

**Council – 29 November 2023**

**Public Questions and answers:**

**1. From Mr Jon O'Connor to Councillor M Blakemore, Cabinet Member for Community and Collaboration**

Could an update be provided summarising any work undertaken by FHDC officers and members with Kent County Council over the last three months in order to explore options for repairing and reopening Grace Hill Library?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question, Jon. Firstly I would like to reiterate this Council's view that the Grace Hill Library building is an important heritage and community asset for Folkestone. Its closure is of great concern and this Council will work with Kent County Council and all partners to facilitate the investment required to reopen it for the benefit of the town and wider district.

The Leader of the Council and I have engaged with Kent County Council to stress this point and seek assurances on the long-term future of the building and the services which were based in it. Officers are also in discussion with teams from the County Council as they progress an options appraisal on next steps for Grace Hill. This will likely include emerging proposals for the library service to be relocated into the Folca building but this is not yet confirmed.

I am hopeful that these discussions, along with the strong, local community voice, will influence the County Council and ensure the positive future for Grace Hill that we all seek.

*Mr O'Connor also gave an update he had received from Kent County Councillor Claire Bell.*

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

It would be helpful to understand the frequency of planned meetings and any specific arrangements, as well as the direction of travel of discussions, particularly as the Folca building had been referred to.

**ANSWER:**

There is no set frequency for meetings, an options appraisal process was just beginning. One of the options for consideration would be the Folca building.

**2. From Mr Chris Johnson to Councillor J Martin, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Otterpool Park and Planning Policy**

At the September meeting, the Planning and Licensing Committee approved an officer's recommendation to approve the inclusion of two sections of a development's buffer strip into private gardens. Will any safeguards prevent

similar adoptions on future developments, such as the Officers' Mess site in Hawkinge, or are they just a paper exercise to be ignored?

**ANSWER:**

The buffer strip at the Officers Mess is secured, by a legal agreement, to be provided for public access. The buffer strip along with other open space within the development will be offered to Hawkinge Town Council for adoption and control. If the town council do not wish to take on the open space and buffer this will need to be maintained by a management company for use of public open space.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

On the development in question, the council took no action between June 2014 and January 2023 in response to reports of an authorised adoption with associated destruction of mature and developer planting. Will the council take enforcement action in future on existing developments where sections of landscape buffer are adopted into private gardens?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for the excellent question because it gives me the opportunity to distance this administration from what we've done previously. We now have two enforcement officers, and enforcement will very much become a part of our planning procedure.

3. **From Ms Mary Lawes to Councillor Polly Blakemore, Cabinet Member for Transport**

Elderly and sick residents in permit zones get free permits for their family members who are their carers. This allows family members caring for their family to park free. However, carers from KCC, the NHS and Private Sector care do not get this and are being hit by PCN fines. Could a resident who needs care get a free hard copy permit with their details so it cannot be used elsewhere, allow Carers to use permit but hand it back for next carer?

**ANSWER:**

Thank you for your question, Mary.

The council issues permits to residents within CPZs, who require regular visits from care or other support service organisations, like home helps and carers. These are called Special Permits and are free of charge.

Residents with multiple carers can apply for Special Permits which are not specific to any vehicle. These are paper permits so can be displayed by the user then handed back to the resident as you are suggesting. Family members can also use this permit.

NHS staff who regularly visit residents within CPZs can ask their manager to apply for a free NHS permit on their behalf. NHS staff permits are similar to the Special Permit but are not transferable. They allow the employee to park in any zone.

Information on permits is available on our website but if residents require further assistance they are encouraged to get in touch with us.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Can this lady, who is a KCC worker who had been refused a permit, contact you direct?

**ANSWER:**

Yes of course.