

Questions from members of the public

Question 1 from Dr Robert Chris

To	Councillor David Scott
Question	<p>The cross party group charged with considering alternative ways forward in respect of the Calverley Square project issued an interim report in December 2019. There is no reference in this report to any discussions with neighbouring boroughs, or external authorities on town planning, preserving and promoting heritage assets, finance, the provision of cultural assets for a community such as Tunbridge Wells, or any of the many other aspects relevant to the questions arising from the abandonment of Calverley Square. It seems, therefore, that the report is essentially a summary of the well-intentioned but poorly informed opinions of a small group of councillors with little direct experience relevant to the task and whose social and cultural identity is not representative of the wider borough community.</p> <p>I note that in the case of Calverley Square, councillors decided upon the course of action and only then called in experts to advise on how to implement it. I suggest that if a successor project is undertaken in the same manner, it is likely to suffer the same fate.</p> <p>I ask:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Is it the intention of the Council to obtain expert advice and input from the public <u>in the formative stages</u> of planning the way forward? If so, how is it proposed this be done and what budget has been set aside for it? If not, on what basis does the Council consider that, whatever proposals emerge from this current process, they will be accepted by the public? Will the Council confirm that no piecemeal decisions will be taken in respect of any of the sites affected by the Calverley Square project that might limit their future use, and in particular that none will be sold or let to third parties, until a coherent plan is approved for the regeneration of the existing civic complex and the other affected sites.

Question 2 from Mr James Tansley

To	Councillor Tom Dawlings
Question	What was the authorised budget for work on RIBA stages 1- 4 for the Calverley Square project and what is the Council's current estimate of the final costs of this work?

Question 3 from Dr Robert Chris

To Councillor David Scott

Question At Cabinet on 6 February it was resolved in respect to Calverley Square that 'the planning or CPO consents that are in place be not implemented'.

I ask:

- a. Will the public register be updated to reflect this decision so that when a Local Authority Search (either LLC1 or CON29) is made, no resident or business whose property might have been affected by the project, will suffer any blight from the planning consent or CPO approval, and as a consequence, the Council will no longer be exposed to any claims for compensation?

Question 4 from Mr James Tansley

To Councillor Tom Dawlings

Question What is the current value of The Lodge, Calverley Grounds, and Nos 10, 13 and 18 Grove Hill House.

Question 5 from Dr Robert Chris

To Councillor David Scott

Question A decision has been made to undertake an independent review of the Calverley Square project. Can the Council confirm that:

- a. The terms of reference will be capable of amendment at the sole discretion of the investigators should emerging evidence suggest this would be in the public interest.
- b. The TOR provided to the investigators will be on the public record.
- c. The investigators will either be independent of TWBC and all other public entities in Kent, or if not, will be supervised by a person or persons who are.
- d. The name and credentials of the proposed investigators will be made public in advance of them being formally appointed.
- e. The investigators will have unfettered access to all Council records, and if in their sole discretion they deem it in the public interest, to the private emails and other correspondence and papers of any past or present TWBC councillors and officers engaged in any aspect of Calverley Square.
- f. The Council will use its best endeavours to ensure that its advisors, consultants, contractors, and sub-contractors make available any documentation requested by the investigators.
- g. The operational interface between the investigators and the Council will be arranged such that those officers and councillors

Continued overleaf

	<p>with significant roles in the project are not in the reporting chain and are barred from any decisions emanating from the investigators' findings.</p> <p>h. The investigators will issue an interim report that will be published unredacted within three months of the commencement of their investigation, and subsequent reports at quarterly intervals thereafter until its termination.</p> <p>i. If the investigators issue any reports in addition to these quarterly reports, they will also be published unredacted within no more than two weeks of their receipt.</p> <p>j. It understands that a failure to meet any of these conditions will seriously undermine the credibility of the review and likely result it in being seen by the public as little more than an attempt by those responsible for the project to protect their interests and minimise any criticism of their conduct.</p>
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Question 6 from Mr James Tansley	
To	Councillor Tom Dawlings
Question	How much does each member of the Council cost per year in total (i.e. allowances, support and other services including cost of elections)?

Question 7 from Dr Robert Chris	
To	Councillor Matt Bailey
Question	<p>TWBC declared a climate emergency on 17 July and committed to making the Borough carbon neutral by 2030. Seven months later, on 19 February its terms of reference were approved at Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board. The objectives set out in the terms of reference illustrate a lack of understanding of what is meant by 'carbon neutral', and of the range of policies available to a local authority that might be effective in delivering it.</p> <p>I ask:</p> <p>a. How does the Council reconcile the notion of an emergency with the reality of taking seven months to do no more than agree the terms of reference for an advisory panel that has no decision-making powers?</p> <p>b. Although the terms of reference allow the panel, subject to unanimous agreement of its members, to invite external advisors to attend when appropriate, given that the panel members do not have specialist knowledge of climate change science or the policy responses to it, it is likely that they will not be best placed to know which external advisors to invite and when it would be appropriate to do so? Would it not greatly enhance the effectiveness of this advisory panel if it had at least one appropriately qualified expert as a permanent member?</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Continued overleaf</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. What budget has been set aside for this panel? d. When will this advisory panel publish its first report? e. Is the panel also considering other important environmental issues (e.g. air pollution and waste management), that are not related (or only marginally so) to becoming 'carbon neutral', and if so, can an explanation be provided as to why its remit has been extended in this way when there are established procedures within the Council for dealing with such environmental concerns?
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Question 8 from Mr James Tansley

To	Councillor Tom Dawlings
Question	At the meeting of Full Council on 25 September 2019, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance undertook to answer whether there had been a breach of the Council's internal policies and procedures in respect of the salaries of the Council's Chief Executive and the Director of Finance, Policy and Development in 2018/19, both of which appeared to be in excess of the sums allowed in the Council's pay policy. I have still to receive a response. Will he provide one now.

Question 9 from Dr Robert Chris

To	Councillor Tom Dawlings
Question	<p>The draft budget for next year shows no income from Great Hall car park.</p> <p>Please explain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Why this is. b. What plans the Council has for this site. c. What commitments have already been made, or are currently under active consideration, in respect of this site.

Question 10 from Mr James Tansley

To	Councillor Tom Dawlings
Question	Please provide details of which Council staff receive 'retention' allowances and how much these allowance are worth.

Question 11 from Dr Robert Chris

To	Councillor Matt Bailey
Question	<p>The TWBC website FAQs provide the following information in regard to the new waste collection service:</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Continued overleaf</i></p>

I live in a block of flats, will I be able to recycle more now the new service is introduced?

Now you have recycling bins to recycle glass bottles and jars, plastic packaging, tins, cans and aluminium foil.

You also have a separate bin/box for paper and cardboard.

We will look at introducing communal food waste collections where there is space to do so.

Our new recycling collection service means everyone can now recycle more materials from home.

None of the residents or the building managers of Grove Hill House, an apartment building with 33 dwellings including 8 social housing flats, has been approached by the Council in respect of the new service.

I ask:

- a. Has Grove Hill House been singled out to be ignored in the recent changes to domestic waste collection?
- b. What proportion of flats in the borough has not yet been provided with all the bins needed for the new service?
- c. By when will all residents in apartment blocks be provided with the new services?
- d. Will the Council compensate residents for its failure to deliver a service they are paying for but not receiving?