



Public Document Pack

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16 March 2022

COUNCIL MEETING

To all Members of the Council

You are summoned to attend a meeting of the ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL to be held on **Wednesday 9 March 2022** at **6.00 pm** in the **Council Chamber & Blue Room, Arun Civic Centre, Maltravers Road, Littlehampton, BN17 5LF** to transact the business set out below:

Nigel Lynn
Chief Executive

AGENDA – SUPPLEMENT PACK – ITEMS 3 [PUBLIC QUESTION TIME] AND 16 [GENERAL QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS]

3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME [BY ADVANCE NOTICE] (Pages 1 - 4)
To receive questions from the public (for a period of up to 15 minutes). The Schedule of questions asked and responses provided is attached.

16. GENERAL QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS [BY ADVANCE NOTICE] [30 MINUTES] (Pages 5 - 12)
To consider general questions from Members in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 14.3. The schedule of questions asked and responses provided is attached.

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FULL COUNCIL –9 MARCH 2022

AGENDA ITEM 3 – PUBLIC QUESTION TIME – ORDER IN WHICH THE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL WILL INVITE QUESTIONS BELOW RECEIVED IN WRITING IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING

1. From Mr Cosgrove to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Gunner
2. From Mr Cosgrove to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Gunner
3. From Mr Cosgrove to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Gunner
4. From Mr Cosgrove to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Gunner

FULL DETAIL OF THE QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED IS DETAILED BELOW

Note, the Chair 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 Chair of the Council
- 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 Cosgrove to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Gunner

In a Freedom of Information Request to the Council I asked, amongst the other matters, the following: The financial benefits of the Levelling-Up grant re The Regis Centre re-clad.

On this I was informed that current day visitor spend of £30.32 per day. was projected to grow by £1.52 per visitor per visit and overnight of £65.51 by £1.97, over 30 years a total of £15,791,256 or £526,375.2 per annum. Can this be regarded a) as serious Regeneration, and b) as ensuring the Council obtains best consideration for this asset and what evidence is there this will encourage Regeneration?

Response

Thank you Mr Cosgrove for your question.

In terms of the evidence, I went back and checked the bid document that was submitted to the Government. The document states quite clearly that in terms of the theatre, it says 2,700 sq metres of additional arts and cultural floor space; will increase capacity by 30 per cent; and there will be new facilities including a technical gallery and a changing places toilet.

Going onto economic value, we have in our bid document that it was £191m of benefits including 135,000 additional visitors to the district and 213 jobs. When it was assessed, under the Government's value for money, the BCR was set at 2.5 so I think that it is fair to say there is strong evidence that it will deliver for the district and the town. I acknowledge that it is not regeneration for the whole town, but it is certainly a very significant part of our seafront assets.

QUESTION TWO

From Mr Cosgrove to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Gunner

In the Freedom of Information Request to the Council I asked also the following:

There was a Decision last March by full Council to set up a Working Party to look at the Presentations, which has not met. If it does not do so there a breach of that Decision. In the reply the Officer claimed that it was 'logical' that any scheme seeking to occupy the same space as the Levelling-Up would not be possible. but no Officer should be able to pre-empt a decision not made by the Council in the circumstance that the Council has failed to do what it agreed last March. When will the Council implement its own decision and thus ensure proper consideration of obtaining best consideration for its asset taking the LUF grant and the Presentations all into account?

He will be aware I had a response from the External Auditor who informs me this situation is being monitored.

Response

I don't accept the premise of the question as when the questioner says taking the LUF grant into account, it is not money lying around that we can decide what to do with, it must be spent on what the bid application confirmed and what was submitted to the Government. This means that it must be spent on this project and if we do not spend it on this project, we jeopardise not only that money but the money for Littlehampton as well.

Council has since agreed to accept this funding and progress with those projects. If Council still wishes to set up a Working Party, and this was agreed under the previous governance structure, then we can do this.

