

FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 5 MARCH 2014

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 Mrs Ryke to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Elkins
2. From Mrs Rollason to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs Brown
3. From Mr Ellis to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services, Councillor Dendle
4. From Mr Brockhurst to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Elkins
5. From Mr Wheal to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance, Councillor Wensley
6. Mrs Hsitou 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. Chairman will explain that the questions received will be answered by the appropriate Members of the Cabinet or the Chairman of the Overview Select Committee. Chairman to advise 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. Chairman is to state that questions will be invited in the order in which they have been received.

Chairman to outline that questioners may have the opportunity to ask a supplementary question but only if there is time remaining from the 15 minutes allowed for Public Question Time.

QUESTION ONE

Question from Mrs Ryke to the Cabinet Member for Housing – Councillor Elkins

Has the Council considered whether the possible incoming tenants of their proposed new Council dwellings, would be comfortable and enjoy a good standard of life, as they would be situated in cramped conditions and have to

suffer limited access for the disabled, limited access for Fire, Police and Ambulance, limited access for Patient Transport and for the collection of refuse and waste and lots of other problems?

Response

Careful consideration has been given throughout the development of these schemes to their density and proximity to existing homes. All the sites have a density of between 20 and 35 dwellings per hectare, whilst housing sites elsewhere are at densities at up to 45-50 properties per hectare. The densities proposed reflect the surrounding area and are in line with good practice recommendations. We have sought to maximise distances from existing dwellings where possible, and have amended plans where residents have raised specific concerns with individual sites.

The homes proposed by the council have been developed in line with a national standards required for all housing association homes called the Housing Quality Indicators, which cover a range of requirements for the home including size. Homes built to these standards are often larger than their privately developed counterparts. We have intentionally proposed good sized windows to allow good levels of natural light into the homes and help to provide a good level of internal environment to enable the occupants to enjoy a good standard of living.

The homes are all being built to Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 and will mean that residents will have highly insulated homes that are more economical to run.

All sites have the provision for a large refuse vehicle to turn around within the site and exit in forward gear. These vehicles are larger than standard fire vehicles and so ample space would also be provided for these. Bin collection points have been proposed where residents would deposit their wheelie bins on collection day to enable easy and quick collection of refuse. All new housing will comply with access for the disabled.

The residents living in these homes will be offered good quality new homes being built to a very high standard.

QUESTION TWO

From Mrs Rollason to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs Brown

As Councillors from Arun District Council may have noticed there is a peaceful silent demonstration outside led by the concerned people of Wick and Littlehampton. Can I ask if the Council is paying attention and listening to the needs and voices of the people or are they just content to claim that this is "their land (when surely this land belongs to the people of Littlehampton) and they will do what they want to and that they will build regardless of the massive voice of the people of the area that are asking them not to do this.

Response

The Council acknowledges the right of individuals to demonstrate and express their concern over the proposed development at Wick. The Council has carried out extensive consultation, writing to more than 650 local residents and holding a consultation afternoon and evening at the Keystone Centre. As a result of the consultation, up to 50 comments and suggestions for the proposed development were received. Such consultation has resulted in reducing the proposed development down from 31 units to 23 units, as well as changes to parking layout, which was probably the biggest concern.

For the first time in many years, the Council is in a position to be able to fund the building of Council homes. By building on existing Council-owned land, the Council will be able to offer the new properties at 'social rent' (60% of market rent), as opposed to 'affordable rent' (80% of market rent). The Council is aware that, in many cases, 'affordable rents' which are offered by Housing Associations are, in many cases, not affordable. This small scale of development provides the opportunity to help some of the 1100 applicants on the Council's housing waiting list. As part of the arrangements for any of the new housing developments that will be undertaken in the district, it is planned that the allocation of the new housing on its first time let, will take account of local connections.

QUESTION THREE

From Mr Ellis to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services, Councillor Dendle

Are Arun District Council aware of the wishes of the Residents of Littlehampton, that, if the swimming pool and leisure complex is moved and built on another site, (which has been agreed by this Council, will only happen if and after another site is chosen and similar replacement facilities are opened) that we the people of Littlehampton wish for the Swimming Pool site, on our unique and treasured Seafont, to be retained for Leisure purposes only and not to be treated as a budgetary item for disposal by the purported Landowner ADC.

