

Item 11 - Questions Received under Standing Order 27.4.1

	Question From	Question to	Question
1	Cllr Rason	Cllr Bowerman	At the council meeting in September Cllr Bowerman said there was to a new approach to grass cutting and the management of verges in 2024. I would welcome the opportunity to read the report on the 12 sites which were identified for No Mow May and hope this can be achieved soon. There was a considerable amount of negative noise around No Mow May because of a widespread confusion about the cutting of verges and conflagration of this with No Mow May. Hence, will there be a rebranding of No Mow May and when will plans for 2024 to support floral diversity in the borough be ready to share with council?
<p>Reply: Thank you Cllr Rason for this question which follows other conversations we've had recently about these matters.</p> <p>As yet there has not been an update on the proposed report for next year's version of "NO Mow May" because this piece of work is not scheduled to come forward until at the earliest, February next year. I am aware of the need for the report but linked to this will be the plans for next Spring/summer and the proposed new grass cutting regime which will involve meeting with officers, interested members and various community groups to discuss the different areas across the borough. As part of this work, we will also be reviewing No Mow May, this year's management of it, how it was perceived and what aspects of it can be incorporated into the proposed new grass cutting regime</p> <p>Floral diversity will be investigated by the Estates department for the various areas identified for biodiversity net gain and the council's principal ecologist will be consulted to ensure careful consideration is given before undertaking any 'rewilding'</p> <p>In the meantime we are working on the 'winter programme' in particular the safety and maintenance of beach huts on West Beach due to high tides and winter storms. In addition, we are working in conjunction with Hampshire County Council Highways to make sure that the recent heavy leaf drops are regularly cleared to minimise the potential high risk of flooding on the roads and culverts which is being predicted for the next few months due to the current weather patterns and waterlogged ground.</p>			

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2	Cllr Rason	Cllr Bowdell	<p>At present, as an officer stated very recently, the council's financial strategy is to not fund any projects which cannot be capitalised. Whilst the council's financial position was more precarious, removing all risks was totally justified. Thankfully, HBC'S financial position is more secure and we are now rated A +, which is significantly better than the majority of Local government councils. So, balancing risks and opportunities must be an ongoing process and there will be conditions that it requires for HBC to cease the current policy to never front fund any projects given that removing risk is also removing opportunities. At present there are many income streams are not accessible such as money from Art council, Southern Railways Community fund for community projects, or funding a bid writer to increase the opportunities to make lives better for our residents. All businesses need to balance risk and opportunities.</p> <p>What conditions does the council need for it to consider a review of the present financial policy which would allowing it, where risks are accessed as low and matching the council's corporate strategies to front fund opportunities for community groups to access other funding for projects?</p>
<p>Reply: The Council does not have a specific policy preventing it from front funding community opportunities. However, the Council, and local authorities in general, do face a significant financially challenging climate, and all bids for revenue funding need to go through thorough financial processes before being approved. It must be understood that any funding agreed would take funds away from other priorities.</p>			
3	Cllr Coates	Cllr Rennie	<p>Does the Leader agree that all efforts should be made by the Council to negotiate with Hayling Community Centre and ensure that storage facilities for the children's charity The Heart of Hayling Boxing Academy are either retained or replaced with a like-for-like secure, accessible and safe storage solution. Anything else will in turn lead to the charity - one that he has publicly supported in the past - closing its doors next month to seek another venue at potentially significant cost and thereby also threatening the viability of the Hayling Community Centre itself who receive thousands in funding through their partnership with HoH.</p>

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			<p>Reply: Havant Borough Council recognises and very much values the work of the Heart of Hayling Boxing Club. As a keen sports person myself, I am acutely aware of the benefits of sports for children and, in fact, people of all ages, and the Council continues to look for opportunities to promote opportunities for sports across the Borough.</p> <p>On the matter raised in the question, there is a need for the changing rooms to revert fully to their intended use, for both the cricket club and the football club. The Council were more than happy to loan them to the Community Centre, for storage purposes during Covid-19, as a pragmatic offer, since they were not being used. They are now going to be used for their intended purpose.</p> <p>The Council, as the question recognises, does not have a direct relationship with the Boxing Club on this matter. The issue under discussion is actually between the Community Centre and the club. However, the Council is, and always has been, keen to support the Community Centre in all of its efforts, including this matter. The building they use is provided free of charge, and the Council undertakes most of its maintenance. Our communities team provides almost daily support to the management team, and we are always looking for opportunities to further help. In the future, we would, for example, like to table firm discussions to see if we can facilitate reductions in utility bills and running costs, via use of solar panels.</p> <p>Further to that help, we have offered the Community Centre a container, which the Council would pay for and install, so that they can store low use items out of the building, allowing the boxing club to store its equipment in the building, which we understand is important. We would also, I am sure, be happy to help them remove large items, no longer in use, if that creates more space. I am aware that logistical issues may arise, but, again, in terms of the support we provide the community centre management team, we are more than happy to broker a meeting and attend site, to see what other help or advice we can offer.</p> <p>In closing, I recognise the passion and, linked to that, anger and frustration this matter has caused. However, I would emphasise, within the confines of needing the changing rooms to be changing rooms, we will continue to work with the community centre on solutions and would only ask that we all work together in a spirit of consensus.</p>
4	Cllr Philippa Gray	Cllr Bowdell	<p>There have been a number of committee meetings cancelled at short notice recently and it takes a long time for them to be re-arranged. Is any consideration being given to processes that will avoid this, and where cancellation cannot be avoided, are there processes that would allow the meetings be rescheduled quickly.</p>

