

Special Council – 25 September 2025

Questions Under Standing Order 22

First Questions

Question 1

From Cllr David Harrison to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

How can you present a united case for reorganisation when your own councillors can't agree which side they're on?

Note: Cllr Harrison withdrew his question in light of the debate on the previous agenda item.

Question 2

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

If adult social care isn't fragmented and unstable, why does your own evidence say it is?

Note: Cllr Rackham withdrew her question in light of the debate on the previous agenda item.

Question 3

From Cllr Colm McCarthy to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

How can you defend a case the NHS itself has branded 'damaging' and 'unprofessional'?

Note: Cllr McCarthy withdrew his question in light of the debate on the previous agenda item.

Question 4

From Cllr Stephanie Osborne to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

Page 120 says the County was 'unwilling to discuss' district concerns — who is telling the truth, you or Cllr Adams-King?

Reply

A meeting was held on 9th July with Hampshire County Council, East Hampshire, and Gosport to present the three options under consideration and to invite feedback. During that session, we posed a series of questions about the options, including their strengths, challenges, and any concerns or suggestions. However, the County Council did not provide any views in the meeting and instead directed us to their own report, which was due to be published later that day, for any formal response.

This is a matter of public record and reflects the County's chosen approach to engagement at that stage. It's not about assigning blame - it's about acknowledging that meaningful dialogue didn't take place at that point, despite efforts to create space for it.

What's important now is that we focus on the future. Option 1 presents a real opportunity to move beyond fragmented structures and build a truly place-based model of local government - one that is responsive, integrated, and shaped by the voices of all partners and communities. We remain committed to working constructively with all councils to achieve the best outcome for residents.

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

Question 5

From Cllr Mark Clark to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

Two of your own Tory councillors, Michael Thierry and Barry Dunning, voted with Hampshire County Council and against New Forest District's submission. If even your side can't back the case you signed, why should residents believe it's credible?

Note: Cllr M Clark withdrew his question in light of the debate on the previous agenda item.

Question 6

From Cllr Alex Wade to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

What effort will be made by NFDC to present what Options 2 and 3 could mean for our Residents and provide a clear view of the likelihood of either proposals not favoured by NFDC being the final outcome?

Reply

Let me begin by saying that while none of us have a crystal ball to predict the final decision of Government, what we do have is a strong, evidence-based case for Option 1 - a case that puts our residents first, protects local services, and strengthens local democracy.

That said, we recognise the importance of our residents' engagement in whatever the outcome might be. As the programme progresses, we will ensure that residents are kept informed. We are committed to presenting what this could mean for our communities in a clear and accessible way.

Ultimately, our focus remains on securing the best possible outcome for the New Forest and its people. And we will continue to advocate for that with integrity and transparency.

In response to a supplementary question regarding clear messaging to residents recognising that the District Council would be a consultee, and not the decision maker in relation to any new unitary authority, it was confirmed that there would be clear communication to local residents to convey that the final decision would be taken by the government and not the district council.

Second Questions

Question 7

From Cllr Mark Clark to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

Do you accept that Thierry and Dunning voting against their own district's position shows party loyalty mattered more to them than representing New Forest residents?

Note: Cllr M Clark withdrew his question in light of the debate on the previous agenda item.