

**FULL COUNCIL – 27 FEBRUARY 2023 – QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS
UNDER STANDING ORDER 22A**

First Questions

Question 1

From Cllr Barry Dunning to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Coastal Services, Cllr Steve Davies

There is a concern with my constituents relating to “wheelie bin blight” where bins will be adopted in areas that are inappropriate, for example in terraced streets or flats.

We have been assured that the areas that are appropriate for wheelie bins will be identified.

Can the Portfolio Holder assure me that this consultation will be completed before the wheelie bins are introduced?

Answer:

We can confirm that intend to have the process of property surveying complete by the end of the year (2023). This will enable us to account for properties not suitable for the wheeled bin service during the rollout of the garden waste wheeled bins, that will start to be delivered to customers in January 2024.

We want to work with the external property survey supplier to devise a criteria for assessing the suitability of properties for wheeled bins to ensure continuity and fairness across the district. These criteria will include things like access, storage space available for wheeled bins, and the presence of steps required for wheeled bins. Gathering this information via a survey will help ensure smooth roll out of the new service for both residents and staff.

We are confident that accounting for access and storage constraints, combined with a clear communications policy will ensure that wheeled bins are not left on the public highway.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on the guidance for sorting food waste appropriately, the Portfolio Holder confirmed there would be in due course a clear communications strategy for food waste and indeed all aspects of waste.

Question 2

From Cllr Kate Crisell to the Portfolio Holder for People and Places, Cllr David Russell

During the current planting season how many trees has the Council purchased for planting?

Answer:

We will have planted 296 new trees and 720 young tree whips across the Forest this planting season.

The figure includes 60 Trees celebrating the Queens Jubilee and the woodland planting with local school children at Fawley Fields, that were funded through grant funding.

Question 3

From Cllr Malcolm Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Partnering and Wellbeing, Cllr Geoff Blunden

How many instances of criminal activities have been recorded by our CCTV cameras in our towns and villages of which how many have the Police been able to view and of those how many resulted in criminal prosecutions?

Answer:

Public space cameras operate in 7 towns and villages across the district providing an active deterrence to crime and disorder, ensuring the New Forest remains a safe place to live, work and visit. The service monitors and reviews many hundreds of hours of CCTV footage which may be used in criminal or civil proceedings. Between January and December 2022, the service has actively tracked 527 offences consisting of burglaries, assaults, criminal damage, anti-social behaviour and the locating of missing or vulnerable people. The CCTV control room transmit all live incidents to the Police Control Room so Police can actively view footage.

Evidence packages, consisting of many hours of footage, were supplied to the Police and the Crown Prosecution Service for the use in criminal investigations over the last year.

Once the transfer of footage to the Police is complete, the constabulary become the data owner. The conclusion of any investigation or prosecutions can take many months, if not longer, and the CCTV service is not privy to prosecutions or case outcomes.

As Portfolio Holder, I am very proud that we are able to deliver a 24 hour CCTV service providing protection and support for both our residents and the Police.

Question 4

From Cllr Caroline Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for People and Places, Cllr David Russell

What are the ultimate intentions for funding for Eling Tide Mill? Withdrawal of funding at this time of hardship for all council facilities can only jeopardise the arrangement with the Town Council, since the lease of the listed tide mill and thus its upkeep rests ultimately with NFDC anyway.

Answer:

It is clear to the District Council that there is a need for a review of the Eling Tide Mill offer post covid. It has been suggested to the Town Council that work was commissioned to test whether the current offer will generate sufficient footfall in the future to realise the income needed. At the present time the Town Council has not produced an up to date Business Plan. The District Council has been working to address some of the maintenance issues that have been identified and will be responsible for undertaking these works. A survey is being commissioned to assess the condition of the bridge and the Quay wall and the District Council is funding this work. No funding has been withdrawn, the District Council continues to maintain the property and act in accordance with the Agreement that exists between it and the Town Council.

Note – in response to a supplementary question seeking a guarantee to assist with the building, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that as a Grade II listed building, the Council would meet its responsibility in this regard and would continue to.

