

**FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 13 JANUARY 2016**

**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 and Cabinet Member for Council Strategy, Councillor Mrs Brown
2. From Mr Chester to the Cabinet Member for Leisure & Amenities, Councillor Dendle
3. From Mr Dixon to the Cabinet Member for Leisure & Amenities, Councillor Dendle

**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 and Cabinet Member for Council Strategy, Councillor Mrs Brown**

#### **Question**

The Local Plan could not be found sound at the EiP and has been suspended. At the same time the council has conceded that it does not have a 5 Year Housing Land Supply. This leaves the entire district open to planning by appeal.

In response to public questions you have stated, on more than one occasion, that the Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure has your full confidence.

Can you please explain the reasons for your continued confidence in him?

#### **Response**

If I can refer you back to Council Meetings held on 11 March and 9 September 2015 you should recall that you asked similar questions and responses were provided at that time.

I have nothing further to add to the responses already provided to you.

## **QUESTION TWO**

### **From Mr Chester to the Cabinet Member for Leisure & Amenities, Councillor Dendle**

#### **Question**

To ask the Cabinet Member responsible for an update on the operation of the following facilities: the boating lake in Mewsbrook Park, the miniature railway starting in Mewsbrook Park and the Putting Green café in Norfolk Gardens. Would he agree that it is all very well maximising income from fees and charges but it is important not to kill off the facilities all together? Would he accept that it is crucial that the Council develops a constructive partnership with the operators of these facilities and that a flexible approach to terms of operation is sometimes needed to keep them going, for example the required days of operation when schools are not on holiday.

## **Response**

Thank you for your question Mr Chester.

### **Miniature Railway**

As reported in the media last month, the existing tenant removed his rolling stock without prior notification. Officers have been in communication with the tenant to understand what his intentions are in respect of the lease that has 10 years remaining. In parallel, Officers have had a preliminary discussion with a third party who may be interested in taking the miniature railway on for a trial period. These discussions cannot be progressed until the existing tenant confirms his formal position.

You will, of course, realise that this type of business opportunity is in a very specialist and therefore limited market. This will, if necessary, as on previous occasions, make securing a new operator challenging.

### **Boating Lake**

On the boating lake concession, there has been extremely limited market interest. Officers are in discussions with a third party who has recently expressed an interest in running the boating lake and are currently reviewing the proposals.

### **Norfolk Gardens Café**

No change in the operation of this cafe is anticipated and the Council is in negotiations with the existing tenant about its operation in 2016.

The rents received for all of these concessions are not excessive and will as they stand not, as you put it, kill off these facilities. To make any business flourish it needs good marketing, a good quality product and annual growth in the number of customers using them.

The Council can provide these good business opportunities but it is for the private or voluntary sector to determine whether there is a market worth bidding for. I do not believe it is a matter for the Council to use Council Taxpayers money to subsidise uneconomic businesses. However, I do believe it is important that the Council encourages, through its tendering opportunities, businesses to take an entrepreneurial but well thought out attitude when bidding and entering into formal commitments.

### **Supplementary Question**

Is the Council satisfied that when a concession holder approaches the Council to discuss operations, when problems are encountered, does the Council allow the concession holder to change various terms agreed in the first instance to allow them to keep trading and would you say that Arun is a listening Council?

### **Supplementary Answer**

Yes, the Council is a listening council and when there are opportunities to be flexible then the Council and Officers listen and do what they can to help, however, the Council has to bear in mind the public interest element too.

### **QUESTION THREE**

#### **From Mr Dixon to the Cabinet Member for Leisure & Amenities, Councillor Dendle**

##### **Question**

I estimate that the Council has wasted something like £1.2 million on the failed St Modwen “regeneration” project and £1.5 million, so far, on producing a Local Plan that could not be found sound at examination.

Having wasted such massive amounts of public money the council now finds it necessary to consider substantial increases in parking charges across the district which, if approved, will almost certainly act as a disincentive to visitors.

Does the Cabinet Member agree with me that the proposed parking charge increases would not be necessary if the council had not wasted so much public money?

Does he also agree with me that Arun Councillors should always lead by example and, if so, will he and his fellow Councillors forfeit their free parking permits so that they can experience for themselves what it is like for the public to have to pay extortionate parking charges?

##### **Response**

In the absence of the questioner, I will arrange for a written response to be sent to Mr Dixon.