

Annual Meeting of Council

16 May 2024

Questions submitted by Councillors

Question 1 – submitted by Cllr Bill Trite

Since, at the full Council meeting on 13th February, a policy review of street lighting was promised from the Corporate Director for Highways in response to the serious night-time nuisance being caused to Swanage residents by the installation of street lights which are obviously much too harsh, intense and intrusive for the residential roads concerned, how much longer than the present three months will it be necessary to wait for this belated review?

Response by Cllr Jon Andrews

The previous Portfolio Holder for Highways requested that a review of the current street lighting policy be undertaken post-election. I will be asking that this is done as soon as practicable.

There are approximately 100 LED streetlights in Swanage that are affected by the concerns raised by residents. These lights are composites made from the outer shell and lens of the old low-pressure Sodium lights, retrofitted internally with LED lamps. This was done approximately two years ago by the Council's street lighting service provider, because the old Sodium lanterns had exceeded their operational life expectancy and replacement parts were no longer being manufactured. The result is that these lanterns have the light dispersing properties of the previous Sodium lanterns but with the light characteristics of an LED bulb.

These hybrid lights were compliant with all legal requirements at the time they were installed and continue to be so. However, following the advice on best practice that we have received from the Council's Director of Public Health, we have concluded that they should be replaced with the newer type of LED lantern that we are now using elsewhere in the county.

The newer lanterns are designed to direct light downward onto the highway, limiting light spillage outside the bounds of the highway or towards neighbouring properties and residences. This will significantly change the overall appearance of the lighting scheme. The newer lanterns also permit greater use of shields or shrouds to manage the throw of light from each individual lantern.

I have asked for the lanterns to be replaced as swiftly as possible.

Also I have asked the Director of Highways to instigate an independent review of the current Street Lighting operational impacts.'

Question 2 – submitted by Cllr Andrew Parry

The rollout of a large-scale development in the heart of West Parley village, designed to accommodate the business model of a National Housebuilder, working with Planning Officers from Dorset Council, has from the community's perspective been abysmal. It is well documented that this scheme was against the wishes of the residents, West Parley Parish Council, and me as the Ward Councillor. But Officers were so keen to recommend the scheme for approval by the Eastern Planning Committee, that promises were made, including addressing traffic congestion in the area, this would have been one of the few upsides, to an otherwise highly questionable rolling back of greenbelt for development.

However, the area is now plagued by traffic chaos with gridlocks and longer tailbacks at peak times. Reports suggest housing units have been slow to find buyers, housing associations have declined the affordable units, the roads specification are too narrow to meet our adoptable standard, questions about the permanent water capture area, (which will almost certainly attract birds), constructed underneath the flightpath of the nearby Airport, remain unanswered by officers. Other matters that really should be reviewed include the double yellow line fiasco, delays in opening the new Lidl store and existing homeowners in the area, now reporting traffic vibrations inside their properties.

It remains unclear why Officers, were so eager to see this development approved? Locally we have no idea, because they have stopped responding to our requests to meet with us.

Therefore, I am seeking assurance that the new Portfolio Holders, CEO and Place Directors work with the Ward Councillor and Parish Council, to review all concerns and address them.

Response by Cllr Shane Bartlett

Can I thank Cllr Parry for his question. I take the concerns he has raised very seriously and we are aware of the issues in West Parley. I hope he will appreciate I have only just been appointed as Portfolio Holder but I will agree to meet with you and Cllr Andrews, Portfolio Holder for Highways outside of the meeting, with the relevant officers to seek to understand the current situation.