



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Agenda Item 8 Council

Member Questions

QUESTIONS FROM	QUESTION TO
Councillor Nigel Cooper	Councillor Steve Lydon, Leader of Council
<p>“The five year review of our Local Plan began last week with the start of a six week Issues and Options public consultation. This will be a long process, apparently lasting until 2022. A press release has set out the timetable for initial public meetings, how does the Leader intend to maintain public interest and involvement over the next 5 years?”</p>	<p>Preparation of a local plan is a complex process that will take a number of years to complete. Public consultation events have been planned for each of the main stages to ensure public involvement throughout the process. The current issues and options consultation is about identifying views on the long term needs and challenges facing the District and what potential options there may be for managing growth. There has been extensive press and media coverage and 9 public exhibitions are scheduled across the District together with 9 evening meetings with town and parish councils. Meetings are also being held with stakeholders (e.g. GCC, CPRE, LEP, LSP) and those that often are underrepresented in consultations such as young people (local schools/youth council).</p> <p>When the Council has considered the options and views of communities it will agree a preferred growth strategy in 2018 when there will be public consultation to assess support for this approach. The new draft plan will be put together in 2019 and further public consultation will be held in autumn 2019 on the detailed policies. The final plan will then be prepared and formal consultation undertaken will be held in autumn 2020 before public examination. If the plan requires modification, there will be a final period of consultation before adoption in 2021/22.</p>

Councillor Haydn Jones	Councillor Steve Lydon, Leader of Council
<p>“The new online planning system, promising many things including being more “user friendly”, was launched on October 9th. When will it be working properly?”</p>	<p>It is difficult to provide a detailed response without further information regarding the exact nature of the issue that Councillor Jones has experienced. Staff within Development Management have been taking a number of calls from individuals seeking to register on the new system which is very different and a vast improvement when compared to the previous offer. In the majority of cases, individuals have been assisted over the phone in creating accounts and logging in. Over 800 accounts have been successfully created to date. A user guide was issued to Parish Councils after Kingswood Parish volunteered to trial the new system. Previous events have also been held for Parish Council clerks. Some technical issues have been encountered in relation to users who seek to login via mobile devices but these have been straight forward to overcome. The software supplier for Public access has been contacted about an issue with accessing a very limited number of documents and this will be resolved shortly. Lastly, the link from the SDC home page to email alerts has recently been amended to direct users away from the registration page for general email alerts and towards the Public Access planning search pages.</p>

Councillor John Jones	Councillor Steve Lydon, Leader of Council
<p>“1. Regarding the increase in parking charges at Council-owned car parks in Stroud, Stonehouse and Painswick. In an email to all Members on 2nd October, it was stated that a consultation will take place on the possibility of imposing charges in Council-owned car parks in towns such as Nailsworth, Minchinhampton, Dursley, Wotton-under-Edge, and even Stratford Park. Did any consultation take place between this Council and the Town Councils or Chambers of Trade in Stroud, Stonehouse and Painswick before the decision was made to increase parking charges in those towns?”</p>	<p>The car park tariffs have not been increased for six years and the current increases are intended to ensure that the charges remain appropriate and proportionate.</p> <p>As car park tariffs already exist in Stroud, Stonehouse and Painswick, there is no constitutional requirement to consult with the Town Councils and Chamber of Trade before increasing tariffs.</p> <p>A full parking review will be undertaken in 2018 to consider further regulation of other car parks in the Stroud District. Any recommendations from this review will go through the committee process.</p>
<p>“2. When the Committee System of governance was introduced by this administration, Members were assured that there would be more involvement by Members of all parties in decision making, instead of by a select few as in the previous Cabinet system. I can find no reference to a rise in car parking charges in the minutes of any recent meetings of either Strategy and Resources, or Environment Committees. Would you agree that the Members of the Community Services and Licensing Committee should have been informed and given the opportunity to discuss rises in car parking charges, before being signed off by the Director of Customer Services and the Chair of the Community Services and Licensing Committee?”</p>	<p>Constitutionally there is no requirement for tariff increases to be agreed, or discussed at Committee.</p>

Councillor Penny Wride	Councillor Steve Lydon, Leader of Council
<p>“Whilst appreciating that getting more transactions on line (So called control shift) which can help to reduce council costs.</p> <p>Can the leader assure us that in future due consideration is given to the elderly, vulnerable and disadvantaged who do not have access to email or have email accounts?</p> <p>They risk being marginalised by SDC insisting on using online transactions only.”</p>	<p>Whilst the Council is actively promoting user friendly self-serve online services, there will be provision for services over the phone for residents who do not have online access.</p>