

FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 20 JULY 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 Chester to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Council Strategy, Councillor Mrs Brown
2. From Mr Myers to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Council Strategy, Councillor Mrs Brown
3. From Mr Coster to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Council Strategy, 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 and Cabinet Member for Council Strategy, Councillor Mrs Brown

Question

When the Leader of the Council made a representation to the June Development Control Committee through Councillor Bower for a site visit before it determined a householder planning application in Aldwick, was she aware that the same Committee at the end of that meeting in four minutes flat was going to change the Council's Constitution abolishing the right of any Councillor to do such a thing in the future?

Leaving aside the rights and wrongs of the new scheme of delegation, how can it be right to make a decision affecting every District Councillor, Town and Parish Council and every member of the public in such a manner, especially having been advised by the Head of Planning that the matter would be better referred to Full Council to decide?

When will this Council realise that in order to stand a chance of delivering any Vision, let alone a 2020 one, effective consultation with its own Councillors, partner organisations and the public is crucial.

Response

As the Cabinet Member for Planning & Infrastructure it is more appropriate for me to respond to your question.

The Council's constitution has for many years included the provision for the Development Control Committee to make amendments to the Scheme of Delegation for Planning Decisions. If it wasn't the Council's intention for the Committee to make changes as it saw fit then logically that power should exist. The Committee had the opportunity to decide whether a referral of the matter to a meeting of Full Council was necessary, but they concluded by a majority vote that it wasn't. That is also a demonstration of democracy in action.

Parish & Town Councils are afforded an important place in the Planning System as a statutory consultee, however not all the country is parished, so a significant proportion of the country's LPA's do not receive comments from organisations or from local community councils. Whilst, we value the comments we receive and believe they often add valuable knowledge and opinions, we also believe it

should be for this Council to determine our own internal processes in the same way as the Parish and Town Councils do.

The representations received from Parish & Town Councils will continue to be evaluated and assessed as before.

Supplementary Question

Would ensure any changes to the Constitution are determined by Full Council?

Supplementary Answer

Yes, the Council does agree changes to the Constitution. In this case no change is required as it is constitutionally correct to delegate to the Development Control Committee. There is no need for this matter to come before Full Council as the matter was already delegated to the DC Committee.

Supplementary Question

Would consultations be reinstated for conservation areas and areas of special character?

Supplementary Answer

The Council does recognise areas of conservation and areas of special character. The way the Council addresses this is common practice in most Local Authorities and the Council is seeking to bring about commonality between practices of all local authorities.

Supplementary Question

Would the Council consider how planning applications are dealt with for Members and Staff?

Supplementary Answer

There has been no change to how these are dealt with.

(Subsequently, later in the meeting, it was confirmed that these applications would not be sent directly to the Development Control Committee but would be dealt with by the Chairman of the Committee and the Director for Planning & Economic Regeneration.)

QUESTION TWO

From Mr Myers to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Council Strategy, Councillor Mrs Brown

Question

The Bognor Regis Regeneration Board welcomes the release of the Council's Decision Paper and the comprehensive consultant's report on the Regeneration of the Regis Centre and Hothampton Car Park Sites. Time moves on and although there are complex decisions to be made especially with the Regis Centre Site, the Board would ask the Council to move forward with the initial feasibility studies as quickly as possible and then to a decision point on the chosen procurement route.

The Council has a great opportunity to bring forward a new exciting era for Bognor Regis building on its attractive location to present it as a modern destination seaside resort matching the requirements and aspirations of its residents and the additional 1500 students to be accommodated at the University of Chichester's Engineering & Digital Technology Park. The Park was granted planning permission last Wednesday and will commence construction next month with the first students welcomed in September 2018.

I would be grateful if the Leader of the could please confirm that:

1. the various organisations and community groups that put forward proposals as a result of the consultation initiated by the Council in 2015 will be involved going forward and
2. the Sir Richard Hotham Project will also be accorded the opportunity to discuss with the council their plans which have been recently resubmitted to ascertain any common ground between their development plans and the council's objectives and responsibilities as landowner of the two sites.

Response

Thank you for your question.

It is certainly the intention to give those parties who submitted ideas the opportunity to talk to the consultants who will be undertaking the feasibility study on behalf of the Council on these key sites.

This Council remains committed to regeneration in Bognor Regis and we need to go ahead with the feasibility studies as soon as possible as the potential benefits for the town are significant and we need to move as quickly as we can to the next stage of the process.

The Sir Richard Hotham Project as a body will be given the same opportunity as the others. The Council as a landowner will not be taking any formal view on the resubmitted planning application until later in the year.

QUESTION THREE

From Mr Coster to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Council Strategy, Councillor Mrs Brown

Question

According to the minutes of your Select Overview Committee titled THE COUNCIL'S 2020 VISION -- WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER FUTURE, you say two of your Council's agreed priorities are:

- 1) Offer an improved customer experience, and
- 2) Build better relationships with other organisations and the community.

But you also say you are seeking to cut down on consultation costs, which includes cutting your Wavelength panel.

In your last two consultations the public told you, by clear majorities, NO FLATS on the Regis Centre or Hothampton sites. Yet you are ignoring this by continuing to plan for flats there. In your Bognor Regis public realm consultation you went ahead with something very different from what you displayed -- different materials, different colours, only 7 trees instead of 22 -- I could go on.

So would you not agree that improving customer experience and building better relationships should start NOT by cutting consultation but by meaningfully engaging with the community with WIDER consultation and, even more important, acknowledging and abiding by the results -- instead of ignoring them.

And will you start on this 2020 vision with a thorough and wide consultation on your Bognor Regis seafront strategy with clear illustrations (not fancy schematics that nobody understands) of what you intend, BEFORE you make any decisions on going ahead?

Response

Thank you Mr Coster for your question.

The 2020 Council Vision report to be discussed later on by the Council this evening does indeed include a reduction in the costs of our consultation panel.

We have, through working with an independent supplier, reduced our costs of administering the Wavelength Panel by about £7,000. We have not “cut out” consultation. The less expensive alternative remains independent and statistically valid. We have already recently utilised this new ‘panel’ and 74% of the public are either satisfied or very satisfied with Council services. Statistics for the last four years on this very important indication have been 72%, 75%, 76% and 74% respectively.

This entire Council is democratically elected and received a mandate from the public in May 2015 through the ballot box.

In relation to the Bognor Regis Seafront Delivery Plan, this was discussed at the Bognor Regis Regeneration Sub Committee meeting held on 8 June, and it was stressed that the Delivery Plan is based on existing strategies and research material that have already been consulted on.

These include the Seafront Strategy, Arun Concessions Strategy, Colliers Concessions report, recommendations arising from the Stakeholder workshop and public consultation and the recently approved Neighbourhood Plan.

I would also stress that all the normal public consultation via the planning process will apply.

Supplementary Question

Will the Council consult, in detail, on the designs and plans for the Bognor Regis Sea Front area with the public?

Supplementary Answer

The Sea Front Delivery Plan is based on extensive consultation that has taken place. The provision of public toilets will be dealt with separately within the Council’s 2020 Vision. The Council is keen to move forward and start work in delivering the Bognor Regis Sea Front Plan.