

Item 9 – Questions Received under Standing Order 27.4.1

	Question From	Question to	Question
1	Councillor Coates	Councillor Rennie	<p>'Some Members may already be aware of the large-scale 80th Anniversary D-Day event being planned on Hayling Island on Thursday 6th June 2024. The Royal Marine Concert Band are now confirmed and a Spitfire and Red Arrows flyover planned, along with combined displays from the emergency services and military, with open-top buses taking visitors to and from Ferry Point. Hayling's beacon will be the second to be lit, after our neighbours on Portsea Island, and various VIPs will be in attendance.</p> <p>I'd be grateful if the Leader could publicly confirm the support he has given the event to date and, moving forwards, will the Council be doing their best to highlight the important role our Borough played during World War Two in the build up to the 80th Anniversary of D-Day, so residents and young people in particular are aware of the role our Borough played in defeating fascism and reinstalling democratic freedom and tolerance?'</p>
<p>Reply:</p> <p>Thank you very much to Councillor Coates for highlighting this event, and the important anniversary it commemorates. As the Councillor is aware, I am meeting parties involved in this matter soon, and will be pleased to discuss matters with them, at that time, as I would with any group that wished to plan an event to mark a key occasion.</p> <p>The efforts being made by so many to recognise both the 80th Anniversary of D-Day, and the role of Hayling Island are very important and I'm sure will supplement the national events taking place in Portsmouth.</p> <p>We would continue discussion on any necessary actions on road closures, licencing, risk assessments, insurance, clean up and any other logistical matters. We have a good track record of helping events in the community, and supporting those who want to hold them, and will here. We would only encourage early engagement, to ensure it goes smoothly. And, yes, we would be very pleased to support promotion of such events, and communication of the very rich history which surround them.</p>			

	Question From	Question to	Question
			<p>We would emphasise that, the Council is very proud to recognise and celebrate the contribution made by the people in all parts of the Borough, both in regards to the significant events on and around D-Day, and in all conflicts before and since. We have strong traditions in regards to making such contributions, which continue to this very day, with our overt support for the people of Ukraine, Syria and Afghanistan. In that vein, this support and recognition, extends across the whole of the Borough, both for the 80th Anniversary of D-Day, and commemorative events which follow.</p> <p>I and other Councillors look forward to discussing this event, and others planned, in the coming months.</p>
2	Councillor Munday	Councillor Fairhurst	<p>With regard to the essential repairs to Langstone sea wall, we appear to have reached something of an impasse with Natural England. They are currently refusing to allow us to make repairs to the sea wall because it contradicts their policy of 'managed retreat' allowing the sea to take over coastline in Chichester harbour in order to protect the biodiversity of the Harbour.</p> <p>In order to strengthen our case that Langstone Millpond has a particular value to wildlife and our residents, could we please ask our legal team to investigate any precedents where Natural England have made special allowances?</p>
	<p>Reply: Natural England (NE) have stated that they would not be likely to assent a public body, or consent an owner / occupier, to make repairs to the sea wall from Langstone Mill Pond to Wade Lane. NE assent / consent would be required for any maintenance repairs at this location, given its proximity to the Chichester Harbour Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In addition, a Flood Risk Activity Permit, and Harbour Works Licence would be required from the Environment Agency and the Chichester Harbour Conservancy respectively. Our webpages here have further details: https://coastalpartners.org.uk/langstone-coastal-path-consenting-guide</p> <p>Natural England have strongly advised the Council that they believe it to be much better to work collectively to agree longer term solutions such as roll-back of the footpath, and do not see a necessity for costly and potentially environmentally damaging repairs, either in the short or long term, to the sea wall. Similar strong views supporting the adaptation of the harbour, rolling back the footpath, have been expressed by the Environment Agency, Chichester Harbour Conservancy, and Rebecca Pow MP, Minister for Environment, Quality and Resilience. Reasoning for this advice is that Natural England published their Condition Review of the Chichester Harbour intertidal, subtidal and bird features in February 2021, which were assessed as unfavourable declining condition.</p>		

	Question From	Question to	Question
			<p>This was largely attributed to the continued loss of the extent of the saltmarsh and poor-quality saltmarsh and mudflat habitat, partly attributable to coastal defences causing coastal squeeze. HBC has also found from stakeholder responses that all our partners support the need for a Chichester Harbour Investment and Adaptation Plan to take a harbour wide approach to coastal management in the Harbour. https://issuu.com/coastalpartners/docs/letters?fr=xKAE9_zU1NQ .</p> <p>Given this level of strong advice from our regulatory partners, officers consider it unwise for HBC to seek ascent, a works licences, and flood risk activity permit for maintenance works, which would have a high probability of being refused. (A good comparison of a similar situation would be a planning applicant receiving pre-app advise and not taking the advice into account.) Furthermore, we are not aware that Natural England have a “policy of managed retreat”. What is clear from their reply to the leader is that they have a position of not supporting works that continue to extend the loss and decline of the saltmarsh and support longer term solutions such as “roll-back”.</p> <p>Considering the above it is not considered a good use of legal resources to ask them to investigate Natural England’s position. In addition, it is expected that any investigation would conclude with the latest local case in Chichester Harbour at Colner Creek, whereby the Secretary of State upheld Natural England’s decision to not grant consent to sea wall repairs, over which a public footpath also ran.</p> <p>Chichester Harbour Conservancy have now appointed an independent consultant to produce a technical report into the sea defences from Langstone Mill Pond to Wade Lane and this is expected to be published in the Autumn.</p>
3	Councillor Philippa Gray	Councillor Robinson	<p>It is concerning to see so much time and effort spent dealing with travellers who choose to stop at undesignated places around the Borough. The situation is untenable because it creates problems for residents, officers and Travellers and local businesses. I’m told that each “eviction” takes 10-14 hours of officer time, plus that of police and councillors and so far this summer there have been 12 such incidents.</p> <p>In addition to the actual number of incidents, residents say that it is the possibility of travellers stopping on undesignated land that creates anxiety – as much, if not more than when an actual encampment takes place.</p>

	Question From	Question to	Question
			<p>It is also the case that most traveller groups only want to stay for very short periods as they are passing through the area.</p> <p>Can we look for better ways to manage encampments?</p>
<p>Reply:</p> <p>The Council has commissioned an updated Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling show people accommodation assessment as part of the new Local Plan – Building a better future. This assessment will show the need for any permanent and/or transit sites in the borough and if so, what size they should be. The Local Plan will then respond to this robust, up to date evidence base when allocating sites. That is the approach way to determine if and where an authorised transit site should be set up in the borough.</p> <p>If the Council has an authorised encampment site, then potentially the need to carry out the current eviction process could be streamlined, but not eradicated completely. If following the local plan process it is shown that there is a need for transit sites, it doesn't always follow that travellers would use this site exclusively.</p> <p>It does take a significant amount of time to currently service each encampment, however the provision of an authorised encampment site is likely to be more expensive to manage and maintain than the current process. As well as visiting the encampments to carry out evictions the Council also carry out welfare checks, particularly where children are involved, and offer advise about how to dispose of their waste.</p> <p>The Councils current process in dealing with encampments is as quick and efficient as the law currently allows. At a recent briefing on Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in the Borough, Chief Inspector Rahman commented, and I quote “the way things are done in Havant is gold standard.”</p> <p>For this reason, we have been approached by neighbouring authorities to understand how we deal with the issue and if we could provide our services on their land.</p>			