

Public Questions

Question A – Lewis Bailey, of Gillingham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

Despite receiving legal advice from the Monitoring Officer, the Independent Group refused to alter their motion to a form which would make it compatible with not predetermining any elements of the Local Plan. Council resolved to seek additional external legal advice on this issue, with a view to bring it back.

Instead of just listening to the expert opinion of the Council's own legal team, the Independent Group forced a situation where the Council had to outsource this work. How much did this external legal advice cost the Council?

Question B – Katie Lowe, of Rainham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson, the following:

How many dinosaurs have you seen in Medway this month? You may have noticed 1 of the new 21 signs in Medway's four Air Quality Management Areas asking drivers to switch off their engines at traffic lights, featuring our recently recruited mascot Dino, a logo designed by young creatives at MidKent College.

These signs have been erected to reduce pollution, protect the health of children and those with asthma, and save our pennies. "Turn Off When You Stop", our Medway Breathes slogan, is intended to go far broader. We are looking to find ways to spread the message and particularly encourage drivers to turn off outside schools. We are already building partnerships across the local communities, schools and businesses to ensure our children's lungs are protected.

Beyond the School Streets scheme, which is not practical for all schools, what can the Council do to help us to amplify the message and change driver behaviour?

Question C – Daniel Broom, of Chatham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and Leisure, Councillor Gurung, the following:

My name is Dan Broom from the Q-ship Society – the Q-ship Society was set up to save, restore and home the last Astute Class sloop from World War One, one of three purpose built Royal Navy ships left in the world, and was listed as a national treasure, which currently sits abandoned on Chatham Docks. With the future of Chatham Docks uncertain, the Q-ship's future is also at risk. The loss of such a significant piece of Medway history will surely be catastrophic.

Will the administration honour our maritime history, which directly links to Medway, agree a plan of restoration led by our volunteers and experts, working with the society to find a home for this vessel to be enjoyed as a tourist attraction for many years to come, rather than send her to her grave?

Question D – Alan Wells, of Chatham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

In early 2024, the developer Esquire applied for planning permission to build 34 homes at Grain Village. The application proposed a new footpath connection to a new pedestrian crossing on Grain Road at the rear of the development, with bee and insect habitat planting included in the plans.

Grain High Street, across the road from the development, is where the Co-Op, the main shop in the village, the pub, and a road to the primary school, church and beachfront can be accessed.

On the 4 November, the Council's Planning Committee approved the development with the pedestrian footpath and crossing, and I quote, 'The access arrangements are considered acceptable with pedestrian footpaths and a pedestrian link to Grain Road.'

On 28 November, Esquire submitted a new application to remove the pedestrian footpath connection and planting, submitting the change to its 4 November plans as a 'non-material amendment'. The Council could have rejected the amendment under the 'non-material' proposal if it had wanted to.

The lack of a footpath to link to the new crossing will mean it will take longer for residents to access the High Street, as well as the loss of the planting of biodiversity flora on verges as originally agreed.

The Council approved the application on 5 December, allowing no time for any objections to the change.

My question to Council is this: Why did the Council not allow villagers at Grain to voice their concerns to Esquire reneging on their original infrastructure plans?

Question E – Vivienne Parker, of Chatham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, Councillor Paterson, the following:

I have noticed signs on the Chatham - Maidstone Road warning about pedestrians crossing by the hotel. Does this mean that the crossing by ASDA is no longer going ahead?

Question F - John Castle, of Chatham, will ask the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration, Councillor Curry, the following:

Many councils have adopted buses using hydrogen fuel cells for the local delivery of bus services. There are many reasons to do so, climate change is certainly one, hydrogen fuel cells can store green energy and when converted into electricity only water vapour is produced. It's clean energy and delivers clean air.

Putting hydrogen infrastructure in place is useful beyond bus services for meeting climate change goals for the Council and local area. For instance, waste and recycling vehicles could also switch to hydrogen fuel cells.

Does the Council agree with me that Medway should commit to removing diesel buses and deliver bus services using clean, green energy?