



County Council Questions and Answers

7 December 2017

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COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 7 December 2017

**Question by Harry Rayner to Matthew Balfour,
Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport**

Please confirm that the Council is taking all possible steps to have the Environment Agency implement the agreed improvements to the River Medway flood protection measures in Hildenborough (Flood Defence Fund) and Tonbridge (Leigh Flood Barrier); and further confirm that the above joint works remains on schedule for completion?

Answer

I am delighted to confirm that the Environment Agency is progressing the Leigh Expansion and Hildenborough Embankments scheme. They have completed the Outline Business Case and are currently working on the Strategic Business Case which are both requirements of the Treasury to secure the government contribution. We are also working with them to prepare the Business Case for the Local Growth Fund allocation to the project, which will be submitted in the New Year. KCC has also committed its own contribution of £2.5m to the scheme and we are currently finalising the legal agreement for this contribution. The scheme remains on track for completion in 2021/22.

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Question by Karen Constantine to Paul Carter, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Traded Services and Health Reform

Given the growing public concerns over the future of our 3 hospitals Kent and Canterbury, QEQM and William Harvey, given that the services people want cannot be delivered under Option 1 or Option 2 isn't time for KCC and HOSC to seek to meet with and call upon Jeremy Hunt for adequate funding?

Answer

I too am seriously concerned about the two options currently being proposed for a public consultation by East Kent Hospital Trust. I believe a third option should be developed. The third option would deliver a newly constructed hospital for Canterbury to serve its existing catchment area, currently serving a population of 240,000. The population is projected to rise to 280,000 by 2030, under the KEOGH published guidance for hospital reconfigurations, particularly relating to the guidance for 'urgent and emergency care', for populations in the range of 250,000-300,000 would support what is referred to as a medical emergency centre which would provide the following services:

- Consultant led A&E
- Acute medicine and critical care/ HDU
- Access to surgical opinion via network
- Possibly paediatrics assessment unit and possibly midwife-led obstetrics.

We urge our health colleagues to include this option prior to any public consultation. This proposition was discussed with partners at Monday's STP Programme Board and as a conclusion; a meeting will be arranged with health professionals to discuss the possibility of taking this option forward. The Leader of Canterbury City Council, Simon Cook, is very much in support of the third option and has been invited to the meeting.

I am on record as stating at the recent HOSC meeting where this subject was discussed, that if a third option did not come forward, the two option proposal is likely to end up on the desk of the Secretary of State for Health, Jeremy Hunt.

In relation to funding, I am sure we all welcome the recent announcement in last week's Autumn Budget, which announced an additional £3.8billion for the National Health Service.

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**Question by Rob Bird to Paul Carter, Leader of the Council and
Cabinet Member for Traded Services and Health Reform**

Every new housing development in Kent puts an additional burden on this council in terms of roads, schools, other educational amenities, libraries and many other vital public services. It is crucial therefore that KCC gets all the developer contributions it needs to meet these demands. Clearly, KCC needs to work hand in hand with district councils and our approach needs to reflect any changes to the legislative and environmental background.

The KCC Guide to Development Contributions and the Provision of Community Infrastructure was produced almost 10 years ago. Does the Leader consider this guidance document to be fit for purpose and, if not, will he arrange for it to be revised as a matter of urgency?

Answer

Developer contributions offer an important source of funding to contribute towards the delivery of infrastructure. Kent County Council currently performs well, securing an average of eight thousand pounds per dwelling in a typical large development. However, we believe that with a significant overhaul and review by government of the current system, a new arrangement has the potential to deliver a simpler, tariff-led system that reflects residential land values across an area and has the potential to deliver funding of at least two to three times multiple of the current, complex arrangements.

Encouragingly, last month the Chancellor announced that the Government would next year review the current system of collecting development contributions and how it could potentially be streamlined and improved.

Specific to the question, it is considered that the current methodology for calculating developer contributions set out in the 2007 Guide to Development Contributions does remain fit for purpose. Whilst the document may have been published ten years ago, the appropriate costs which are used to secure contributions are updated regularly, ensuring that KCC always seeks to recover the maximum level of funding that it can within the failings of the current system. The methodology is well tested and accepted by district planning committees.

