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CABINET

15 October 2018 at 5.00 pm

Present : Councillors Mrs Brown (Chairman), Wensley (Vice-Chairman), Bence, Charles, Clayden, Haymes and Wotherspoon.

Councillors Ambler, Bicknell, Buckland, Cates, Cooper, Edwards, Mrs Madeley, Northeast, Mrs Oakley, Mrs Porter and Mrs Stainton were also in attendance at the meeting.

202. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Councillors, representatives of the public, press and Officers to the meeting.

203. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

204. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

(Please note that the questions and answers in these minutes are a summarised version, with the full version published on the Council's website).

(a) Questions from the public (for a period of up to 15 minutes).

The Chairman invited questions from members of the public who had submitted their questions in advance of the meeting in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

The Chairman confirmed that as eighteen questions had been submitted, all in relation to the Look & Sea Centre, Littlehampton, and in view of the public interest in this matter, she would extend public question time to allow all of the questions submitted to be asked and responded to.

The Chairman confirmed that as one of the questioners was not present at the meeting, that questions 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14 would be responded to in writing, but that the questions asked and the responses provided would be available on the Council's web site at: [Public Question Time](#)

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The first questioner was therefore invited to ask questions 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15 – these are as set out below, in summary:

Question One - What regular financial contribution did ADC make to the visitor experience as we believe that £20,000 of ADC funding was recently given to the Look & Sea before its collapse?

Response – Arun was responsible for the establishment and original funding of the Look & Sea facility. With the exception of an annual grant for the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) the expectation at the outset was that the Trustees would operate a financial viable business which included the provision of the VIC. Given that the Look & Sea Centre has existed for over 15 years without a subsidy, it was assumed that until recently the business was viable. The Council did provide £20,000 after a request from the Trustees and was clearly disappointed that despite this support, the Trustees were unable to operate a viable business.

Question Three – What consideration has been made on keeping the tower and VIC open?

Response – This has been discussed and will be debated here tonight. Ultimately, Cabinet will need to take a decision which it considers to be best for the residents of Arun as a whole.

Question Five - What does the cost/benefit analysis of the visiting school's spend in the Town show?

Response – This question presupposes that visiting schools will no longer visit the Town. There is no evidence to suggest that the number of school visits will decline. What the recommendations in the report suggest is that material is created that can be used as an education resource which is not a fixed point. There is already an excellent museum in the Town and I am sure that they would welcome the extra footfall.

Question Seven - What is the expected revenue loss to the Pier Road and other business (eg 3,000 odd cod and chips and ice creams per annum)?

Response – I am not sure as to the purpose of this question. For example, some might argue that the closure of the Look & Sea would mean that visitors might seek out alternative establishments to buy food which would benefit those establishments along Pier Road.

Question Nine - Will the Council explain the latest auditor's reports on the two businesses?

Response – As far as I am aware the Council has not seen such reports. Even if we had, I believe that is more appropriate for those in control of the businesses to make comment.

Question Eleven - Has the option of leasing Harbour Lights and retaining the visitor experience by selecting a caterer who would embrace the visitor experience as a separate entity been considered?

Response – It has but it is considered that requiring a lease to provide the visitor experience would significantly reduce the number of potential operators who would turn their current interest into a firm bid to operate the facility.

Question Thirteen - Who is to fund the authorship and production of the Littlehampton Education material?

Response – Details of how the education material will be created and delivered will be determined once a decision has been made tonight. In terms of funding, it is proposed to use some of the £16k the Council set aside previously to subsidise the VIC.

Question Fifteen - Who will pay to devise, design, and launch and maintain the Littlehampton e-visitor information application?

Response – There are already several different platforms available such as Sussex by the Sea and Visit Littlehampton. Depending upon the decision made tonight, discussions will take place to determine how these might be enhanced.

205. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2018 were approved by the Cabinet as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

206. BUDGET VARIATION REPORT

There was no item for this meeting.

