site with great access for those walking, cycling, or using public transport. The Secondary School's proposed site on Frindsbury Hill will just add to the local levels of traffic congestion and pollution.

Maritime Academy opened its temporary, Twydall Primary School located, doors this September. The bussing arrangements, delivering and collecting students living in Strood and Frindsbury are in place. I am confident that the Academy's staff are doing their very best. However, the Government is continuing its poor record on delivery of new schools in Medway. The other current example is the delayed Rochester Primary School.

There is no sign of any building work on the Academy's Frindsbury site. This is simply not good enough. There are only pre-works that are related to reptile translocation and additional archaeological investigations.

Can the Portfolio Holder give any guarantee to Maritime Academy students, their parents, and staff that the school will finally open its Frindsbury doors by September 2024?

### **Question C – Councillor Edwards will ask the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:**

The majority of businesses in Medway are small businesses. They underpin our local economy, serve the community, and provide jobs for local people. But they are facing eye-watering energy price bills from April next year when the Energy Bill Relief Scheme is due to end. The Federation of Small Business's recent report, *Out in the Cold*, found that two thirds of small firms say their energy costs have increased compared to last year, with 96 per cent of small businesses concerned about rising energy bills.

Will the Council write to the Government to urge it to either extend the Energy Bill Relief Scheme beyond 31 March 2023 or develop a follow-up scheme to continue financial support for small businesses during this energy cost crisis?

All signs point to steep energy prices providing challenging circumstances for small businesses beyond the immediate winter period, and particularly so for energy-intensive businesses like hospitality. Without ongoing support many of Medway's small businesses may struggle to survive so we need Medway Council to be a strong voice urging central government to give them more support.

**Question D – Councillor Maple will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:**

As Medway's population faces the cost-of-living crisis caused by steeply rising energy costs, inflation at over 10%, with food and fuel inflation well above that figure and other financial pressures caused by government mismanagement, would the Leader of the Council update Council on the lessons learnt regarding the incredibly disappointing returning of £350,000 of unspent Household Support Funding earlier this year, while clarifying what measures are in place to ensure this never happens again?

**Question E – Councillor Andy Stamp will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:**

The large retaining wall on the A289 Pier Road in Gillingham has been structurally unsound for well over a decade and is in desperate need of repair.

Whilst Department for Transport funding has been secured so that permanent repairs can finally be carried out next year, the 'temporary' blue hoardings have been in place since 2009. Residents and Ward Councillors have long complained that the hoardings are not only an eyesore, but they also restrict visibility and cause road safety issues for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians using this busy dual carriageway.

To my dismay, it recently came to light that the Council do not actually own the temporary blue hoardings (including the structural steel propping behind) and Council taxpayers have been paying to hire them for the past 13 years. Can the Portfolio Holder therefore provide a breakdown of the total hire costs for these hoardings (including the structural steel props) since they were installed in 2009?

**Question F – Councillor Cooper will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services – Lead Member (statutory responsibility), Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, the following:**

Following the administration's callous decision to refuse to fund support for children eligible for free school meals over the summer break and its subsequent U-Turn, would the Portfolio Holder agree that Auto-Enrolment for free school meals in Medway would support struggling Medway families and would boost school budgets?

**Question G – Councillor Murray will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services – Lead Member (statutory responsibility), Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, the following:**

The Local Government Association has determined that 28% of Healthy Start Vouchers remain unclaimed in Medway, constituting over 800 families who are potentially missing out on healthy food. What has the Portfolio Holder done in the past year to increase take-up of Healthy Start Vouchers for families facing the cost-of-living crisis?

**Question H – Councillor Osborne will ask the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools, Councillor Potter, the following:**

Given the steeply rising costs of energy and unfunded pay rises, leading Medway schools to fear running out of money in the next nine months, can the Portfolio Holder clarify the per head funding per student in an annualised table in Medway since 2010/11, until today, while assessing whether these reductions are sustainable for school improvement?

**Question I – Councillor Browne will ask the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools, Councillor Potter, the following:**

Medway’s School Place Planning Strategy describes Medway Council’s presumption in favour of school academisation. When did Cabinet and Council make that decision?

