

FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 13 SEPTEMBER 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 Chester to the Leader of the Council - Councillor Mrs Brown
2. From Mr Dixon to the Leader of the Council – Councillor Mrs Brown
3. From Mr Chester to the Leader of the Council - Councillor Mrs Brown
4. 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 Chester to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs Brown

Question

Is the Leader of the Council familiar with the following verse of an old song 'the land, the land, twas God who made the land, the ground on which we stand, why should we be beggars with the ballot in our hand, god made the land for the people'. As much of tonight's agenda is about the land would she agree with me on the following basic principles (1) that the land the Council owns actually belongs to the people of Arun (2) that Councils have the opportunity to use their land to provide opportunities and facilities for local communities that the market cannot and will not (3) the use of the Councils land can be to provide community facilities for young and old, help to address the infrastructure deficit and to provide visitor attractions to assist the local economy, even dare I say it Littlehampton's only campsite and (4) such land once sold is gone for ever and it will be far more difficult for Councils to buy land back again than it is to dispose of it.

Response

Thank you for your question.

Local government exists to provide services to the residents, businesses and visitors of a given area. In the case of Arun the Councillors here tonight have been elected by the people of Arun to make what are often difficult decisions on behalf of all the people of Arun. I recognise and understand your wish, as a resident and as a Town Councillor, for a particular outcome. The Councillors here tonight will debate the matter later and will determine what will be the best outcome for the people of Arun as a whole.

QUESTION TWO

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

Question

In March 2017 I put the following question to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure.

"The Inspector warned the council of the need to avoid predetermination as it modifies its Local Plan.

Would you agree with me that by declining to consider a single large scale new settlement at Ford, and given the higher housing number now under consideration, the council has ensured that there is no credible alternative to Barnham, Eastergate and Westergate?

Can you explain why the council has declined to consider a large-scale new settlement of approx. 5,000 houses at Ford?"

The minutes state that:

"The Cabinet Member for Planning & Infrastructure, Councillor Bower, responded by stating that it would be highly inappropriate for him to make any comment as to do so would irresponsibly open the issue of one strategic site against another at a time when the Local Plan had been completed as a coherent evidenced based whole plan to deliver the objectively assessed housing needs of the entire District."

As usual, the question was not answered. Now the Inspector has also asked for an explanation as to why the council has declined to consider a large new settlement at Ford. The council can ignore the public but it can't hide from the Inspector.

If you do have an explanation, may the residents of the district you serve now hear it?

Response

Thank you for your question.

The Council has published on its website a formal response to the various questions the Inspector has asked. For Members' information the actual question asked by the Inspector was:

1.3 Has the option of a new settlement at Ford following the principles of Garden Cities been fully considered as an alternative way of meeting housing needs? In this respect it is noted that SA undertaken in 2009 appears to have discounted this option.

QUESTION THREE

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

Question

Policy TOU DM1 in the submitted Arun Local Plan reads 'excepting permitted development rights or local/neighbourhood development orders, existing visitor attractions, facilities and accommodation (except holiday caravan sites), will only be granted permission for a change of use that continues** a visitor offer unless, it is demonstrated that the use is no longer required and is unlikely to be reused or redeveloped for visitor purposes. This will include a clear demonstration of marketing, viability appraisal and the suitability of the site to accommodate the alternative use. The Council will require evidence that the site has not been made deliberately unviable, that marketing has been actively conducted for a reasonable period of time and that alternative visitor uses have been fully explored. Change of use of holiday caravan sites to other uses, including permanent residential uses will not be permitted, unless the site is allocated for other development within the Local Plan.'

How has the Council taken this policy into account when considering its options and marketing for the Daisyfields caravan and camping site?

** this should read 'discontinues' not 'continues' and I have drawn this to the attention of the LP examination so this can be corrected.

Response

Thank you for your question.

In many ways the answer is similar to the answer I gave earlier. Urban areas like Littlehampton are subject to many competing uses and it will be for the Council as Local Planning Authority to determine how to give appropriate weight to emerging policies such as the one you quote and the competing need to deliver much needed housing. The decision the Council reaches tonight will be as a landowner only.

QUESTION FOUR

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

Question

I have always seen an Arundel Bypass as "enabling infrastructure" to enable the delivery of government housing and employment policies in the Arun District and, in particular, to assist the regeneration of Bognor Regis and Littlehampton – both

of which have serious pockets of deprivation, amongst the bottom 10% in the country.

The exclusion of a grade separated junction on the Ford Road eliminates any opportunity to link Bognor Regis to the Strategic Road Network (SRN) in the east (the A24) by creating a link road from the accident black spot at Comet Corner, bridging the railway line near Ford, and linking to the Arundel Bypass.

It also ensures that Ford Airfield cannot be developed to its full potential, which means that all other communities in the district must suffer the housing pressure, whilst Arundel takes the infrastructure improvement.

The Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling cancelled the A27 Chichester improvement scheme. The council was fully aware of this when it voted through its Local Plan.

The council has planned most of its strategic housing development to the south and south east of Chichester – at Bersted, Pagham, and Barnham, Eastergate & Westergate with only a relatively modest number of houses at Ford.

So, in essence, the council's strategy is to locate a majority of its strategic housing where the A27 WILL NOT be improved and a relatively small part of its strategic housing where the A27 WILL be improved.

How do you, as leader of the council, think the proposed Arundel Bypass will contribute towards the delivery of government housing and employment policy and also the regeneration of Bognor Regis and Littlehampton?

Response

Thank you for your question.

I am somewhat surprised that you feel it necessary to ask such a question. The communities within Arun have long campaigned for improvements to the A27. The public consultation exercise currently being undertaken by Highways England for improvements at Arundel is very welcome. I hope you will find time in your busy schedule scrutinising the Arun Local Plan to write a letter of support for one of the options proposed. In 2013 the Council commissioned with West Sussex County Council and Horsham District Council a report looking at the economic benefits of having an Arundel Bypass. Alongside, the usual benefits of reduced journey times and increased spend by tourists, the report estimated that an additional £493m would be added to the total West Sussex GVA. Communities in Arun will be contributing to this increase in GVA. If the benefits beyond West Sussex are taken into account the figures grow yet further.

The Chairman then allowed time for supplementary questions.

Supplementary Question From Mr Chester to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs Brown

The first questioner asked a supplementary question covering both of his questions [Questions 1 and 3].

Question

Although I understand the Leader of the Council's responses, I refer to correspondence from Littlehampton Town Council that has been sent to all Arun District Councillors – has this been received? I also refer to Public Question Time from the meeting of Cabinet held on 31 July 2017 and whether the response promised by the Leader of the Council in writing to the supplementary questions asked has been circulated? I also refer to Policy TOU DM1 in the Local Plan. This was a Policy that has been written by Arun and submitted to the Inspector asking all private landowners to protect sites and to keep them in existence for the health of the local economy. In view of what is being considered tonight I feel that there is a conflict of interest if that policy applies to all private landowners in Arun but not to itself.

Response

A letter from Littlehampton Town Council has been sent to all District Councillors. Responding to the query about Public Question Time from the meeting of Cabinet on 31 July 2017, all responses to Public Question Time can be found on the Council's web site. I cannot add anymore to what I have already said in terms of my response to Question 3.