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207. JOINT WORKING – BUSINESS CONTINUITY (TELEPHONY) BETWEEN ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL AND CHICHESTER DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Chairman had requested that an urgent item be considered at this meeting in accordance with Rule 2.3, Part 3 – Responsibility for Functions of the Cabinet relating to the assistance that the Council had provided to Chichester District Council in response to a failure of their telephony system. The reason for this urgency was to make Members aware of the intervention, the positive feedback and the lessons learnt for future business continuity planning.

The Chief Executive presented this item and outlined that the Council had successfully worked in partnership with Chichester District Council (CDC) for some time on a number of initiatives and projects. This relationship worked particularly well across the IT services where both Councils regularly shared technical knowledge; skills and experience. Both Councils had undertaken a joint project in 2016 to replace their telephony solutions and a key part of this project was to ensure shared business continuity arrangements existed in the event of either Council losing access to their telephony systems. On 18 September 2018, CDC lost access to its telephony system completely due to a fault on the BT exchange. As a result, both Council's business continuity plans were invoked. Within a very short space of time, both ICT teams had set up a temporary Contract Centre at the Arun Civic Centre, with CDC's phones being diverted and Contract Centre staff being relocated to the Civic Centre for the next 48 hours. A review of this incident outlined that the technology had worked as it should and that staff from both Councils had acted with the highest level of professionalism to maintain the customer contact service.

In discussing the report, Cabinet stated that it wished to have recorded its thanks to Paul Symes and his team for the assistance that had been given to CDC. This had shown an excellent example of the continued partnership working between the two Councils and that it was reassuring to know that in the event of an emergency, the Council's business continuity plans worked and services to the public would be maintained.

The Cabinet then noted the report.

208. THE FUTURE OF THE LOOK & SEA CENTRE, LITTLEHAMPTON

The Chairman announced that she had received notification from two Councillors that they wished to speak on this item and so she would invite them to make their statements first before inviting the Cabinet Member for Technical Services and the Director of Place to present the report.

First to speak was Councillor Buckland who confirmed that he was speaking as a Member of Littlehampton Town Council (LTC); a Member of West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and as a District Councillor representing the River Ward. Councillor Buckland stated that he wanted to know how the demise of the Look & Sea had been allowed to happen and who was being held accountable? He was aware that ADC had granted a large sum of money to the Trust and so who had been monitoring this? Councillor Buckland also wanted to know why the Council proposed to disband the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) and he wanted to see figures that would show footfall, expenditure and losses. His final concern was that ADC had not entered into any discussion with LTC about whether it would be supportive of taking on the VIC side of things. He also asked why Ward Members had not been consulted on the report and especially recommendations (3) and (4).

Councillor Bicknell was then invited to speak. He confirmed that he had a number of questions and observations that he wished to make as Chairman of the Littlehampton Regeneration Sub-Committee. He stated that he had read the report and so felt that some of his questions had been answered. The closure of the Look & Sea had been a complete surprise to ADC and he accepted that the Council could not have intervened earlier and that it could not interfere with the individual running of the business. He was satisfied that full consideration would be given by the Cabinet to answer what has been asked by members of the public and that he was confident that the Cabinet would arrive at a decision with the best interests of Arun's tax payers in mind.

The Cabinet Member for Technical Services, Councillor Haymes, then introduced the report and explained that this matter had arisen due to the unfortunate and unexpected closure of the Look & Sea Centre. It was important for the Council to act quickly to secure a new operator for the building. In doing this, he outlined that the world that existed today was very different to when the original concept for the Look & Sea had been agreed and the building erected. The Council now needed to move with the times and the recommendations in the report reflected this.

