

FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 12 JULY 2017

**AGENDA ITEM 3 – PUBLIC QUESTION TIME – ORDER IN WHICH THE
CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL WILL INVITE QUESTIONS BELOW RECEIVED
IN WRITING IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING**

1. From Mr Dixon to the Leader of the Council - Councillor Mrs Brown
2. From Mr McLean to the Cabinet Member for Residential - Councillor Bence
3. From Mr Myers to the Leader of the Council - Councillor Mrs Brown
4. From Mr Ellis to the Leader of the Council - Councillor Mrs Brown
5. From Mrs Clark to the Cabinet Member for Planning – Councillor Charles
6. From Mrs Lewis to the Cabinet Member for Planning – Councillor Charles
7. From Mr Dixon to the Leader of the Council - Councillor Mrs Brown
8. From Mr Ellis to the Cabinet Member for Planning – Councillor Charles
9. From Mr Dixon to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Mrs Brown

**THE FULL DETAIL OF THE QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED IS DETAILED
BELOW**

NOTE: The Chairman will:

- invite questions from members of the public who have submitted in writing their questions in line with the Council's Constitution;
- explain that the questions received will be answered by the appropriate Members of the Cabinet or the Chairman of the Overview Select Committee
- confirm that Public Question Time allows Members of the public to ask one question at a time and that a maximum of one minute is allowed for each question.
- state that questions will be invited in the order in which they have been received and that if there is time remaining from the 15 minutes allowed for Public Question Time, questioners will be allowed to ask a supplementary question.

QUESTION ONE

From Mr Dixon to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs Brown

Question

In a recent letter the Secretary of State for Transport makes it clear that the delivery of the A27 Arundel Bypass should continue as planned – according to Highways England work is due to commence in March 2020 and is scheduled for completion in 2022.

How does the council plan to capitalise on the government's proposed £250 million investment in an Arundel Bypass?

Response

Thank you for your question.

The Council is working very closely with Arundel Town Council to promote the positive benefits of providing an Arundel By-Pass. Last week the Chief Executive and I had a meeting with the Chief Executive of Highways England, alongside a Member of Arundel Town Council and the Leader of West Sussex County Council.

However, the proposed consultation document has yet to be published. When it is the Council will formulate its detailed response. In due course we will learn what form any proposed improvements will take. At that point we will consider what further action might be appropriate for the Council to take to further the economic, environmental and social well-being of the locality.

QUESTION TWO

From Mr McLean to the Cabinet Member for Residential, Councillor Bence

Question

Following the Grenfell Tower disaster, can I please be advised what action Arun has taken to protect tenants in Arun owned and leased properties - and if there is an outcome to these actions taken by Arun to date – then what are they?

Response

Following the horrendous fire at Grenfell Towers in London, the Council has taken a range of actions regarding its social housing.

First of all, I should point out that Arun District Council does not have council housing which is 'high rise' which is classified by the Department of Community and Local Government as being over 6 floors high.

Secondly, we have no buildings which have any form of aluminum cladding.

However, we have taken this incident as an opportunity to ensure the safety of our tenants and leaseholders.

Actions we have taken so far include:

Undertaking checks to blocks of flats which have been clad to ensure correct installation and that there is fire breaks between the floors of flats.

The materials that have been used for all cladding meets current fire safety and building regulations. Initial findings have been received which indicate that the materials have been fitted correctly.

Letters have been hand delivered to all tenants and leaseholders who live in properties that have been clad, including houses. The letter set out the steps we are taking to assess the cladding and identify any actions, if required. A further update will go out shortly.

Flats have been inspected and front doors that are not believed to be fire doors have been identified. Leaseholders have been asked to provide evidence of fire door compliance by no later than the 31 July. If any door is found to be non-compliant the leaseholders will be asked to change it. In the event that it is not replaced steps will be taken by the Council to install a new door and recharge the leaseholder.

First risk assessments have been carried out on a number of blocks of flats and to date no significant issues have been found. The Council along with other West Sussex Districts and Boroughs recently attended a meeting with West Sussex Fire Brigade. The meeting provided an opportunity to share information on approaches to fire safety.

The Fire Service has already carried out 53 requested inspections of high rise buildings across the County. Work on non-residential high rise buildings will follow.

A meeting to review the provision of various information relating to private sector housing, building control, planning and housing is to be led by the Director of Services. This information will then be fed back to West Sussex Fire Brigade. Council housing staff have been written to, to ask that when they are out on site, steps are taken to ensure that corridors and stairways in flats remain free from obstruction and rubbish.

