

Nick Worth, leader of South Holland DC, attended the forum to answer questions from members. A number of questions had been sent in advance.

Q How much is SHDC able to influence the nature and types of shops in Spalding town centre

A Market forces generally influence the type and nature of shops. If planning permission is required eg change of use, then SHDC do have a say, although an example given was the all-night casino which was refused by SHDC but overturned on appeal by the government inspectorate. He added the Spalding Town Board had recently been established with £20,000,000 of govt funds to rejuvenate the town centre. This could possibly be used to buy some shop premises and therefore have more control on rents and tenancies. Spalding Business Improvement District has also started and this is managed by the retailer/business members and they have started by recently introducing hanging baskets into town.

Q How much influence and control does SHDC have over the management of of Halley Stewart field

A All councillors are Trustees of the charity that owns the field and it costs £20,000 pa to maintain. The new lease to the football club gives the football club a maintenance responsibility, and they have also invested in the facility with new stands and shortly a new all weather astro turf pitch. This is likely to encourage and enable community use.

In response to questions from the room, for information it was the Flower Parade committee themselves who declined an offer to use this facility in 2025

Q As a former County Councillor what was the council's thinking on building a significant roundabout and bridge when additional funding is not available for another 10 years to complete the road links

A The road had been under consideration for over 20 years. Homes England offered £20,000,000 (of the £52m total cost) to build it in order to open up land for housing. The next phase of housing is ready to go with planning consents which will release funding for the southern end. The remainder will ultimately be funded by the developers.

Issues were raised about building new houses whilst there are still insufficient doctors, dentists school spaces etc. The Council is prepared to support the building of a new surgery but the issue is getting someone to run it

Q How much do you feel South Holland and Spalding in particular will benefit from a reorganisation of local government if the new combined authority is led from Boston, Louth or even Lincoln

A He doesn't think this reorganisation will benefit Spalding. Greater Lincolnshire is currently 10 councils with 10 CEOs, 10 + senior managers etc so savings will be made. Each area has to have a population of over 500,000 and various options have been suggested.

Whichever option is decided on there will be fewer Spalding/SH councillors and could lead to a Town Council for Spalding by 2028.

Q How much do you feel South Holland and Spalding in particular will benefit from a new Mayoral authority and how can it not involve extra costs to us, the residents and council tax payers

A Mayoral combined authority is set to cost in the region of £24m pa and it has been agreed the costs be absorbed through existing budgets. There could be a benefit to Spalding as one of the priorities for that council is transport, so it could potentially lead to funding being found for the link road earlier than stated above.

Q A survey was held last year about waste recycling and waste management. What was the outcome and what is the present position

A The outcome of the survey was very close 51% - 49% in favour of wheelie bins. However in view of the potential LG reorganisation where every other council in Lincolnshire already uses wheelie bins and the statutory introduction of food waste bins it would appear we will all at some point have wheelie bins. Following comments from the room he acknowledged there would be exceptions, for instance large blocks of flats with shared entrances, assisted collections will be available (which he also pointed are available now for those who struggle to get their rubbish to the roadside)

Q A question from the floor was 'what about the Castle Sports Complex

A Refurbishment is costing £28m with £20m of that from the government

Q Pedestrian zone/town centre parking

A New regulations currently being written will enable traffic enforcement officers to ticket vehicles in the pedestrian area within the relevant hours. It is felt that once tickets start to be handed out the problems will stop. There was consideration of a gate or barrier to prevent access but this idea has been abandoned as it would require someone to lock and unlock it, it would need maintaining and other associated costs. Provision will be made for delivery and emergency vehicles.

Q Derelict/run down buildings

A Starting with the White Horse owned by Sam Smith brewery, they have a strange outdated policy of only allowing married couples to rent their pubs. Consequently they want to let it but have not found anyone suitable. Cllr Worth is aware of a gay couple who were interested in it but were not allowed.

The old Johnson hospital site was another issue raised. This is the new Town Boards No 1 priority but need the funding (as discussed earlier). A compulsory purchase order would be possible but would still have to pay market rates so maybe unaffordable. Council tax is being paid on the building by the present owners.

Bull and Monkey site - plans for a care home are due back before the council shortly following the council decision to refuse the original application

Q Cllr Worth himself asked for solar panels and Pylons to be raised

A Current applications range from 200 acres to 2000 acres of agricultural land to be taken up by solar farms especially in the Deeping area. Food security is an important issue. Also 50m tall pylons. These issues, because of the size and national importance, are often decided by the government so SHDC has little influence and no financial benefit as for instance from off shore wind farms, the council where electricity first arrives on land gets paid (in this case East Lindsey) but not in the distribution chain.

Councillor Worth was thanked for his time and offered to return at any time.