**Question J – Councillor Howcroft-Scott will ask the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Gulvin, the following:**

Taking care of the workplace environment improves productivity, helps retain talent, and most important of all: it is good for the Council’s overall mental health. To this end I am troubled and concerned with the working environment our Council employees are subjected to at Gun Wharf, greatly highlighted by the refurbishment taking place in the old mayoral chambers. Please can our Council employees have a working environment they can feel proud of and is fit for the 21st century?

**Question K – Councillor Mahil will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services – Lead Member (statutory responsibility), Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, the following:**

It is encouraging that four schools in Medway have signed up to the national *Lets Go Zero* campaign, supporting schools reach net carbon zero by 2030. What encouragement is the Council giving to schools across Medway to participate in such schemes and how are they monitoring engagement levels?

**Question L – Councillor Johnson will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:**

What is the projected total cost of the current Judicial Review of the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children?

**Question M - Councillor Curry will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:**

The Council has recently signed off contracts for subsidised bus routes across Medway and accepted into service operators not capable of meeting the preferred tender requirement for EURO V buses. What assessment was made of the environmental air quality impact of accepting such buses into operation on routes traversing Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs)?

**Question N – Councillor Lloyd will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:**

What is the total cost, including advertising, the traffic order and physical works, of the recently installed 40 mph zone on Deanwood Drive, Rainham?

**Question O – Councillor Prenter will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following:**

Medway has an ambition to be child friendly. For this to be a reality it needs to have good quality, affordable public transport for our young people. Do you think Medway's children get a fair deal compared to those either in London or Kent?

**Question P – Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Turpin will ask the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following:**

Following the closure of Deangate Ridge Golf Course, Cabinet in March 2018 instructed officers to begin detailed planning for consultation and development of a new sports centre for the Hoo Peninsula.

In July 2019, Full Council approved the provision of up to £150,000 to complete initial investigation surveys (ecology, topographical, contamination, utilities, UXO and tree) as well as a high-level capacity study to establish approach and quantum of sustainable development.

None of the above work has been completed, or even started.

As these decisions were taken over 3 years ago and would have been very helpful for the Hoo Development Framework consultation (and the draft Local Plan that was proposed last October).

Also considering the work that has been completed to redevelop Splashes during this time, please can you advise why this work has not been carried out?

**Question Q – Councillor Etheridge will ask the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:**

At the Regeneration Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on the 13<sup>th</sup> of October this year, the Committee, requested that you supplied the answer to the following questions, prior to this Full Council meeting.

The questions were as follows:

Since you were last here before this Committee in October 2021, it has been identified that from 2014, you have spent over a million and a quarter on consultants to assist in developing a draft Local Plan.

1. Who were these consultants and what was their expertise?
2. In what year were they hired, was the work put out to tender and exactly what areas of the local plan they were directed to?
3. From their services, how was the draft local plan enhanced, ensuring compliance, with government regulations?

You have stated on numerous occasions, that consecutive governments have made changes to the local plan process.

4. Can you tell us in which years, those changes were made to the Local Plan process?
5. Can you tell us the overall effect specifically and on what part of our Local Plan process?
6. Finally, considering the amount of time that has passed since 2014 to-date, the number of man hours by both Council staff and consultants, why wasn't the draft Local Plan robust enough to weather a few minor changes in its production?

Councillor Chitty, not a single question has been answered, can you tell us why, considering that by not doing so, you have denied Members the opportunity and the right to seek further information.

**Question R – Councillor Rupert Turpin will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jarrett, the following:**

On page 99 of the Hoo Development Framework consultation pack the very first principle of the indivisible and interlocking framework for the delivery of garden cities is land value capture for the benefit of the community.

With this in mind, will the Council commit to ring fence the land value capture of any Council owned land on the peninsula which may be developed into housing or captured in any land equalisation process with the Hoo consortium or other developers, as a result of the development framework?

If so, then community infrastructure in Hoo and the surrounding villages, such as, for example, the much needed new sports centre and swimming pool, can be funded and provided in a timely manner and to the high quality the area deserves, rather than any land capture being redistributed on projects across the rest of Medway or lost in the general fund and reserves.

**Question S – Councillor McDonald will ask the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation, Councillor Chitty, the following:**

Could the Portfolio Holder inform Council when the last time Transport for London carried out compliance checks on TfL licensed vehicles in Medway?