This is clearly a live issue and it is anticipated that further matters relating to fire safety will be identified locally or nationally and details will be brought back for your attention in due course.

QUESTION THREE

From Mr Myers to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs Brown

Question

The £100 million of recent investments in Bognor Regis that have been announced over the last two to three years including Rolls Royce Motors, The University of Chichester, and Butlins have been significant and very welcome along with the improvement in the public realm in the town centre and the soon to be refurbished railway station. However the Regis Centre site and the Hothamton car park redevelopment will bring a transformational impact for Bognor Regis which will benefit residents, businesses and visitors. The Bognor Regis Master Options Report on the two sites was agreed by the Council in March - what progress is being made in bringing forward these proposals and when will further announcements be forthcoming?

Response

As you know on the question of the regeneration plans for Bognor Regis we asked the community what they would like to see and we asked for ideas. We took all of that information and moulded it into a scheme which has received largely positive comments and cross-party support back in March.

Since March the Council has been working hard to progress these schemes. This has included speaking to key stakeholders, potential funders and statutory partners. Preparatory work on large complex schemes such as this take time to progress and there is considerable work going on in the background. The Council clearly wishes to move forward as quickly as possible and to maintain the momentum already achieved. The proposals for Hothamton's Linear Park will be the first to come forward in greater detail and a report setting out the next steps for development is expected in October 2017.

With this significant regeneration development in mind, we are also promoting Bognor Regis as an investment opportunity. An Investment Prospectus will soon be ready which promotes the town's key assets and an Investment Conference is being held in September which will showcase Bognor Regis to a new and influential audience.

As Bognor Regis is entering an exciting phase of significant regeneration and investment a place brand for the Town is being developed. Internationally

renowned design agency Hemingway design has been commissioned to help turn around the fortunes of the Town with a marketing campaign to give it a new identity.

In the meantime we are investing in our seafront and making improvements such as new public toilets and the recently completed town centre public realm.

Tourism is a key sector for the district and attracts approximately 4.3 million visitors a year and a total spend of around £237m. This value is increasing year on year and we will continue to support this important sector. The council's delivery of the very popular Sussex by the Sea website, our annual Visitor Guide and Visitor Information Points in Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Arundel are clear examples of our commitment to this.

We also work closely with our Coastal West Sussex partners to ensure the area is promoted as a tourism destination as widely as possible."

QUESTION FOUR

From Mr Ellis to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs Brown

Question

Regeneration or No Regeneration, is that the question? And the answers is? Millions of Pounds wasted. When will the waste of money by ADC stop? We have NO Local plan that stands up? So far you have spent twice the amount Chichester spent on their local plan, and we are talking millions, and we still are very unsure if the Examiner will make our proposed modifications to the original flawed Local Plan. We have future regeneration planned for Bognor Regis seafront, that does not seem to meet with the approval of the people of Bognor, whose own idea taken at Consultation seem to have been ignored. All Bognor Regis has had so far is remodelling for an existing leisure centre, paving over the High Street and a few Flower beds in front of the Station.

We have no regeneration for Littlehampton Town Centre or Seafront, we have costly plans prepared by expensive Consultants, but no idea when these might, if ever, happen. What we do have is the rebuilding of the swimming pool and leisure centre, to replace buildings that were not fit for purpose. Here we have two unique British Seaside Towns that are rapidly falling off the spectrum of places to live and visit. Why? Years of ineptitude by ADC, its Leaders and Cabinet, years of failing to guide its Officers to produce workable affordable solutions to regenerate the area, has left us with exactly the same as we had in the 70's, 40 to 50 years ago. How can the Council convince us that under the current leadership the regeneration situation will not be just the same in six months or FIVE?

Response

I am very surprised by your question – and I have a very different view of this District to you. I know there is a huge amount to be proud of where Arun has had a direct or indirect influence.

Over recent years there has been significant investment and regeneration in Arun and this will continue with the delivery of the Local Plan strategic housing and employment sites.

The main urban areas of Littlehampton and Bognor Regis have seen the most changes and improvements both in terms of business growth and physical regeneration.

Bognor Regis, in particular, is moving into a period of major change and redevelopment. In recent years the Town has attracted private and public sector investment totaling in the region of £280 million. This has been spent on creating a new relief road, building the 30,000 sqm Rolls Royce Motor Cars Technology and Logistics Centre and the University of Chichester's Business School and Learning Resource Centre.

At the current time more than £100 million is being delivered across Bognor Regis on projects, including the University of Chichester's Engineering and Digital Technological Park, Butlin's new multi-million pound Splash Pool, new homes, and the railway station refurbishment.

