

Questions from the Public under Rule 11

Questioner	Question	Answer
Richard Haberkost	The council registered Hastings Housing LTD at council offices address, a private company. The concept and potential for Housing in Hastings is seriously good if Hastings Housing LTD is used and grown in context. Which persons in housing need are currently being assisted and how? If homeless, under which categories, criteria?	<p>Councillor Willis:</p> <p>The Hastings Housing Company Ltd was setup in September 2017 to operate in the private rented sector, and it was originally intended to undertake trading in three areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Investment of up to £5m per annum for three years for the purchase and provision of housing on the open market for private sector rent. •The acquisition of residential property for rent from developers in lieu of capital receipts it would receive as part of wider regeneration proposals. •Development or the receipt of housing on land owned or purchased by the council, for sale or rent. <p>This original target was not achieved, and it currently has 7 properties, 6 of which are managed through a management agency and one through the Councils' own lettings agency. The Company is currently under review following the appointment of new directors and at this stage is not looking to expand its portfolio.</p> <p>As the Housing Company sits separately to the Council there is no statutory obligation on the Company to house people in need or owed any homelessness duty.</p>
Chris Hurrell	Back in October 2023 it was stated in Cabinet that HBC were establishing baselines for water quality testing in the park watercourses with the Environment Agency. HBC	<p>Councillor Haffenden:</p> <p>Hastings Borough Council are working with both the Environment Agency and Southern Water to ensure they fulfil their legal</p>

	<p>were considering carrying out water quality testing themselves.</p> <p>What progress has been made to establish water quality test baselines and when will HBC start carrying out tests of water quality in the park watercourses?</p>	<p>obligations to both monitor water quality and guarantee the water at Old Roar Gill remains free from contamination. The Environment Agency are the statutory body responsible for water quality monitoring in the UK. Officers understand the EA do not regularly monitor water quality in the upper park or gill. Considering recent pollution incidents, officers have requested the EA extend their monitoring to the upper park and gill. However, we understand they have not done so. The council does not have the resources, capacity, or expertise to undertake water quality monitoring and will continue to press the EA to extend their monitoring to the upper park and gill.</p>
Becca Horn	<p>We have lots of plans coming up for the regeneration of our town centre and its historic venues, such as St Mary In The Castle and the Castle and West Hill Café. Many residents of Hastings and community groups are invested in these changes and are keen to be properly consulted. What mechanisms have been or are being put in place to ensure this will happen?</p>	<p>Councillor Hilton:</p> <p>Consultation on proposed development to the West Hill Café will begin when a preferred developer and operator has been confirmed. A Development Prospectus is due to be published within the next few weeks and the bidding organisations approach to community engagement will be one of the criteria for assessment. The prospectus will be published widely to encourage many organisations to submit their proposals as possible. The council will also have direct staff in place to support the engagement process.</p> <p>The Town Deal funded public realm and Green connections proposals for the town centre generated over 1000 responses to the questionnaire and consultation events. These are currently being analysed and responses will feed into the next stage of design work.</p> <p>St Mary in the Castle may be a separate exercise, but nothing is planned at the moment.</p>
Joanne Walker	<p>I have been noticing an increase in fly tipping around Hastings and recently I was involved in a community event to remove fly tipped items from local woodland, which included a three piece suite. Very rarely do I see warning signs or threats of fines for fly tipping.</p>	<p>Councillor Haffenden:</p> <p>It is sad that across the Borough there are still people who feel that it's acceptable to dump rubbish. This illegal activity is unacceptable behaviour, and over the country is well advertised as such. Fly-tipping is a problem for many areas in the UK, with penalties being</p>

	<p>The Pebsham Waste Facility is really only of use to residents that drive and the bulky waste collection of £35 is expensive unless you actually have three large items to dispose of.</p> <p>What can HBC do to encourage residents not to fly tip?</p>	<p>increased over the years to dissuade people from dumping their waste.</p> <p>In Hastings we have a service dedicated to the removal of fly-tipping. If you have any information about fly-tipping, whether that be a report of someone fly-tipping, or just the dumped waste, please let us know either via myhastings, or by emailing recyclingandwaste@hastings.gov.uk.</p> <p>Customers can legally dispose of their bulky items either by booking a bulky waste collection, which at £35 is cheaper than the council's locally, or by taking the waste to the household waste recycling site off Bexhill Road.</p>
<p>Eleanor Wynne</p>	<p>With cuts to the budget of the youth council, how do you expect the voices of the young people of the community to be heard?</p>	<p>Councillor Hilton:</p> <p>1) Connected Futures</p> <p>Connected Futures is a research project, led by young people, which is exploring the barriers to employment facing young adults in Hastings.</p> <p>As part of the project, a group of local Hastings young researchers are responsible for connecting with other young adults to listen to their stories, opinions and experiences, with a focus on fact-finding, challenging the status quo and current practices.</p> <p>Through their roles within the research group and representation on project groups, the young people will act as the voice of Hastings young people, guiding decision making and invoking positive change.</p> <p>Funded through a Connected Futures grant by the Youth Futures Foundation, the project is being delivered by CXK in partnership with East Sussex County Council and Hastings Borough Council.</p>

The three members of the youth council are being transitioned to become youth researchers for this programme.
The new Hastings Board being set up to coordinate the Long Term Deal for Towns funding will also have representation from these young researchers although this is yet to be confirmed.

