

Warwick District Council 2 September 2020

Item 8 Questions to the Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holders

Councillor B Gifford question for Portfolio Holder for Development

I welcome the proposed briefing on the Government's White Paper - Planning for the Future. Has the Portfolio Holder yet responded to the Government's consultation on Planning for the Future, and if so did the Portfolio Holder consult with Stratford District Council about the proposed responses?

Response from Councillor Cooke

I thank Councillor Bill Gifford for giving me advance notice of his question.

As he makes clear in his question all Council members have been invited to a seminar next Monday at 6pm to discuss this legislation, plus both he and I have also been invited to a similar one to be held by WCC on September 15th.

The consultation on the White Paper closes on 29th October. So at present, I have not personally responded to the consultation as before doing so I would wish to hear what is said at these seminars. Like other members I have read much in the media and online and have my own views.

However, I have a meeting on Friday with officers to discuss the White Paper and in particular how we as a Council should choose to respond.

Following on from my statement earlier in the meeting I welcome the suggestion of discussing this with colleagues at SDC to explore the potential for a joint approach

Councillor C Gifford question for Portfolio Holder for Health & Community Protection

We understand that the Universities are putting plans in place for their campuses, but with large numbers of students coming to Leamington, we wonder whether the Portfolio holder is aware of any specific plans being put in place in Leamington. With the reopening of pubs and bars and the ongoing need for social distancing, there appear to be increased numbers of Street Marshalls on duty on Saturday evenings, which is to be welcomed. Will the mid-week numbers be increased as well, and will the University be paying for an increased number during the week?

Response from Councillor Falp

We are working with the university to ensure that returning and new students are provided with information to advise them in regard to Covid and procedures in place locally (which may be different to their home towns). We deployed additional street marshals when lockdown restrictions eased to allow the opening of pubs and restaurants, however the number of marshals have since returned to routine numbers. The numbers of marshals both for us and for the university are deployed based on intelligence (takes into account events in the town, special nights, pay days etc) The university pays for the marshals deployed on a Monday- Thursday evening during terms. Routinely, in the first weeks of a new academic year there are always enhanced numbers & hours of marshals deployment than intelligence suggests are required. The operational schedule for the marshals has already been agreed with the

university (subject to change up to last minute based on intelligence, lockdown restrictions etc).

In addition the new Student Housing Enforcement Officer post within the Private Sector Housing Team has well been received and the University and Warwick District Council have agreed to jointly fund a one year extension of this post from 1 October 2020.

Councillor Kohler question for Portfolio Holder for Health & Community Protection

In the 'CSW Test and Trace Member Briefing' dated 21st August, one of the priority actions was to "agree triggers for enforcement/lockdown".

- a) Have these triggers now been agreed?
- b) Are you clear on the council's role and responsibilities if a local lockdown is required in our district?
- c) Are officers happy that they have access to all of the resources that will be required if a local lockdown is required?
- d) Have the issues around data sharing mentioned at the last Full Council now been resolved?

Response from Councillor Falp

The criteria for triggers have been established however each case will need to be assessed on its own merits. The role of the council and its responsibilities are clearly laid out in the local outbreak management plans and supporting standard operating procedures which have been established. We have participated in a exercise to test all of the procedures in addition to responding to individual cases, clusters and outbreaks in environments. We have recruited additional environmental staff to work centrally at a county level to provide support to each district and borough. The data sharing agreements are being worked upon.

Councillor Skinner question for Portfolio Holder for Health & Community Protection

In the light of much adverse publicity created by the proposed update of the Dog Control Orders having been inadvertently put into the public domain, would it be appropriate for the Council to completely withdraw this current draft? A new draft can then be worked on, taking in to account stakeholder group's consultations before any further changes are made to the Orders.

If there is a time element to consider, then can the current Orders not be kept and set for review following a new draft in say a year's time?

As it stands, this proposal will (rightly) meet considerable opposition if it finally goes to the public consultation officially. It has been likened already to when Dog Control orders were proposed in Newbold Comyn back around 2011 and there is currently a petition opposing any dogs on leads proposals that stands at over 3,300 signatures within days of starting.

At this time of Covid-19 recovery, more than any other, we should be actively encouraging ways of helping improve people's mental health and it is well known that dog walking / owning is one of the best ways to do so. Much of this proposed update is going the opposite way of thinking.

The reason behind suggesting dogs on leads for the protection of breeding birds at St Mary's Land had not been discussed at the SML Working Party and has not taken in

any of the recommendations a recent consultation report had produced on the matter. This example alone suggests that before a reasonable draft is put out, stakeholder groups such as SMLWG should be consulted first.

Response from Councillor Falp

It is extremely unfortunate that the stakeholder pre-consultation suggestions were placed into the public domain and as a result created the misunderstanding we are currently seeing. The pre consultation with stakeholders as requested by the licensing and regulatory committee was designed to gather stakeholder thoughts in order to formulate the final proposals for the new public space protection orders (previously known as Dog control orders) to be agreed by the committee before going out to public consultation.

Legislation requires public consultation for the revocation, extension of existing or changing of the requirements. We are reviewing the options in regard to the approach to these public space protection orders in order to move forward positively.

Councillor Davison question for Portfolio Holder for Health & Community Protection

With schools and universities reopening, there is the risk that COVID will be detected in these student populations. Recent news items suggest that school classes or even whole year groups may need to self-isolate in this case. With universities, the challenges are even greater as one student may have multiple contacts from teaching groups, university activities, social groups and accommodation. What part would the council play in these scenarios, for example in terms of test, track and trace as well as deciding which groups of students need to self-isolate?

Response from Councillor Falp:

The council is part of the local track and trace programme which has been developed with all health protection partners. The initial tracing of contacts in complex cases is undertaken by the public health tracers where additional support is required in large complex cases environmental health colleagues have assisted. The local processes for workplaces and schools environments with cases, clusters or outbreaks have been established procedures and processes which have been tested and challenged. The council form part of the incident management groups established to address cases which would take the decisions as to who would be required to self isolate.

Councillor Davison question for Portfolio Holder for the Leader

COVID has been extremely challenging for all of us, and we'd like to thank officers for the excellent work they have continued to do, whilst developing new ways of working. Currently some groups of officers are undertaking site visits whilst others are saying that they are not conducting any visits at all. Now that many national restrictions have been lifted and we are being encouraged to visit restaurants, bars etc, can the council revise its guidance to officers so that site visits are less difficult to arrange? We need to be addressing our residents needs effectively, which often requires visiting them; we cannot wait for COVID to be over as it is likely to be with us for some time.

Response from Councillor Day

In the light of the issue raised, officers will review the current guidance to ensure safety for all but that officers can do more site visits more effectively

Councillor Milton question for Portfolio Holder for Culture & Neighbourhood

Does the portfolio holder agree that the recent Traffic Assessment relating to the Castle Farm Leisure Development conducted on behalf of the Council was inaccurate?

Councillor A Dearing question for Portfolio Holder for Culture & Neighbourhood

The idVerde Abbey Fields Management Plan is very overdue and it is needed to inform the Travel Plan to the new Kenilworth Leisure Facilities. Its supposed date for publication was February. Given officers are working from home, and the research was based on Consultation done before Christmas, I do not think Covid can be relevant here. Could the Portfolio Holder account for the delay?