KCC will next year publish an updated Guide to Development Contributions as well as a refreshed Kent Design Guide to provide a comprehensive set of design standards to ensure that all new development results in vibrant, safe, attractive places supported by the right level of infrastructure whilst we await the outcome of the government's review.

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**Question by Dara Farrell to Paul Carter, Leader of the Council and
Cabinet Member for Traded Services and Health Reform**

Can the leader update the Council on his recent efforts to lobby government on the issue of funding for vital public services?

Answer

The list is fairly comprehensive and I have lobbied both on the behalf of Kent County Council (KCC) and as Chairman of the County Councils Network (CCN).

For local government services, I have lobbied strongly and consistently for additional funding for social care and more broadly for additional funding to meet atypical financial pressures placed on local government against the backdrop of diminishing Revenue Support Grant (RSG). This culminated in BCF1 being delivered in March this year which delivered £2billion additional funding over the next three years to be applied against three criteria to improve DETOC figures, strengthen care markets, and support demand-led pressures on social care budgets. For Kent, this equates to circa £51million over the next three years.

The local government settlement is expected in the next few weeks and is eagerly awaited. KCC and CCN has been actively lobbying for an extension to the transitional grant which was introduced by Greg Clark when he was the Secretary of State for local government some two years ago which ends this financial year – worth currently £7m to KCC. We await the local government settlement to see if we have been successful.

We continue to fight for a new fair, needs-led, evidence based funding methodology for local government before Business Rate Retention is introduced which should, if fair and needs-led will undoubtedly see additional funding flowing to County Councils.

On schools funding KCC has played an active role in the F40 Group which represents a group of the lowest funded education authorities in England where government-set cash allocations for primary and secondary pupils are the lowest in the country, who have been lobbying for a fairer national funding model for schools. We welcome with some reservations the new national Funding Formula for Schools which will see Kent being the recipient of an additional £62.1million once the National Funding Formula is fully implemented.

On the funding for public health services, when every opportunity arises I continue to remind Ministers and senior health officials that the per capita funding methodology for public health services is out of date, unfair and not proportional to need. For example, the City of London receives £191 per head, which KCC receives only £45 per head for the public health grant.

On the funding for NHS services in Kent, I use every opportunity to lobby for change in the formula which delivers the per capita allocation to fund health services. Again, this does not reflect the demand, particularly failing to reflect demographic demands.

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**Question by Antony Hook to Matthew Balfour,
Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transportation & Waste**

The many large lorries coming into small town and village streets in Kent, such as Ospringe Street in Faversham, are a problem in our county, causing damage to buildings, poor air quality, excessive noise and increased danger to pedestrians.

Will the Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transportation & Waste agree actions to deal with these problems, striking a proper balance between economic development and quality of life, and without any prejudice to the independent decision making of the County Council's Planning Committee, join me in opposing the application by a skip carrying company (East Kent Recycling) to bring an additional 480 lorries per week through Faversham and nearby villages

Answer

The County Council takes matters of freight management very seriously and has developed the Kent Freight Management Plan in order to address some of the very valid concerns of residents. We are already working closely with Swale Borough Council setting up the pilot ECTO Stars Scheme in 2016 with a number of large operators based in the borough. The ECO Stars Scheme provides public recognition for operators, who are actively taking steps to improve efficiency, reduce fuel consumption and reduce their impact on local air quality. The Scheme provides support for operators in better fuel management and driver training.

KCC has also developed and adapted the Freight Journey Planner tool, an online mapping tool specific to HGVs that allows drivers to plan the most effective routes within Kent and avoid those streets with weight, height and width restrictions.

In respect of the planning application mentioned, officers had been asked to ensure reference was made to the above measures, which they did in their response on 31 October. I am also informed that the applicant has state that the vehicles using the site would meet the Euro V1 emissions standards. Matters regarding the control of air quality within your local Air Quality Management Area are however the responsibility of officers of Swale Borough Council. I would hope therefore that they respond accordingly. As a matter of course, our own officers will always seek appropriate mitigation from such applications to ensure the operation and safety of highways are not compromised.