



Public Document Pack

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27 April 2021

COUNCIL MEETING

To all Members of the Council

You were summoned to attend a meeting of the ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL that was held on **Wednesday 17 March 2021** at **6.00 pm virtually via zoom** to transact the business set out below:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N. V. Lynn", is positioned above the printed name and title.

Nigel Lynn
Chief Executive

AGENDA

10. **Questions from Members** (Pages 1 - 6)

To consider general questions from Members in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13.3.

- Members are reminded that if they have detailed questions, would they please inform the relevant Cabinet Member/Chairman and/or Director in advance of the meeting in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules
- Copies of the reports on the recommendations from the Cabinet Meetings have been previously circulated to Members and Members are asked to bring their copies with them to the meeting. Further copies are available from the Committee Manager.
- Copies of the reports on the recommendations from the other Committees are provided via an e-link, where appropriate

- Filming, Photography and Recording at Council Meetings - The District Council supports the principles of openness and transparency in its decision making and permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. This meeting may therefore be recorded, filmed or broadcast by video or audio, by third parties. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with guidelines agreed by the Council and as available via the following link – [Filming Policy](#)

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 13.3

Q1 Councillor Edwards to the Cabinet Member for Residential Services,
Councillor Mrs Gregory

Q1 Members, I and others have spoken about the issue of shared bathing facilities for some of the residents at Flaxmean in Felpham at a number of previous meetings of this Council. Many Councillors, across all Parties, remain concerned about the perceived lack of progress on this issue and I ask the following question on behalf of my colleagues, who like me, want to see something done to improve the current situation. I acknowledge that whatever is proposed will require formal consultation with the residents concerned as we are talking about their homes. I also acknowledge that the Coronavirus pandemic may have slowed progress on this issue, but these inadequate facilities are, I know, of great importance to some residents, who have personally contacted me, my Ward colleague and other Councillors.

My question is, what progress has been made since the issue was raised in 2020, and what is going to happen to progress this issue to the satisfaction of all the residents concerned?

A1 Thank you for your question Councillor Edwards regarding the perceived lack of progress on this issue and I understand you are representing the frustrations of both local residents in Flaxmean House and your fellow Ward Councillors.

Firstly, let me explain the Housing Services' situation:

On 23 March 2020, in response to the Covid 19 pandemic the Council provided residents at Flaxmean House, shared bathroom facilities, with external individual shower facilities.

I must stress at that point, with many unknowns in relation to the pandemic, the Council's primary concern was the safety of residents. Having considered the options at the time, this was considered to be the most viable and expedient method. This was only ever intended to be a short term arrangement in response to the virus. Some 12 months later we are much better informed about steps that can be taken to limit transmission in shared spaces.

There is no easy or quick fix solution to this especially during a pandemic, due to the need to prioritise the safety of residents. In order to mitigate against risk, we have enhanced the cleaning regime to the shared facilities and this along with the rollout of the vaccine presents a different picture to a year ago.

That said, I understand that shared bathing facilities are not acceptable. In response I have asked Officers to contact all residents that share bathing facilities and offer the option of a supported move to alternative sheltered accommodation, if they so wish. We have been exploring the option of converting the three existing void properties at Flaxmean House into shower

COUNCIL MEETING – 24 MARCH 2021 [Part 2]

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 13.3

facilities. To this end, an initial high level estimate of feasibility and cost was commissioned in the autumn of last year, which I shared with Ward Members.

Further, Officers are to consult with all Flaxmean residents, within the next 6 weeks, and depending on the outcome, if appropriate, a report will be tabled at the July Residential and Wellbeing Committee, outlining the next steps.

I should make Members aware that in the event that tenants wish for showers to be installed, a full procurement exercise will be required to deliver this. The Housing Service is already stretched to capacity with existing workload, plus additional tasks that have arisen over the last year as a result of the pandemic. Alongside this, there are key vacancies within the service that are impacting capacity.

As a Ward Councillor, I do fully understand your concerns for our residents and the need to offer basic standards of accommodation and will fully support the outcome of the consultation.

