

FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 12 SEPTEMBER 2018

**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 Cabinet Member for Residential Services -
Councillor Bence
2. From Mr Coster 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 Cabinet Member for Residential Services, Councillor Bence

Question

I commend the Officers of the Council and the Cabinet Member for working hard to source housing provision for families in need. However, in recent weeks I have come across a couple of examples of the Council using accommodation which has not received planning consent, in Bayford Road and Clifton Road, Littlehampton. In these cases, conversions to HMOs and from retail to living accommodation. In both cases efforts are now being made to regularise the situation. This discovery concerns me as it is possible in such cases the proper building control checks will not have been carried out with regard to the buildings safety, in particular fire safety. In both cases young children were housed in these premises. Would he agree with me that the Council should only use premises to house applicants that have been granted planning consent?'

Response

In relation to the planning and building control aspects of your question, work is underway to ensure that the correct permissions are in place.

In terms of temporary accommodation, the Council has an inspection programme in place and checks are being undertaken to ensure that accommodation being used is compliant with the relevant regulatory regimes. This is an ongoing programme and given that homelessness in the District is increasing, and consequently so is the use of temporary accommodation, an Officer has been recruited for the sole purpose of expediting the programme and ensuring inspections are undertaken in advance of using private sector accommodation.

Where problems are identified, the Council will ensure that these are rectified where necessary using its enforcement powers. It will not use properties which are non-compliant.

Supplementary Question

Thank you for your answer. I take it that the Council has been or is using some properties that do not have consent to house people on the housing register. If this is the case, how does this affect individual's insurance or indeed the Council's insurance – it could be invalidated. Given recent concerns over issues such as fire and water certificate safety checks I feel that this whole issue should be examined by a Special Meeting of the Council's Scrutiny Committee. It would assist everyone if this could be addressed by that Committee.

Supplementary Response

I am not in the position to provide an answer in relation to insurance or on any compliance issues. There is a strong programme of enforcement and checks are in place. An Officer has been employed to look at compliance; fire and health and safety. Unfortunately, I cannot elaborate further but am happy for any of the processes to go back to the Scrutiny Committee and I would support this.

QUESTION TWO

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

Question

The temporary Ice Rink at Christmas was enormously successful in regeneration terms in that it brought thousands of people from all around the area into the heart of Bognor Regis -- which is what we all want to see on a permanent basis. Yet in your Officer's report to agenda item 5 today - the ice rink petition - recommendation 4 seeks to bind the Council into a statement specifically banishing any rink proposal to the outskirts of the Town and thereby deliberately destroying one of its major purposes.

Did you have any input or involvement in the creation or approval of that 4th recommendation statement, and at your Conservative Group meeting prior to this meeting was this agenda item and that statement discussed, and was there any direction made or agreement arrived at as to how Members should vote on this agenda item -- and if so, what was it?

Response

I do think the question indicates a very naïve and biased view of how local government works in practice.

The actual process of a report coming before Members for a decision has nothing of the hallmarks suggested in your question. The Chief Executive and I regularly describe the actual process when we meet new members of staff, as part of their induction process.

It is Members who provide the strategic direction for this Council. Officers then look into the subject matter and advise Members, usually in the form of a report. The report has recommendations but it is always the case that Members decide whether to accept the recommendations, amend them or reject them. When Members have made their decision they then instruct Officers to implement that

decision. As part of the process, our Overview Select Committee also monitors decisions and the actions taken are reviewed.

With regard to any involvement by myself or the Conservative Group in writing or influencing the recommendations the answer is “none”.

Supplementary Question

Thank you for your response, however, this does not answer my question. I repeat, was this an item that was discussed at your Conservative Group Meeting and at that meeting was any direction made as to how the Petition would be considered by your Members?.

Supplementary Response

I did answer your question clearly and reconfirm that Conservative Group did not take a decision on this matter. However, I cannot speak on behalf of the other Political Groups.