

Answers collated following the meeting

Question one

Thank you for your e-mail and the question you have raised about the Hoylake Golf Resort and New Ferry Projects.

As you will know these are two very different “projects”. The Hoylake Golf Resort has come through a competitive dialogue process; identified a preferred Developer and is now seeking to bring this project forward to implementation through a series of stages. All of this is set out in the various Cabinet reports submitted on this project. These reports explain the history of the project, the consultancy studies that have been undertaken in the past and the current position so I will not go into all the detail on these matters in this response as that information is publically available and has been the subject of numerous FOI enquiries.

The “project” in New Ferry was caused by the unfortunate events of the explosion which took place in March 2017. This was a major incident and has been dealt with through the Council’s Emergency Plan. The initial acute phase has been followed by a recovery stage (which is still progressing) and is now moving towards a stage of seeking to identify and explore options on how the Council and other partners can support the future of this area. At the present time Homes England have made £100,000 available to support a feasibility study to identify regeneration options. This work will be completed within the next few months. As there are currently no detailed options identified it is not possible to comment on whether the Council “will approve prudential borrowing to lend to a Developer for New Ferry” but the Council has made it clear from the outset of this incident that it will do all that it can to support the community of New Ferry following this unprecedented event. In terms of the Recovery Phase the Council has now spent over £400,000 of its own resources supporting the community in the area and in addition to this Council staff and local volunteers have spent many hours supporting people through these traumatic events.

In summary, therefore, there is currently an identified project in terms of the Hoylake Golf Resort and this is why matters are progressing as they are. The detailed design studies, which the Developer is commissioning and funding at its own cost, are required for the planning process. In New Ferry, there is no identified project(s) as yet because the feasibility study stage is on-going but when this is completed then whatever projects emerge these will be considered in terms of what is required to bring them to implementation. These matters will be discussed with the New Ferry community as all matters since the explosion have been, through local meetings and consultation, with the continued support of the Local Member of Parliament and Ward Councillors.

I hope that this answers your questions.”

Question Five

Mr Wilkinson is referring to the response produced on Cllr Patrick’s behalf to acknowledge enquiries and comments that have come in regarding the proposed dog control PSPO, please see extract of the response below referring to the Kennel Club and RSPCA:

‘I’m pleased that the proposals have been developed in consultation with the RSPCA and Kennel Club, who have both acknowledged the proposals are based on common sense and that the Council is conducting full public consultation before making any decision about future dog control measures.’

As part of the development of the proposed measures for inclusion in the dog control PSPO I undertook pre consultation with a number of local and national stakeholders. Specifically I held a conference call with several officers from the Kennel Club in December during which I presented the proposed measures and referred to their publication about PSPOs (Out of Order – The Impact of Access Restrictions on Dogs and Their Owners) which sets out the Kennel Club’s advice and expectations on dog control PSPOs. The officers asked some clarification questions about access restrictions in parks and about owners having means of disposal for dog fouling on their person. Their collective view and comment at the end of the discussion was that what was being proposed was based on common sense and that our intended means of consultation was comprehensive. Their main concern about PSPOs is the lack of meaningful consultation undertaken by some authorities prior to establishing far reaching PSPOs.

I also met a number of local stakeholders in December at the town hall, including the local senior RSPCA officer where again I presented the proposed measures of the dog control PSPO and intended method of public and stakeholder consultation. I received the same response from the RSPCA officer and others in attendance, that the proposals were based on common sense and would help improve the experience of open spaces for all. I have subsequently kept these stakeholders updated on timescales and notified them immediately prior to the PSPO consultation’s launch. They have all received the full details of the dog control PSPO proposals as part of the formal engagement with stakeholders.

Please see below extracts of website advice from both the Kennel Club and RSPCA regarding dog control PSPOs

The Kennel Club’s overview of Dog Control PSPOs includes:

- While the majority of dog walkers are responsible, unfortunately there is an irresponsible minority who don't pick up after their dog or allow their dogs to run out of control. This behaviour has resulted in an increasing number of local authorities introducing ever-more stringent restrictions on where dog walkers can exercise their dogs. Restrictions may require dog walkers to keep their dogs on a lead in part or all of a restricted site, such as a park or beach, or they could impose a complete ban on taking dogs into these areas.
- The Kennel Club accepts that there are scenarios where restrictions on dog walkers are required and justified; indeed we are aware of many restrictions which are perfectly sensible and fair for all.
- The Kennel Club is not opposed to the principle of restrictions on dog owners and walkers. It is often overlooked that problems associated with irresponsible dog ownership affect responsible dog owners as much as those without dogs. Dog walkers are one of the most common users of the open spaces where these problems occur and over which restrictions are introduced.
- While we will usually seek alternative options to legal restrictions to tackle issues relating to irresponsible dog ownership, we do recognise at times there is a need for them. When done in an appropriate manner they can be effective at dealing with problem dog walkers.

The RSPCA's national position statement on PSPOs includes the following headlines:-

- The RSPCA acknowledges the value of PSPOs for local authorities to ensure that sections of open space may be dog-free, for example childrens' play areas, sports fields, etc.
- Dogs enjoy interacting and playing with other people and animals and it is important that they are able to express this and other normal behaviour off the lead. It is therefore imperative that local authorities use PSPOs sparingly and in a manner that is proportionate to the problem, in accordance with Defra's guidance.
- Local authorities should be aware that under section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act, owners are required to ensure they meet their pets' welfare needs, this includes the freedom to express normal behaviour and regular and appropriate exercise. It is for this reason, that where dogs are excluded or restricted on open spaces, it is essential that local authorities ensure that other open spaces in close proximity remain accessible to dogs on and off leads to allow owners to fulfil their responsibilities.
- The RSPCA hopes that local authorities issue PSPOs cautiously and not as a blanket power that punishes the responsible majority in an effort to tackle problems created by an irresponsible few.