Supp

Q I would like to thank the Cabinet Member for her detailed answer and I genuinely hope things will now be moved forward. I am pleased that there has not been any political mud-slinging included in that answer as this situation has been left in limbo since this was built in 1970. I want to assure you all that I would be here asking these questions whoever is in charge, this is not a political stunt, I am doing this on behalf of the residents of a specific sheltered housing scheme which is in my ward and I will continue to do so until something actually gets done. I raise concerns with this previous high level estimate mentioned which Councillors were shown last Autumn. The costs we were shown then were £206,148, this was an error, whoever added up the full cost had included the individual cost of the flat against the actual cost – it should have been an actual total of £158,788. That initial cost of over £200k was considered prohibitive but after I managed to save £47,360k we were not informed whether this true cost was still prohibitive. So I ask for Cabinet Member reassurance that any future costs will be correct when presented and given that she has indicated a shortage of staff, to potentially undertake the task, did she believe that forming a Working Group to enable Members to aid Officers to bring this project to fruition would be a good idea and if so – when would this be done?

Sup

A I did not pick up on that financial error and so well done to you. I had looked at the end cost and had thought that it was an awful lot of money and had then discussed this with Officers. We need to go to the tenants first of all and ask what they want. I have not seen the consultation yet but will make sure I know what the questions are and are being asked on there. If it is appropriate then perhaps we can have a Working Party but at this stage, let us get the consultation paperwork out and ask the tenants that are sharing facilities whether they would actually want to move or whether they actually want to

COUNCIL MEETING – 24 MARCH 2021 [Part 2]

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 13.3

remain in Flaxmean because let's face it, even if we put these shower in, in the void flats, they are still gong to have to come out of their font door to use the facilities. But if this is what they want, this is what we will set out to achieve and get prices for. I am keen for people to get the opportunity to move if they want to move so they move into proper facilities, and I do know that we have some voids at the moment – it will not be a case of just being offered a particular property, there will be proper consultation with anybody that decides who is sharing facilities that they want to move and it will be a supportive move and this will cover the cost of the removals and things like carpets and signing up their telephone or internet connection etc to make it a smooth operation for them, if this is what they want to do. It could be that people wish to remain in Flaxmean because they have friends around them or have family close by – but these questions need to be asked. Finally, if I think of anything else, I will put this in writing, but I invite you Councillor Edwards to enter into dialogue with me on this.

Q2 Councillor Roberts to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Dr Walsh

Q2 You previously told Full Council that the £14,000 spent on the 3D Street Art in Littlehampton came direct from a Government Fund. Do you now accept that it was funded by Arun District Council and Littlehampton Town Council, with Littlehampton Residents effectively paying twice? And if so, how did you get it so wrong?

A2 I have already provided responses to this question on two separate occasions and the answer is the same.

Supp

Q I have not had the answer, how did you get it so wrong. In the past you admitted you were wrong, and you have not told me why you got it so wrong. Why are you so adverse to answering this question?

Supp

A I have answered the question twice and have nothing further to add. I accept that it was funded by Arun District Council and Littlehampton Town Council.

Q3 Councillor Roberts to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Dr Walsh

Q3 You previously told Members and the Public that there was never any discussions or instruction to not hire foreshore officers this year. You said that it was always the intention to continue with the service, but that you would delay the recruitment process until after the current lockdown. Do you stand by that as being accurate and true?

A3 Again, I have answered this question on at least one occasion. The service is continuing and is budgeted for.

COUNCIL MEETING – 24 MARCH 2021 [Part 2]

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 13.3

Supp

Q Anyone listening and watching this knows that these are not answers to the question. Indeed, Cllr Walsh had emailed me on 22 February 2021 and given the fact that Cllr Walsh you say that it was always the intention to continue with the service, and that there are no plans not to do it, can you please explain to me this email I have from an Arun District Council Officer which states, "I have just had a Teams call with a very senior officer, my boss, which included discussion as to when we will be employed on the seafront this year. I posed this question way back in November last year, that had no firm decision until now. My boss, Officer X, in conjunction with the Council's Corporate Management Team, has decided not to employ seasonal beach officers this year, I asked for the rationale behind this, and it was explained that it was in part due to the Covid-19 pandemic; partly due to the Council saving finances and as there is a long term review of costs – how do you explain this coming from an ADC Officer to the foreshore officers being in direct conflict with what you say is accurate and true.

Supp

A As far as I understand it, the proposals were discussed amongst Officers of the Council, the Corporate Management Team (CMT), it was a proposal which may have been discussed at CMT and may have been leaked by a member of staff to the press and this is where the letter arose from, but when it was put to Cabinet it was not accepted.

Q4 Councillor Roberts to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Dr Walsh

Q4 You told Members and the Public at Special Full Council that your administration was on track to deliver 90 new council homes this year. Do you stand by that as being accurate and true?