- 2) The Youth Commons is a Youth Investment Funded project (£8.6m Capital and Revenue) which will be based at Eagle House, Cambridge Road. They will be working with those aged 11-18 responding to the wants and needs of young people in and around Hastings. Hastings Commons is working on involving young people in every step of the building process for Eagle House. They have and will continue to play a contributory role in the design process of Eagle House and the roof top of The Observer Building.
- 3) There is also the Hollington Youth Hub operated by the County Council. They provide a variety of activities including meeting points, music pods, health advice, educational needs etc
- 4) Xtrax is currently being supported by Hastings Commons to help it become more sustainable and resilient. The former manager of Xtrax is supporting staff working for the Youth Commons and they will continue to be co-located with the Youth Commons in Eagle House.

Officers are working closely with Connected futures to ensure that we are live to the research and aligned with phase 2 of the programme. We have identified a place on the new Hastings Board in relationship to the long term plan, as was described in the cabinet report on the 4th March.

Officers are also working with the connected futures young research group in a proposal to create research or working group of young people who work alongside and assess/scrutinise the plans

		<p>developed as part of the long term plan. This will be for the new Board and its members to drive forward, once established.</p>
<p>Myriam Lengliné</p>	<p>I am part of the residents group ‘Sewage Contamination in Old Roar Gill & Alexandra Park’, set up in June 2023, after last May devastating sewage spill in the Gill.</p> <p>As Southern Water only carried out basic ammonia test strip testing, we started doing our own independent water testing in the Gill and Alexandra Park’s Buckshole area in July 2023.</p> <p>The results showed very high levels of harmful bacteria, in line with the Environment Agency data found online (tests that the EA has been doing in the Alexandra Park’s Gill and Ore streams, for several years.)</p> <p>We then decided to stop doing our independent testing, paid by us, for two reasons:</p> <p>1/ Southern Water completely rejected our independent results, saying it was ‘normal for wild water’ to have high levels of such bacteria;</p> <p>2/Cllrs Batsford and Sinden, back in August 2023, during a small residents meeting in the Pump House park café, mentioned resurrecting Friends of Alexandra Park, so the money left on the bank account of The Friends of Alexandra Park could be used for independent testing.</p> <p>This was, then, once again mentioned by Cllr Batsford at the Cabinet meeting which took place in October 2023 – he also said he needed the EA to give HBC the baselines for bacteria levels in the gill and park streams (which to us do already exist, based on the EA online data mentioned previously.)</p>	<p>Councillor Haffenden:</p> <p>The Friends of Alexandra Park are not established, managed, funded, or maintained by Hastings Borough Council. All Friends groups associated with parks or nature areas in the borough are independent from the council. They have their own constitutions and their own democratic structures as determined by their individual constitutions.</p> <p>Should the Friends of Alexandra Park seek funding for projects in the park, the council will be happy to discuss those projects in more detail.</p>

	<p>Question:</p> <p>We are now in March 2024, nothing of what was said last year has happened - why and when will the Friends of Alexandra Park be re-established to allow funding for independent testing of water quality (testing needed more than ever, after the recent catastrophic landslide in the Gill, as so much debris and soil have fallen down the stream, potentially adding further pollution)?</p>	
<p>Laura Morden</p>	<p>At the Cabinet meeting on 02/10/2023 Cllr Batsford asked officers about an assessment of the gill. The Environment and Natural Resources Manager did not answer in the meeting and the Deputy Chief Executive stated she would consult and reply to the question.</p> <p>My question is:</p> <p>What were the outcomes of the consultation with officers and will HBC now be carrying out an assessment of the health of the gill?</p>	<p>Councillor Haffenden:</p> <p>Officers continue to have on-going discussions with Southern Water over the pollution incidents which occurred in Old Roar Gill in 2023. One outcome of those discussions was that SW agreed to pay for, and commission an ecology assessment of the gill stream habitats and species. On 13th March 2024, the council received a draft scope for an ecological condition assessment survey of the gill from Southern Water. Council officers will consider the draft and agree a final assessment methodology with Southern Water as a matter of urgency.</p> <p>The council understands that Southern Water will be seeking expressions of interest from appropriately experienced ecology consultants by the end of March 2024, with a first draft of survey results to be delivered to Southern Water and the council by the end of June 2024.</p> <p>Southern Water are further proposing the consultant present their findings at a meeting with representatives from Southern Water, the council and local stakeholder groups.</p> <p>The council is pleased that Southern Water has agreed this important step in assessing the habitats and species of Old Roar Gill and look forward to seeing the results and recommendations from the study.</p>

