

COUNCIL
3 MARCH 2011
PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Report from: Neil Davies, Chief Executive

Author: Wayne Hemingway, Cabinet Coordinator

Summary

To set out the public questions received for this meeting.

1. Background

1.1 Section 7.3 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 **Garry Harrison of Strood will ask the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following question:**

What does the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services intend to do to contribute to the success of the Strand which historically has been both a key play area for Gillingham and Medway and also a summer destination for families from all of North Kent?

2.2 Danielle Amusa of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Wicks, the following question:

Our services at the White Road Family Centre receive an annual budget of £1000. If the services were to close, has Medway Council considered the additional costs and the impact it will have on the local community?

2.3 Kelly O'Connell of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Wicks, the following question:

If under the Early Years spending review there is to be no more White Road Family Centre, what is the local authority's plan for the many isolated families who fully engage in this service but who cannot and will not access other services in the local area?

2.4 Denise Cole of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Wicks, the following question:

What are going to be the benefits of closing the Family Services when it is a service for 0-90 year olds and there are no other organisations that support the age groups mentioned?

2.5 Tony Jeacock of Rainham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Jarrett, the following question:

Is the Portfolio Holder aware of the status of the clock on the Will Adams monument in Watling Street?

2.6 Bryan Fowler of Chatham will ask the Chairman of the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Bright, the following question:

At the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29 September 2010, which you chaired, you opposed the request of my Ward Councillor and your fellow Committee Member, that the Committee write to the owners of the Pentagon Centre about the matter of the refurbishment of the Shopping Centre toilets for which a public grant of over £200,000 was made.

The Pentagon Shopping Centre management did not replace the old, cracked wash basins and have levied a charge of 20p for each shopper using them.

Could you as, Chairman of this Committee, state why you opposed this request?

2.7 Peter Cole of Chatham will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Rodney Chambers, the following question:

Government guidance published in 2007 covering the closure of schools clearly states that when disposing of any associated playing field evidence must be provided to the Secretary of State that there is no longer a need by other schools and that the needs of the local schools, particularly those sharing a campus or boundary with the closed school, have been taken fully into account.

Although this should have already been done by the relevant Portfolio Holder before the Cabinet agreed to dispose of the land (Cabinet Decision Number 2/2011) this is clearly not the case as I have actually taken the time to consult the two schools concerned (Greenacre and Bradfields Schools) and I can state they have not been consulted or even informed that the playing fields connected to the Ridge Meadow Site are to be disposed of. Both schools indicated that they would welcome the additional space and the associated revenue stream it could bring.

Is this not a simple failure by both the Portfolio Holder and more widely Medway Council's Cabinet to follow strict criteria and bring into the question the robustness of the decision taken by Cabinet on January 18 this year?

2.8 Wendy Cole of Chatham will ask the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services, Councillor Doe, the following question:

Medway Council made a statement to the Medway Urban Parks and Green Spaces August Forum that it was "fully committed to retaining and improving its open space" (Councillor Doe, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services). Why then, as Portfolio Holder, did he raise no objection to the disposal of the playing field, associated open space and woodland at the Ridge Meadow Site as detailed in the Property Disposals document to Cabinet of 18 January 2011 (paragraph 6.1)?

2.9 Tristan Osborne of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Front Line Services, Councillor Filmer, the following question:

Given the announcement in the budget of increasing revenues from enforcement penalties, can the Portfolio Holder give a firm commitment to a full, transparent and immediate operational review of the CCTV car fleet given recent press and public commentary that indicates the public consider it unfair that the car can break the highway code to enforce the law?

2.10 Bryan Fowler of Chatham will ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Rodney Chambers, the following question:

What function will the Pentagon Shopping Centre have as regards the holding or parking of buses when the new bus station is eventually opened on Chatham's Waterfront? For clarity: I mean the whole of the Pentagon Centre including its current bus station and parking areas.

2.11 Tristan Osborne of Rochester will ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Jarrett, the following question:

Can I ask the Portfolio Holder what consultation efforts have been made to the public in the surrounding area of the former Ridge Meadow Primary School on the proposed sell-off of the land. Given we have heard many statements of opposition on development on nearby Capstone, does this potential land sell, which is opposed in the community, represent a change in policy for this administration?

Background papers

None

Lead officer contact:

Wayne Hemingway
Cabinet Coordinator, Democratic Services
Telephone: 01634 332509
Email: wayne.hemingway@medway.gov.uk