It is well known that investment generates investment. The Town Centre Public Realm improvements of £2.8 m have already generated at least £3 million in private sector investment in improvements to nearby premises.

The proposed Town Centre Business Improvement District will raise dedicated funds of more than £700,000 over five years to support the management of the Town Centre.

Further planned investment is in the pipeline for Bognor Regis includes improvements to the seafront; phase two of the Rolls Royce Motor Card expansion and the creation of a Creative Digital Hub at the railway station. Southern Rail is also undertaking a major overhaul of the station.

On the question of the regeneration plans for Bognor Regis we asked the community what they would like to see and we asked for ideas. We took all of that information and moulded it onto a scheme which has received largely positive comments and cross-party support back in March.

The Council is also fully committed to progressing its multi-million pound gardens by the sea regeneration plans for the Regis Centre and Hothampton sites. Large schemes as this take time and the Council is working with key stakeholder and investment partners to progress both sites towards delivery.

There is also a place-branding initiative underway to re-launch Bognor Regis as great place to live, work and invest.

The Council is confident that further investment and regeneration will take place. Our Local Plan will see nearly 20,000 new homes built in the District by 2031 and major employers such as Rolls Royce Motor Cars have been quick to recognise the opportunities our strategic employment sites can offer.

The Council will play a leading role in driving growth; prosperity and economic development in the District and is actively promoting all opportunities that will make this happen.

Littlehampton has also seen much investment and regeneration including the recently completed £27 million flood defense and public realm enhancement scheme. Improvements on the River Arun have not only ensure the safety against flooding of many homes but also improved the public areas of the river and seaside. This work has been recognised for its quality with a prestigious national award.

The Council is also funding a new multi-million pound Leisure Centre in the town and major road improvements to the A259 and A284 have received over £13 million of public funding for them to progress.

Schemes to improve the seafront and town centre public areas have also been approved and will be progressed over the coming years.

A major redevelopment scheme on the West Bank at Littlehampton could see the delivery of over 1000 new homes, new businesses and commercial premises and further improved flood defenses.

Arundel is also an important contributor to the local economy, particularly the tourism sector – the Castle is the number one tourism destination in the District. The Council will continue to support the town's local partnerships and stakeholders to ensure that they continue to succeed.

Would we like to do more ourselves and encourage further investment – the answer is clearly yes, but you need to understand that developing and delivering projects takes time and we don't have the financial or human resources to deliver multiple projects at the same time. Whether we like it or not, we live in a world where we have to compete for money. What we need is for people to get behind us and support our bids for private and public sector investment.

Regarding the Local Plan, I am unclear which Chichester Local Plan you are referring to, the one that failed examination, the one that has recently been adopted or the one they are now working on because the adopted one wasn't able to meet all of their identified needs. As far as our Plan is concerned, I am satisfied that we have done all we could to answer the original concerns raised by the Inspector. We await the verdict of his successor.

Personally, I believe there is much to celebrate in the towns and I believe there are many good reasons to be glass half full than glass half empty.

QUESTION FIVE

From Mrs Clark to the Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor Charles

Question

The 2015 HELAA stated on Tuppers Field, Walberton "This area was judged as having a 'Low' Landscape Capacity for development, based on an assessment of the areas Landscape Value and Sensitivity. The site is therefore not considered suitable for development." In the Sustainability Appraisal for the ongoing Local Plan Inquiry, the LUC primary evidence document discounts this site and says "Potential significant negative effects were recorded in relation to water quality, soil, historic environment, and landscape. There is little scope for accommodating growth without impacting on the landscape quality and sensitivity of the Walberton Village Conservation Area."

Why is this site now under threat? The examiner, appointed by you, was clear in his recommendation for Tuppers field to be included as an LGS. We cannot understand why you refused to accept this advice, nor can we find an example of a local planning authority overriding an independent examiners report on an LGS in a Neighbourhood Plan – can you?

Response

The HELAA identifies 'potential' development sites within the District. It does not allocate any sites and it does not grant planning permission for any sites. It is merely a list of those sites that may have potential. A planning application for development on the site has recently been submitted and the HELAA as well as the Landscape and Sustainability Appraisal work will be some of the factors in considering the principle of development. There will also be a public consultation.

The District Council communicated its concerns about the quality and validity of the Examiners Report into the Neighbourhood Plan with the Parish Council prior to issuing any decision. The decision notice was issued after the Council had taken legal advice and that decision notice is publically available on the Council's website. At that time, the Neighbourhood Planning Group had two options. It

could have accepted the Council's decision statement, amended the Plan and gone to a referendum or it could have challenged the decision statement and asked the Secretary of State to intervene. The Neighbourhood Plan Group chose (and it is important to emphasise that they chose) to follow the first option. If your NP group were convinced that the District Council were wrong in this decision, the time to challenge it was at the end of last year before you put a Plan to referendum. This matter was also comprehensively dealt with at the recent Overview Scrutiny Committee.