A4 We were indeed on track to deliver 90 council houses by the end of the Council's financial year, and indeed have paid the deposits on each of them. However, the 12 month COVID-19 pandemic has significantly slowed down construction companies, and 27 homes at Summer Lane have been delayed by local flooding. As far as I understand it now, they are all currently expected to be delivered by June next year, some 2 months behind schedule in the current financial year.

Supp

Q Your own Cabinet Member said the words you used were misleading it was 64 not 90. Are you proud of how you represent yourself and your administration in the so called facts that you present – when you say deliver 90 and it is actually 56 – how do you respond to that?

COUNCIL MEETING – 24 MARCH 2021 [Part 2]

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 13.3

Supp

A I am told that the phrase that is used 'on track' to deliver is quite the normal phrase and this was the briefing I was given that we were on track to deliver those and we were on track when I gave the answer, but it is the Covid-19 and the flooding that has delayed delivery. Nothing has changed since then.

Q5 Councillor Roberts to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Dr Walsh

Q5 Full Council Minutes show that in relation to Littlehampton Public Realm works that you told members and the Public all was on track to have "Spades in the Ground" in March 2021. At Littlehampton Regeneration Sub-Committee on 12th March, you said that Officers told you it was due to start in March 2021, and you wrongly interpreted that as meaning "Spades in the Ground". On Social Media just hours before the meeting you said "***I was told by Officers in December and January that they expected to get spades in the ground in March***". Which is the truthful and accurate version please?

A5 I was being briefed that the contract was due to start in March, which I interpreted to mean spades in ground, and I was not told otherwise. I was not informed about the delay in construction to September until some 2 weeks ago. The contract has been signed and preliminary preparatory works are commencing this month.

Supp

Q This does not make sense as you were told two weeks before that, what the difference was in terms of spade in the ground, yet literally just two hours before the meeting you said that Officers told you in December and January that they expected to get spades in the ground. If two weeks before you had been briefed that spades in the ground was very different than starting, why would you continue saying that Officers told you in December and January that Officers expected to get spades in the ground in March?

Supp

A That was what I was being briefed on at that time, but I only had that change some two weeks ago, not two weeks before I made that statement.

Q6 Councillor Roberts to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Dr Walsh

Q6 At Littlehampton Regeneration Sub-Committee on 12th March, I mentioned the video you had put on social media and said you had accused Cllr Seex of speaking untruths. You said you did no such thing. At 1 minute to 1 minute 15 seconds on that video you say "***She further makes a suggestion that I have not listened or spoken to her about various economic matters and regeneration matters that she has wanted to speak to me about. THAT'S COMPLETELY UNTRUE***". Do you now accept that you did state and accuse her of speaking untruths?

COUNCIL MEETING – 24 MARCH 2021 [Part 2]

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO
COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 13.3**

A6 You in fact have alleged that I have accused Councillor Seex of lying and speaking untruths. I did not use the word liar or lying, but stated that it was completely untrue that I had not listened or spoken to her about various economic and regeneration matters, as we had, in fact, had several phone calls about these, in which she variously suggested demolishing The Windmill and replacing with a hotel, replacing the cinema in the former Waitrose building, and establishing a holiday village near Climping, all of which Councillor Seex subsequently confirmed in a Facebook post.

Supp

Q Do you accept you did state and accuse her of speaking untruths?

Supp

A I did just respond in my answer to you.

Q7 **Councillor Roberts to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Dr Walsh**

Q7 On Social Media in discussions about the further delay in the Littlehampton Public Realm works you said ***“The High Street makeover is not 2 years late! It was due to start before Christmas, and then put back to March, but contractor delays means it is now September, which is about 9 months. Fact”***. Do you stand by your so-called “fact” as being truthful and accurate?

A7 I have already acknowledged that the Littlehampton Public Realm process, which actually started under the last administration in 2016, is 2 years behind the original schedule, but some 9 months behind the revised schedule.

Supp

Q The question was about what you put on Facebook as a supposed fact. Not about trying to blame the last administration. These questions are about you and your posts – do you still believe your facts are true and accurate, that the High Street makeover is not two years late.

Supp

A I have already withdrawn that remark as you well know, and I apologised to you for it in an email. I am not blaming the previous administration, I am saying that this actually started in 2016 and has taken this long to get there, and I am confirming it is two years behind the original schedule but some 9 months behind the revised schedule.