The Director of Place highlighted some key points. Everything that had happened to date had been an unexpected series of events leaving the Council with a limited amount of time to consider the information available. In moving forward, the Council, as the freehold owner of the site, needed to seek a new operator for the premises and needed to determine what uses the premises should be put to in the future to inform any tender. The report had set the scene in explaining how the building had been used previously. As trends were changing due to the availability of social media and smartphone functions, VICs were less well used than before and this was why it was being proposed that the opportunity be taken to use the whole of the premises as a café/ restaurant/bar. For this to happen, planning permission would need to

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be granted for the change of use in respect of the upper floors. Authority would need to be granted to the appropriate Officer to proceed in agreeing the parameters by which the Council could grant a lease to any new operator. The report proposed that the building would no longer be used to provide a Visitor Experience of VIC, however, to compensate for this loss, it was proposed to offer an alternative service by undertaking the commissioning of education material to support school field trips bespoke for Littlehampton and to utilise a range of electronic promotional tools to promote ‘the offer’ of Littlehampton. Reference had been made to the Littlehampton Museum and the need for the Council to liaise with LTC to assess if linkages to the museum could be used to provide ongoing support to education.

The Chairman stated that many questions had been asked and statements made and that these had been responded to. The Look & Sea Heritage Trust had been created in early 2000 and had been let on a fully repairing lease to the Littlehampton Experience a charitable trust that paid a peppercorn rent. That Trust had enjoyed 80% business rate relief and could have applied for a further 20% of relief. Councillor Mrs Brown stated that she wanted to make it clear that ADC had played no part in the direct management of the Centre, though it had provided a grant in respect of the VIC only. The café had been run by a business managed by Trustees who had retained all of the profits. ADC had been approached by the Trust last year asking for a grant in the sum of £20k to assist with a cash-flow problem. This grant had been agreed and the Council had been assured of the continuation of the Look & Sea service. This had clearly not been the case with the business being placed into administration in August 2018. The Lease, with the Look & Sea Limited’s interest in the premises had since been surrendered. The Council was now, unexpectedly, in the position where it now had an empty building that would need money spent on it. It was outlined that the Council wished to make this a viable tourist attraction and hoped that viable business offers would be received to run the whole building. It was hoped that this could be achieved with the right operator. Councillor Mrs Brown stated that she was very aware of the concerns expressed that the Littlehampton Experience would be lost, however, she confirmed that the Council would work with LTC to progress offering this in a different way.

In discussing the item, mentioned was made of the amounts in business rate relief that the Trust had received over time. Cabinet Members were astonished that considering the excellent summer weather, the Harbour Lights Café decided to close early missing out on a lot of evening business. Cabinet Members very much regretted this unexpected series of events but wished to move forward swiftly in finding an operator that would provide an establishment that people would want to visit. It was agreed that there was a need to look at the educational aspects to ensure that the Visitor Experience could be reinstated somewhere.

The Cabinet

RESOLVED – That

- (1) It supports the submission of a planning application to seek planning permission for the change of use of the upper floors into a café/restaurant/bar;
- (2) Agrees that the Group Head of Technical Services be authorised to (a) seek conditional tenders/expressions of interest for an operator to run a café/restaurant/bar for the whole premises for a period of at least 25 years (unless a lesser period would represent best consideration) subject to planning permission any other legal issues; (b) negotiate suitable Heads of Terms for a new lease and (c) to enter into the agreed Lease with the selected operator following consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Technical Services;
- (3) Confirms that the building will no longer be used to provide a Visitor Experience or Visitor Information Centre; and
- (4) Approves the commissioning of (a) educational material based on the current curriculum to support school field trips bespoke for Littlehampton and (b) utilise a range of electronic promotional tools such as web and “app” guides to promote ‘the offer’ of Littlehampton from a tourism and local interest point of view.

The Cabinet then confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/018/151018, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

209. ARUN WELLBEING HEALTH PARTNERSHIP – 5 SEPTEMBER 2018

The Cabinet received and noted the Minutes of the meeting of the Arun Wellbeing Health Partnership held on 5 September 2018.

210. OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE – 18 SEPTEMBER – COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2019

The Cabinet considered the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview Select Committee held on 18 September 2018 and the recommendations at Minute 188 [Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2019].

The Cabinet then confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/019/151018, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

(The meeting concluded at 5.35 pm)