

Council – 26 February 2026
Questions Under Standing Order 22

First Questions

Question 1

From Cllr Hilary Brand to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Geoffrey Blunden

We have been informed that the Wheelie bin roll out for Phase 3 has been delayed until May 2026 due to wheelie bin manufacturing schedules. Does this include a delay to the food waste collection?

Reply:

Yes.

Note: This question was dealt with in writing in the absence of Cllr Brand.

Question 2

From Cllr Mark Clark to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Derek Tipp

How many conservation officers did we have five years ago and how many now?

Reply:

Five years ago, there were two conservation officers in post. Today, we continue to have two conservation officers.

Question 3

From Cllr David Millar to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Derek Tipp

Storm Chandra struck on 26 January, and since then sustained rainfall has left many parts of our district flooded, roads impassable, farmland waterlogged and businesses disrupted. In Fordingbridge, residents have again experienced how vulnerable the town is to prolonged rainfall – for many, this is the fourth or fifth ‘100 year event’ they have lived through in the last 25 years.

At the Local Plan meeting on Friday 13th, around 250 residents braved the conditions hoping to gain assurance as to how this council's potential allocation of almost 3,000 new homes in and around Fordingbridge would avoid worsening flood risk and bringing more infrastructure pressure.

Given the very real concerns raised by residents, can you confirm that the Council will:

1. Ensure that flood mitigation and infrastructure are designed and delivered in advance of or alongside any future development;
2. Take the lead on identifying projects which will mitigate the impact of building on farmland and flood plains across the Avon valley; and
3. Use NFDC's strategic Community Infrastructure Levy to guarantee that existing and future residents of Fordingbridge are not left living in demonstrably worse conditions just so that this Council might meet Government housing targets?

Reply:

Let me assure you that the Local Plan does take flood risk and infrastructure capacity extremely seriously.

I can confirm that any future development would only proceed where robust flood mitigation is designed into schemes from the outset and delivered in step with the development. This is a requirement of national policy, and it will be a clear expectation in our plan-making.

We are already working with partners such as the Environment Agency and Hampshire County Council to understand what wider mitigation projects are needed across the Avon Valley.

Part of the Local plan process is to identify those strategic measures and the council will play a key role in coordinating that work. Regarding infrastructure funding, the Community Infrastructure Levy is one of the main funding streams to support areas experiencing growth.

As the local plan progresses, we will ensure that the needs of Fordingbridge are properly considered when CIL is prioritised. At this stage, no decisions have been made on the strategic allocations for the local plan.

Question 4

From Cllr Alex Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Geoffrey Blunden

Please can you confirm in the Phase 3 area how many properties have requested assisted collections for the new waste collection service, and what per cent have we rejected? And, what consideration are we giving to Resident challenges on medical waste additional requirements?

Reply:

In January our 'Get Ready' leaflets were posted out to 36,000 households in the phase 3 area, and by 24th February, there were 63 applications for assisted collections received. All of these have been accepted as the applicants met the requirements.

Regarding medical waste requirements, our collection policy is clear that additional waste capacity can be made available in this situation. Members of the public can request this larger capacity online, or by calling our customer service team.

In response to a supplemental question, seeking clarification whether there was a deadline for submission of assisted collection requests, the Portfolio Holder reported that it was an ongoing process and therefore there was no deadline.

Question 5

From Cllr John Haywood to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Derek Tipp

A number of parishes in the district now have Neighbourhood Plans. Neighbourhood Plans represent the end point of years of effort, a large part of it done by volunteers. People who are passionate about their area freely give their time to shape its development at a very local level, supported by planning professionals.

Neighbourhood plans are the only part of the district's local plan that have a direct democratic basis through a local referendum, and once made, they become an integral part of the local plan itself. Congratulations by the way to Lymington and Pennington for the clear "Yes" in their Neighbourhood Plan referendum.

In Ringwood we are becoming frustrated by the number of times that neighbourhood plan policies are being over-ridden by this council in planning decisions.

Can I ask the portfolio holder: in how many planning decisions have neighbourhood plan policies been over-ridden by this council in the past year?

Reply:

Six planning applications have been considered by the Planning Committee since January 2025 where a conflict with a Neighbourhood Plan has been identified. Despite these occasional conflicts, the Neighbourhood Plans still have influence over development in many ways.

A Neighbourhood Plan, once adopted, becomes part of the Council's overall Development Plan, along with the Local Plan and the Hampshire County Council Mineral and Waste Plan.

These plans contain many policies and some of these may, on occasions conflict with one another. In that case on an individual application, it is up to the decision maker, such as the Planning Committee, to weigh up the relevant policies and decide where the balance lies. In other words, to make a planning judgment.

Finally, I would like to confirm that the Council welcomes the production of Neighbourhood Plans, and we will continue to assist local planning groups to prepare sound plans. I too would like to congratulate Lymington and Pennington on the successful referendum on their plan.

Note: This question was dealt with in writing in the absence of Cllr Haywood.

Second questions

Question 6

From Cllr Mark Clark to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Derek Tipp

Can the Council consider issuing a Section 48 Notice to the Owner of the Hythe Pier to effect immediate repairs to the structure given the Ferry business is now up for sale and the public would wish to see the return of the Ferry service to a sound and safe landing stage?

Reply:

Thank you, Councillor Clark, for your question.

Under the Planning Listed Buildings and Conservation Area Act 1990 legislation, a Section 48 Repairs Notice can only require works that are reasonably necessary for the proper preservation of the listed structure. If the repairs in question relate to the pontoon rather than the listed pier structure, it is doubtful as to whether the Council could legally serve such a notice.

If you would like to explore the matter further, particularly in terms of what is or is not included within the listing and what powers may be available, I would encourage you to speak directly with our conservation officers, who will be happy to advise.

In response to a supplemental question, where Cllr Clark clarified that the concern related to the pier, rather than the pontoon, and that electrical issues on the pier work was preventing residents from accessing to the inscribed boards of their loved ones and whether anything could be done given its Grade II listed status, the Portfolio Holder reported that he would pass this matter onto the Conservation Officer to consider.

Question 7

From Cllr John Haywood to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Geoffrey Blunden

A number of residents have approached me with concerns about vermin infestations in their gardens and homes being caused by the council's new food waste collection service.

Can I ask the portfolio holder if the council has seen an increase in reports of vermin across the district since the roll-out, and if any investigations into the impact of the new food waste collection service on vermin infestations have been made?

Reply:

The council has no evidence that there is an increase in vermin infestations being caused by food waste collections. In fact, reports to the Council's own pest control service have fallen by 130 cases in the last year, as the caddies have clearly contributed to more secure way of storing food waste than the plastic bags previously used, with reports of street litter on collection days almost eradicated.

Note: This question was dealt with in writing in the absence of Cllr Haywood.