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<p>Reply: There has been reason to cancel committee meetings at short notice recently. An example, being the cancellation of the Planning Committee for Health and Safety reasons during extreme weather. Council officers shall seek to rearrange these meetings as soon as practicable. When calling a meeting, the Council must ensure that it follows the rules around notice of meetings and publication of reports together with more logistical considerations such as clashes with other meetings and room availability.</p>			
5	Cllr Rason	Cllr Lloyd	<p>I was very pleased to take part in the very recent Ashden training last month and wish to thank all the officers who enable+ the training to take place and to Cllr Lloyd who facilitated the training. There were lots of exciting ideas floated. I am pleased to see a review of our Strategy and Action plan on Climate change is due to take place. May we know when the outcomes from the Ashden training and the Review will likely to ready to be shared with the cabinet and members?</p>
<p>Reply: Thank you Cllr Rason. It was encouraging to see so many members at the recent workshop and to hear the constructive, enthusiastic discussions and the level of ambition which members wish to see.</p> <p>I think it's fair to say that recent climatic events, at home and around the world, have brought us all to the reality of climate change. It is a fact, as is the vulnerability of our borough.</p> <p>At this point, we are collating the priorities which came out of the workshops, which also means investigating the feasibility of initiatives plus the budgetary and resource implications. This will then feed into a review of the Council's Climate Change and Environment Strategy and its Action Plan.</p> <p>It is critical though, that there is widespread buy in to our strategy. It is encouraging that through the workshops, this is in place within our wider membership; however, buy-in has to come from across the borough. As such, we intend to undertake engagement with key groups and the wider community.</p> <p>Currently, we have diverted resources on an interim basis, to capture the mitigation effort this council is already achieving, and to work on the Strategy and Action Plan review.</p>			

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			<p>To ensure the review of the Action Plan is deliverable and appropriately resourced going forward, I expect Members to realistically be able to review the updated Action Plan in the Spring next year.</p> <p>In the meantime, I feel sure the Climate Change and Environment Panel can work with any quick wins that were identified at the recent workshops.</p> <p>I very much look forward to reporting back on progress at year end.</p>
6	Cllr Munday	Cllr Lloyd	In the list of sites under active negotiation for planning approval I notice there is no mention of the Southleigh site. Please could you tell us whether there are any current plans to develop this site?
			<p>Reply:</p> <p>To date, no planning application has been lodged for the Southleigh development but that is not to say that there are no plans to develop the site in the future. Southleigh has been identified by the Council through the Housing Delivery Position Statement for comprehensive development and was also highlighted when we published the submissions from the Call for Sites last year.</p> <p>Southleigh is a strategic development site and must be developed in a comprehensive manner across the various landownerships with a complete plan for the infrastructure and environmental safeguards which will be needed to support the new community. The Council will also be pushing any future masterplan for the site to be prepared in full consultation with local communities, particularly of Denvilles and Emsworth.</p>
7	Cllr Munday	Cllr Lloyd	At the recent workshop on 12 th October Councillors were given an analysis on the current position of the Council with regard to progress towards Net Zero. Please can you tell us what action is planned as a result of this?
			<p>Reply:</p> <p>I would refer to my previous answer to Cllr Rason on this matter. I am aware of our position against other councils within that quasi league table. I have already tasked officers to research what else we might be already doing, or could do and report, that raises our current position within that table.</p>

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8	Cllr Harris	Cllr Lloyd	Further to the mention of such work in the CEO's August report, what progress has there been on installing more EV charging points around the borough?
<p>Reply: The Council is keen to increase the number of electric and hybrid cars on our roads and we recognise the need to ensure the charging infrastructure is in place to facilitate this. The Council's Property and Parking teams are continuing to meet with different suppliers to gather evidence on the opportunities for EV charging in the Borough and to ensure that it feeds into the Council's overall carbon reduction policy. The Council will bring forward a way forward in the new year.</p>			
9	Cllr Harris	Cllr Rennie	Following the publication of the Royal Haskoning DHV Report into the situation at, and options for, Langstone Mill Pond, and as winter approaches and the danger of catastrophic failure of the wall looms, can we be updated on how HBC plan to follow through on the pledge made in the summer to save the millpond, and can Alan Mak MP be enlisted to acquire any necessary permissions at government level?
<p>Reply: Cllr Bowerman continues to chair meetings with a multi-agency group comprising officers from the Borough and County Councils plus representatives from the Chichester Harbour Conservancy, the Environment Agency and Natural England to find a collaborative way forward. The Council continues to seek a satisfactory approach that considers the environment, access and heritage that responds appropriately to the predicted impacts of climate change. The multi-agency group will be considering the outcomes of the recently published study and will be jointly hosting a "drop-in" exhibition at the Plaza in December to disseminate and discuss the findings with the community and wider stakeholders.</p> <p>I am also arranging a meeting of senior representatives of the multi-agency partners to ensure all is being considered and appropriate actions taken to progress this matter. All updates are being made available through the Coastal Partners website.</p> <p>I have discussed the matter with Alan Mak MP and made clear the Council would welcome the MP's support to find an acceptable way forward.</p>			