

**COUNTY COUNCIL QUESTIONS AND
ANSWERS -**

16 July 2015

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Question 1

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 16 July 2015

Question by Will Scobie to Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community Services

Would the Cabinet Member please provide the Council with an update on Kent County Council's involvement with the Live Margate scheme and the work of the Margate Task Force?

Answer

Both Live Margate and the Margate Task Force are programmes designed to tackle complex issues of the deprived wards of Cliftonville and Margate Central. KCC has been closely involved in these initiatives for many years.

Kent County Council has been and continues to work in collaboration with Thanet District Council, the Homes and Communities Agency, Townscape Heritage Initiative, University of Kent and the local community on the Live Margate Housing Initiative.

The overarching aim of the programme remains consistent to provide a focused approach to the housing market to promote a sustainable and balanced housing mix with the creation of quality family homes (through restoration and rebuild).

KCC has purchased five properties to date: **12a Dalby Square, 27 Edgar Road, 28 Edgar Road & 103 Norfolk Road** as well as **Hotel Leslie** (1-5 Surrey Road / Nautical Mews). The Hotel Leslie, a former House of Multiple Occupancy, was demolished to produce three town houses and two mews style properties. All units have sales agreed. We have already seen the benefits of the programme activity on the localised market.

With the private sector becoming increasingly active, there continues to be a need for intervention with the larger, more complex properties which remain a key focus for the programme and our partners.

KCC has been involved with the Margate Task Force since it was launched in 2012.

Trading Standards have a long established and productive relationship with the Margate Taskforce. A Trading Standards Officer is a nominated member of the taskforce and works from the taskforce base on a flexible basis. Intelligence Officers from the KCC Public Protection Group are also part of the taskforce and contribute to the wide ranging and free flowing sharing of information and intelligence aimed at supporting its work.

A Community Warden has been part of the Margate Task Force ever since it was launched, working in their role as KCC Warden but also being an integral part of the much larger joint enterprise MTF, comprising of up to 30 other staff.

Public Health continues to work with the Margate Taskforce, as this is seen as part of an integrated offer to improve the health and reduce health inequalities in Cliftonville West and Margate Central Wards. Public Health has facilitated local involvement of Health Improvement and Health Services such as Health Trainers, Health Visitors, Mental Health services and a local GP, with nationally recognised joint working between the GP and Job Centre Plus staff.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 16 July 2015

Question by Roger Latchford to Sean Holden, Deputy Cabinet Member for Economic Development

The Council on the 17 July 2014 were unanimous in their support of Manston remaining as an Airport a vote supported by your Cabinet Member. My question to you is will you tell the Council today why you attended a meeting 17 June 2015, representing KCC where Manston a site of such historical importance which proudly served our country has now lost its historical identity not only being renamed, but plans put forward to the site being converted to industrial use and housing in direct opposition, to the vote unanimously carried in this Chamber, of which you will be aware.

Answer

I attended the meeting to observe and then to report to the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Economic Development on the first public presentation of the plans of the owners of Stone Hill Park (formerly Manston). It must be right for the County Council to listen to so significant a business development proposal with its associated aviation heritage, housing and leisure elements.

Simply hearing their proposals in no way implies an endorsement of them. Neither, of itself, does it contradict the Council motion of July 17th last year. It would be negligent of the Council to ignore, as the question implies we should, a possible development of such importance to East Kent. KCC would pay similar close attention to any realistic proposal for Stone Hill Park. If Riveroak were to present a viable business plan as part of a compulsory purchase order by Thanet District Council then KCC would expect to go to that presentation. So far, no other plans have been forthcoming.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 16 July 2015

Question by Mike Baldock to Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport

Over a year ago the old A249 running through Chestnut Street and Danaway in Borden was resurfaced and loose chips laid down. To this day, despite several extra sweepings being carried out, those chips are still flying off the road hitting pedestrians, causing damage to cars and making the pavements very awkward to walk on. This phenomenon is not limited to those parts of the roads that may have cars parking on the road. I am aware that both the current Cabinet Member and his predecessor have been aware of the problem for some time.

I don't know if this case is typical with this particular method of resurfacing, or is this particular instance an aberration from the norm but I would ask the Cabinet Member to confirm today what steps has he taken to reduce the ongoing damage to people and property along this road, get the job done properly, and recompense those residents affected so adversely?

Answer

I have had recent correspondence with Mr Baldock on this issue regarding his concerns about the condition of the road outside Danaway Cottages, Borden. As stated in my latest response, surface dressing has been widely used across the country and in Kent for many years. It is a preventative treatment that can extend the life of roads for a fraction of the cost of the type of surfacing where the surface is removed and replaced. That means that we can resurface many more roads than we would be able to otherwise, making the maximum use of taxpayers' money, particularly during these austere times where the funding provided to local authorities has been reduced considerably. We have successfully resurfaced many hundreds of roads using this technique in recent years.

In light of Mr Baldock's continued concerns my officers have carried out a further review of the site and confirmed that there has not been a failure of the surface and that the chippings have bedded in sufficiently. We agree, however, that there are some chippings on some of the footways and in parking bays throughout the site, though some of this material appears to have come from gravel driveways in the area. We will arrange a further hand sweep of the footways.