Can they give us any assurances that the wishes of the People will be adhered to under the consideration of the Parliamentary Localism Act and the original proposals put forward in the Littlehampton Neighbourhood Plan. If they cannot, and as we have asked for this site not to be treated as a budgetary item for disposal by the purported Landowner ADC, please explain why.

Response

I am aware that many residents would prefer not to see development on the site of the Littlehampton Swimming and Sports Centre should a new Centre be constructed within the Town. However, it may be that in order to fund modern sports facilities to meet the needs of our residents for the next 50 years that some development is necessary. We have commissioned an options appraisal to inform our decisions on this matter and the recommendations will be fully debated by Members, both at the Leisure Tourism and Infrastructure Working Group and recommendations at Full Council.

With regard to the Littlehampton Neighbourhood Plan, the examiner modified the relevant policy to ensure that it is in line with the National Planning Policy Framework and complies with legal requirements. The examiner went on to conclude **“I am therefore delighted to recommend to Arun District Council that the Littlehampton Neighbourhood Development Plan, as modified, should now proceed to referendum.”** Unfortunately, Littlehampton Town Council has yet to agree to the examiners recommendations. This will delay the opportunity for residents to have their say.

Whilst Arun District Council is in discussions with Littlehampton Town Council to try to resolve the concerns they have, the referendum, which had originally been scheduled to take place on 8 April 2014, will now be delayed until a solution is found.

QUESTION FOUR

From Mr Brockhurst to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Elkins – Question asked by Mrs Ryke in the absence of Mr Brockhurst

When Wick estate was designed all amenities green spaces car parking spaces and amenity space were considered to be adequate. The size for this council estate if they agree with it, why have they goal posts been moved to the detriment of the existing residents and their children?

Response

The areas that have been identified for the proposed housing development include car-parking hard standings and one grassed area. We believe that the new parking arrangements will significantly improve the position overall, both in terms of the additional parking that will be available and in relation to the siting of the spaces which will provide better visual security. A number of environmental improvements, such as tree planting and landscaping, are proposed in the neighbouring areas of the development which will be to the benefit of all residents.

QUESTION FIVE

From Mr Wheal to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance, Councillor Wensley

It is my understanding that Councillor Mrs Warr has been absent abroad, from Council business, each winter for a past number of years.

Can you tell me

- how many winters (years) and for how many months for each of those winters she has been absent abroad?
- Will you confirm that she has been claiming and receiving allowances whilst absent?
- Is she still claiming her allowance whilst absent?
- Does the Liberal Democrat Leader sanction this kind of abuse of tax payer's hard earned cash?
- Do you think it moral and acceptable behaviour?

Response

I respond in the order you have submitted questions

- At least seven years and for an average of 3-4 months for each of those winters
- Yes, she has continued to claim her Basic and IT Allowances
- Yes
- Although I follow the tenor of your last two questions concerning the use of tax payer's money and morality, it would be more appropriate for you to contact direct the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group through personal correspondence.
- Chairman, I note that Mr Wheal has carefully worded his question and focus on the moral rather than the legal position, however, it might be helpful for me to quote that Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 which states that "if a Member of a Local Authority fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance to attend ANY meeting of the Authority, they shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the Authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a Member of the Authority. The legislation states that as long as a Member attends any meeting of the Council within any six month period that will suffice. This confirms that the Member concerned is working within the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972.

It is not for me to answer whether the absence of the Member is moral and acceptable although you may be assured that on this matter also I have a view, however, I suggest that you may care to address this question as well to the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and ask him if he thinks the behaviour is moral and acceptable.

QUESTION SIX

From Mrs Hsitou to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs Brown

NOTE: As the fifteen minutes allowed had expired, the Chairman called to an end Public Question Time and so Mrs Hsitou's question was not asked. As the question had been submitted in line with the constitution rules for Public Question Time, it and the response is detailed below:

Have the Council considered that the Wick estate should be maintained to a better standard, before trying to rush through the desire to cram in more dwellings?

Response

The Council has recently used grant monies in excess of £1m to invest in maintaining the Wick estate, as has recently been evidenced by the installation of external wall insulation and the installation of more efficient heating systems. My

view is that these works have significantly improved the environment whilst at the same time making an immediate difference in terms savings on energy costs. The Council has a programme of improvements for all of its Council stock which includes housing properties at Wick. As has been mentioned earlier, it is proposed to carry out environmental improvements on the estate, which it is hoped will be seen in a positive light. We will be working with the residents association and via the tenants' panel to deliver environmental improvements on all of our estates, including Wick.