QUESTION SIX

From Mrs Lewis to the Cabinet Member for Planning – Councillor Charles

Question

Walberton's Neighbourhood Plan Examiner, a retired barrister, followed the then current and long-term ADC view, which is now underlined by the LUC judgement and stated that Tuppens Field satisfied the 3 criteria in the NPPF and is "valued by the community, and lies close to the heart of the village, and is to be considered to be a buffer between the residential areas and the golf course."

He also stated in his judgement that: "I do not consider in the context that it is an extensive tract of land. Accordingly, it is recommended for designation as a Local Green Space."

Karl Roberts admitted that the guidance on definition of an extensive tract of land was not specific and was therefore subjective so why then are you not listening to the view of your (legal) independent examiner and to parishioners – both old and young who classify and value this area as a green space?

Response

The District Council communicated its concerns about the quality and validity of the Examiners Report into the Neighbourhood Plan with the Parish Council prior to issuing any decision. The decision notice was issued after the Council had taken legal advice and that decision notice is publically available on the Council's website. At that time, the Neighbourhood Planning Group had two options. It could have accepted the Council's decision statement, amended the Plan and gone to a referendum or it could have challenged the decision statement and asked the Secretary of State to intervene. The Neighbourhood Plan Group chose (and it is important to emphasise that they chose) to follow the first option.

The designation of Local Green Spaces is to be done through Neighbourhood Plans and all LGS designations in the District have been brought forward this way. The NP Group chose not to challenge the decision of the Council and therefore did not include any LGS designation at this time. Overview Scrutiny Committee have confirmed that any future LGS designation will be brought forward when Walberton review their Neighbourhood Plan and the land at

Tuppers Field will be considered as a potential LGS at that time. The timescales for any new Neighbourhood Plan are unknown but any proposed Local Green Space would have to be supported by appropriate evidence at that time.

QUESTION SEVEN

From Mr Dixon to the Leader of the Council - Councillor Mrs Brown

Question

Do you agree that, in principle, any Councillor misrepresenting their age to the electorate should not be trusted?

Response

No, I don't agree. All that residents vote for is someone to be an effective Councilor working on their behalf.

QUESTION EIGHT

From Mr Ellis to the Cabinet Member for Planning – Councillor Charles

Question

In view of the NHS not taking up ADC's offer of assistance in opening up the Morrison's site for a new Surgery unit for Littlehampton and outlying districts, may I ask whether it is possible that ADC could now offer assistance to an existing surgery and practice that is held in great esteem by its patients, but is having to exist in out-dated premises that are too small to achieve any growth.

Dr Charles Shlosberg of the Lawns Surgery in Rustington has now been running his practice for Fourteen years at The Lawns Surgery, adjacent to Zachary Merton Hospital, achieving regularly 100% in Patient satisfaction and winning awards in local Communities Newspaper contests. The premises he has to inhabit are beyond their life cycle and he is in need of some desperate assistance to continue practising and giving his undivided attention to his Patients, also to allow him to have more Doctors and Medical Staff on site. Is there anything ADC can do to offer premises or assistance to this practice, which unlike the NHS you have been trying to deal with, would welcome your assistance?

Response

Thank you for your question.

I am sorry to hear of the difficulties that Dr Charles Shlosberg of the Lawns Surgery in Rustington is having. Karl Roberts – Director of Place has offered to go and meet Dr Shlosberg to establish if and how Arun might be of assistance in helping to identify a possible solution. However, any solution is unlikely to involve an Arun asset because the Council owns very few assets and none are currently suitable or available.

QUESTION NINE

From Mr Dixon to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Mrs Brown

Question

It is often hard for members of the public to hear what Councillors say in the Council Chamber. For some reason the microphones are set for Councillors to speak from a seated position, yet Councillors stand up and, in essence, move their heads away from the microphones.

Wouldn't it be better if Councillors spoke from a seated position, closer to the microphones, so that the public can actually hear what they say?

Response

The benefit of asking Members to stand when speaking is that it clearly allows everyone to see who is speaking which isn't necessarily the case if they are in a seated position. It also gives the speaker authority, it helps the audience pay better attention, and eye contact and body language are more accessible to those listening. I acknowledge that sometimes it is difficult to hear clearly what some Members say and so encourage all Members to make sure they do not have papers covering their microphones when they speak.