

FULL COUNCIL – 11 DECEMBER 2023 – QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 22

First Questions

Question 1

From Cllr Parker to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary

I have been made aware of yet another sizeable sewage leak at a Southern Water run pumping station in the New Forest - this time at Flexford Lane, Sway.

I was delighted that the leader shared my concerns about the sewage discharge near Lyndhurst in September and agreed that pollution of our rivers and land is unacceptable. She will recall that she committed in her statement of 11 September 2023 to this council that “the District Council will do all it can to support [the Environment Agency]” and that the Council would “continue to work hard with our partners to protect and improve [the New Forest environment]”.

The Leader will recall that in 2021 Southern Water was fined £90m for deliberately dumping billions of litres of raw sewage into the Beaulieu River and other sites. Then, just last month, over 18,000 households in our District, including residents in my ward of Brockenhurst and Denny Lodge, had no water supply due to the shutdown of the Testwood Water Supply Works. Most recently I have had videos and photos shared with me of raw sewage running into a stream at Flexford Lane water Works in Sway, with toilet paper clinging to the verges.

The ongoing impact of these failings cannot continue to simply be accepted by this Council. Therefore will the leader please detail all actions taken by the Council since her statement of the 11 September 2023 to support enforcement efforts and protect the New Forest environment? Will she also lay out her plans for the coming weeks and months to ensure that our residents have both the unique environment in which we all live and their water supply protected?

Question 2

From Cllr Woods to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden

Fordingbridge Surgery recently contacted me about the increase in the price of the parking clocks. Specifically, they informed me that one member of staff has decided to leave to go to a job where they don't have to pay to park. In light of the failure to consult businesses and services before forcing through this massive increase, would the Portfolio Holder consider introducing a discounted parking clock for local businesses?

Question 3

From Cllr J Davies to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, Cllr Poole

Following news of a further planned bailout, this would now be the 2nd bailout by New Forest Taxpayers since Freedom Leisure were handed the leisure centre contract. Does the Portfolio Holder agree that the Council should have done what the Liberal Democrats proposed at the time and waited until we were out of covid to decide what to do with the leisure service?

Question 4

From Cllr M Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing, Cllr Poole

In the year ending July 2022 there were 12,174 incidents of reported crime in the New Forest district a 17.3% rise on the previous year ending in July 2021, What is this authority doing to combat this growth in crime beyond putting in some more CCTV cameras?

Question 5

From Cllr Clark to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden

Following the recent announcement that the costs for implementing the Waste Strategy have now changed due to Government intervention. How much can we expect back from the Government on wasted costs, or will all be passed on to our Residents and taxpayers?

Question 6

From Cllr Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden

Parking charges are bringing in £1.2million but costs of car park maintenance are approximately £400,000 annually. Can the portfolio holder please explain what the excess profit is to be spent on?

Question 7

From Cllr Brand to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Tipp

One of the key activities of the Business, Tourism and High Street Portfolio is to – identify all businesses in the District and target engagement with them. Could the Portfolio holder explain what this means and what this looks like?

Question 8

From Cllr Millar to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden

Although many residents support this Council's move to adopting wheelie bins, many do not. And on both sides there are people who are concerned about the implementation process, and in particular, where such bins will be stored. For example, a sizeable number of properties in Fordingbridge were built with brick bin stores, designed to hold dustbins. They will not be suitable for wheelie bins. Residents have been told that NFDC will be carrying out a survey of properties across the district to identify which properties will need alternatives to wheelie bins.

How is this assessment being conducted? Has any of Fordingbridge, Godshill and Hyde been surveyed? And are residents being engaged in the process? Our experience so far is that any assessment seems to be being carried out without any engagement with the local community, who are unaware of when to expect an assessment, how they might highlight their particular circumstances to officers, where to find the result for their household and how to appeal.

Question 9

From Cllr Haywood to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary

Members will likely have read in the press of the closure, by its current owners Carlsberg Marstons, of the Ringwood Brewery on Christchurch Road in Ringwood. From January, brewing and distribution of Ringwood ales there will cease, brewing transferring to the Midlands and distribution transferring well outside our district, with the sad loss of 10 jobs. Ringwood Brewery is highly regarded around the world as a trailblazer in the revival of traditional English ale and is a popular brand throughout our country. It is a source of pride for many in Ringwood and more widely in the New Forest. Can I ask the Leader what steps this council has taken to help retain this iconic brand in its home town?

Second Questions

Question 10

From Cllr Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden

Our residents have recently had to contend with flooding, cut off water supply, sewerage dumps in rivers on numerous occasions and now a major issue with sewerage collection at Totton. I wonder if the council can acknowledge that Southern Water seems unable to provide an adequate service and look again at how NFDC should be planning for ongoing help to residents with not only Flood Action Plans for each area but also Water Collection and Supply Emergency planning to further support the residents where Southern Water is unable to do so.

Question 11

From Cllr Haywood to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate, Cllr Heron

When people face significant changes to their detriment, it is normal to expect that some change their behaviour to avoid that detriment. This behaviour change can also have indirect side effects in areas seemingly loosely connected to the change in question. Given the eye-watering increase in long stay parking charges, what modelling of such behaviour change has this council done, if so what did that modelling reveal and does it anticipate any impact on its headline revenue increase from this?