Question 5

From Cllr Alex Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness Services, Cllr Edward Heron

With the challenges faced with costs, delays in building works, among other issues does he believe the target of 600 homes will be achieved by 2026? And does the back and forth over Lymington Police Station highlight that this and similar sites could make a real difference to the Homes we need in our District?

Answer:

I do believe that the figure of 600 will be achieved. Regarding the back and forth, the figure of 600 is only achievable through the amazing work of the Council's team for acquiring and developing Council housing. The team are quite used to back and forth on many sites, and it is not unusual in the process.

Note – in response to a supplementary question on other opportunities in empty units, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the team was constantly looking at opportunities. He encouraged councillors to inform the team of any opportunities within their individual wards.

Question 6

From Cllr Christine Ward to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure, Cllr Diane Andrews

Can you confirm that NFDC will be sending a full response to the Government's Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill; Reforms to National Planning Policy consultation and that the draft response will welcome the proposed strengthening of emphasis on placemaking and local design codes? Can I also ask whether officers will be making positive comment about the proposed strengthening of Green Belt policy in Plan Making?

Answer:

I can confirm that a full response will be sent to the consultation, the draft response to the 58 questions asked in the consultation will be considered by Cabinet on Wednesday 1st March. It is encouraging that the consultation reflects the importance of place making and using the planning system to create thriving environments where both people and nature thrive. Given the special and diverse character of our district it is also positive that the consultation recognises that local design codes are needed to retain local distinctiveness and sense of place.

Furthermore, given the national pressure to deliver housing, large amounts of Green Belt have been released nationally over the past decade or so. The proposed strengthening of Green Belt policy in Plan Making must be welcome if nationally and locally we are to retain the sense of openness in the landscape and the role this plays in our climate and nature and health and well-being agenda.

Question 7

From Cllr Jack Davies to the Portfolio Holder for People and Places, Cllr David Russell

I engaged with officers a while back regarding an abandoned hippo bag dumped on the corner of Bays Rod in Pennington. I was told it was not fly-tipping, and so was Hippo's responsibility. But if it is abandoned, then it is fly-tipping. I have not heard back on what

solution has been found and residents are shocked it has still not been removed. Can the Portfolio Holder guarantee it will be removed by NFDC this month?

Answer:

The 'Hippo Bag' was investigated by the Council's enforcement team. Contact was made with Hippo, who were unable to identify where the bag had come from. In the absence of a user of the bag or Hippo arranging collection, Council resources will be used to uplift the bag and dispose of it w/c 27th Feb. We will follow up with Hippo Customer services to make them aware of our resource cost to determine if this can be recovered.

Overall Fly Tipping is being addressed effectively across the Forest with Streetscene and Enforcement colleagues working effectively to gather data that can 'make the polluter pay', leading to increased fines and a reduction in Fly Tipping.

In 2022 calendar year there was a 10% reduction in flytipping incidents reported to NFDC by the public. In the same period there was a four-fold increase in flytipping investigations carried out, and an increase in fixed penalty notices from 27 in 2021 to 264 in 2022.

We hope to further enhance the impact by deploying mobile cameras and by employing a specialist who will help run campaigns to help reduce behaviour which results in litter being dropped and fly tipping by building respect for the local environments.

Note – this question was dealt with in writing in the absence of Cllr J Davies.

Second Questions

Question 8

From Cllr Caroline Rackham to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

Can the Leader of the Council assure us that devastating scenes reported in January from the freeport in Teesside, of dead and dying marine life will not happen here and that any industry that could threaten wildlife in this manner will not be allowed to be part of the local freeport in our area?

Answer:

As this Council has done many times before I can assure Cllr Rackham and those who raise related concerns, that the designation of areas as tax sites within the Solent Freeport does not change any regulatory framework that exists and so all the protections and oversight of regulatory bodies such as the Environment Agency remain in place.

Note – in response to a supplementary question with regard to Dibden Bay, the Leader reiterated that the environmental protections remained in place.