If residents are willing to coordinate to arrange for all vehicles to be removed beforehand, I am willing to arrange a further sweep of the carriageway also. Our contact is Robert Seggie and his mobile number is 07787 571084.

Also, if residents believe that damage has been caused to their vehicles or property they have the option of making a claim for compensation and can request a claims form by calling 03000 418181.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 16 July 2015

Question by Martin Vye to Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Given that there is hard evidence that increasing numbers of our fellow-residents, including people in work, are having to make use of foodbanks and other forms of charity, and the Government's stated aim to cut a further £12bn from the social welfare budget is likely to make the situation worse.

Will the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health initiate an urgent investigation into ways in which emergency help can be coordinated across the county, in order to meet the need, and to prevent the demand for council services rising?

Answer

I thank Mr Vye for his question and share his concern to ensure that people in Kent who are experiencing an emergency or crisis should have access to appropriate help.

Although it is difficult to know exactly how many are using foodbanks the Kent Support and Assistance Service (KSAS) has successfully performed the role of coordinating a response to those in need facing an emergency or crisis, linking them to the network of available help, support and advice in their own communities.

Indeed only last week, KSAS was in Canterbury in Martin Vye's division alongside colleagues from Emergency Planning and the City Council, providing emergency help and support to the 92 people affected by a large fire in a block of flats which has sadly resulted in many homes needing to be demolished.

In addition to this highly effective service, our Transformation Programme is delivering our information and peer support service which can signpost and give advice to residents in a wide range of issues. Finally we are working to build capacity in local communities to focus on local solutions for residents in their own communities.

I believe these measures to be appropriate to ensure a coordinated response to those in need and believe the transformation work being undertaken will negate any need for the investigation suggested.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 16 July 2015

**Question by Brian Clark to Roger Gough, Cabinet Member
for Education and Health Reform**

With the recent news of the government's plan to automatically convert "inadequate" rated schools to academies, would the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform provide a detailed statement on KCC's support for "inadequate" rated schools in Kent. I would ask that his answer to my question includes how many cases KCC has challenged the findings of OfSTED in their judgment of individual schools, how many times they have been successful and, in light of the recent news that 40% of schools inspectors are deemed by Ofsted not good enough to assess schools reliably, provide details on any planned changes to its approach in supporting such schools

Answer

The new Government policy to automatically convert Ofsted rated inadequate schools to become sponsored academies is not a substantial change of approach. This has been more or less the practice for some time, but it has not occurred in all cases in Kent when we have been able to demonstrate an alternative plan is in place to improve the school.

The Local Authority knows all its schools well, analyses all performance data and inspection outcomes and uses the feedback and monitoring arrangements carried out by School Improvement Advisers to categorise schools and allocate resources and packages to support their improvement, according to need. Our strategy has been to ensure schools do not go into an Ofsted category of concern, and for those that have done so to ensure they are improved quickly.

This approach has been very successful and has resulted in a good rate of school improvement overall and a significant reduction in the number of inadequate schools in Kent (29 schools in September 2014 reduced to 13 schools in July 2015). This is 2.5% of schools in Kent, which is below the national average for this category of schools. In the last school year only four schools were judged inadequate.

Now, 82% of schools overall in Kent are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted compared to only 55% in September 2011.

We provide intensive support for schools judged by Ofsted to be inadequate. This is provided through a Senior Improvement Adviser, and it is usually accompanied by support from another more effective school and its Headteacher. There is support to ensure there is an effective post inspection Statement of Action and regular monitoring of progress against this action plan, together with targeted leadership and management development for the leadership and the governors. Where a school has had to become a sponsored academy the LA works closely

with the Office of the Regional Schools Commissioner to ensure the best sponsorship arrangement. This has been necessary in very few cases in Kent.

There are no plans to change the approach to supporting such schools but we will continue to work in partnership with schools, DfE and Ofsted to ensure the best possible outcome for children and young people in all Kent schools. The Local Authority has not challenged the findings of any Ofsted inadequate judgements, but any such challenge would normally be expected to come from the school. However, the LA has supported some schools to complain about other Ofsted judgements in a small number of cases.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 16 July 2015

Question by George Koowaree to Gary Cooke, Cabinet Member for Corporate & Democratic Services.

Given the need to ensure that member training sessions and briefings are available as widely as possible will the Cabinet member for Corporate and Democratic Services please say how many such briefings in the last year have been recorded for use by members and officers unable to attend?"

Answer

Can I thank George for his thoughtful question. He will be aware of how seriously we as an Authority take the issue not only of Member training but training and development in general.

He will also recognise I hope that training and briefing sessions not only need to be widely available but it is important that training and briefing is also appropriate. Accordingly this comes to Members at two levels:

1. What we do as an Authority; and
2. What we do for ourselves through the e learning portal

To date it has not been possible to record training sessions. However, this remains something that we are keen to provide for Members when the opportunity presents itself within the resources available.

I am keen to ensure that Members have every opportunity to involve themselves in briefings and training which includes:

1. Bespoke training for individual Members;
2. Tuesday afternoon Member Briefings;
3. Member Showcase events;
4. Webinars;
5. Uploading of pre-recorded Member Briefings to the KNet Member Area which will shortly be re-developed ;
6. Development of the e learning Member portal;
7. Joint Member and Officer training sessions; and
8. Bespoke Briefing sessions as part of the regular business at the conclusion of a Committee meeting.