

COUNCIL

MEETING OF 14 MAY 2024

AGENDA ITEM 10 – QUESTION 24/001 ASKED PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 5.5

The following question (24/001) has been asked pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 5.5 by Councillor Mark Hood:

On 23rd November 2021 the Street Scene and Environment Services Advisory Board agreed to partially rewild River Lawn in partnership with the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership to be progressed in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change. The promised consultation with local members did not materialise and no consultation with Medway Valley Countryside Partnership has ever been undertaken. No base study to establish the number of species present in the sward of grass was conducted and no increase in species is recognisable other than the Dock which is now dominating the area which appears to have become waste ground to any visitor who is unaware of the current management regime.

Does the Cabinet Member for Climate Change:

- (i) now recognise that rewilding is inappropriate under the canopy of the nine trees here;
- (ii) will he agree to restore the regular maintenance of this space and concentrate on rewilding in locations that local members have identified in Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground where it will be successful; and
- (iii) acknowledge that biodiversity gain here can be achieved through the public realm improvements which are overdue?

Response of the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Regeneration and Property (Cllr Robin Betts):

'On 23 November 2021 the then Street Scene and Environment Services Advisory Board recommend "the proposal to partially rewild the land."

Since that date River Lawn has been progressed alongside other Roadside Nature Reserves where we have progressed rewilding schemes. Rewilding is appropriate under tree canopy and is a tool that should be used in all landscapes. It also helps support our aims in our Climate Change Strategy, and ambitious aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2030.

In the words of Sir David Attenborough, "sometimes nature and rewilding sites require a helping hand" so I will concentrate on preventing any domination of any particular species of plant at River Lawn.'