QUESTION THREE

From Mr Cosgrove to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Gunner

In the autumn of 2020, you and your predecessor as Leader of the Conservative Group communicated with me concerning Regeneration matters, and the motion that was adopted by full Council that September flowed from this and set-up the Presentation process. Also, you will recall that you expressed the view to me concerning the Levelling-Up bid that you were "stuck with it". Yet now there is the failure to take forward the very Presentation process you proposed in that motion. Will you commit to working to implement the Council decision last March so that the bid success can be viewed in the context of the opportunities offered in the Presentation process and without prescribing the outcome, one of which could explore whether the bid and Presentation proposals on the Regis Centre site could be combined, including embedding the theatre in a different framework and solving the Brewers Fayre issues?

Response

I refer to my answer given under Question Two but adding that I cannot speak to any conversations had in the Autumn of 2020 between me and my predecessor – I find it difficult to believe that I would have expressed a view that “I was stuck with it” then bearing in mind that we did not have the project until last summer.

QUESTION FOUR

From Mr Cosgrove to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Gunner

I am sure all Councillors including yourself stand in support of the people of Ukraine at this time. Can you commit that Arun Council will strive to do all it can so that this area plays its full part in meeting the needs of Ukrainian families and people as they flee the conflict, along with every village, town and city in this country and Europe?

Response

Yes.

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COUNCIL MEETING – 9 MARCH 2022

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14.3

Q1 Councillor Dixon to the Chair of the Economy Committee, Councillor Cooper

Q1 How will the council utilise a bypass at Arundel to assist its regeneration efforts?

A1 Thank you for your question.

As you are aware, I am just one individual member of this council. However, I am sure this is a question that this council and the Economy Committee will seek to address when it is confirmed that there will indeed be a bypass. I would anticipate the Committee would seek to utilise the improved journey times to demonstrate that Arun is even more open for business to accommodate those who may have previously over-looked the Arun area due to its lack of wider connectivity.

I am passionate for progress in this district without dither and delay.

Supp

Q Would it be fair to say that Councillor Cooper, at this stage, does not actually have a clue?

Supp

A As I have stated in my previous answer, I am one Member of this Council and as such I have no more sway than any other Member here. As for me having a clue, I would ask you the same, do you have a clue because it is clear that all you want to do is dither, delay and obstruct.

Q2 Councillor Dixon to the Chair of the Environment Committee, Councillor Edwards

Q2 The question as to whether we have a low or high-level deck for the A27 Arundel Bypass is an important issue for the people of Arundel. It has a major impact on the landscape and environment to the south of Arundel.

At the Special Council called to consider the council's A27 Arundel Bypass consultation response you and your group declined to debate the substantive motion which included this important issue.

Can you please explain why you felt that it was not important enough to debate?

A2 As the Chair of the Environment Committee I am always happy to answer questions from members and members of the public.

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QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14.3

However, according to the Committee system that you and your coalition colleagues brought in, at a Full Council meeting, be it scheduled or specially convened, I am no more important than any other Member. I do not hold a portfolio and I have absolutely no delegated authority other than deciding what goes onto the agenda for the Environment Committee in consultation with the Vice-Chair and the Officers.

Your question relates to a Special Meeting of the Council and asks for my personal opinion, neither of which relate to the business of the Environment Committee. Therefore, I cannot answer the first part of your question because I have no authority to do so and my opinion is my own and I am not required to share it with you or anyone else unless I choose to do so.

Supp

Q I think that some Members are hiding behind the Committee system. Councillor Edwards is the Chair of the Environment Committee and so I would suggest that the environmental issues in the foreground at Arundel are quite important to the people of Arundel. He may well criticise me personally, but the reality is that it is not about us it is about the people of Arundel. Does he accept any responsibility for environmental issues relating to Arundel?

Supp

A I would suggest that Councillor Dixon sends his questions to the Environment Committee where they will be fully discussed and voted upon.

Q3 **Councillor Stanley to the Chair of the Environment Committee, Councillor Edwards**

Q3 Can the Chair please provide a detailed breakdown of what the £320,000 budgeted for Bersted Brooks will be spent on?

A3 Thank you Councillor Stanley for your question.

Given that you voted not to progress this project when you voted against the budget, I am somewhat surprised by your continued interest in this and indeed any other of the wonderful projects being delivered by this Conservative administration.

An answer was provided to you by me and by the Director of Services at the Special Meeting of the Council on the Budget telling you that when the information you were asking for was fully available, you and the rest of the Members would receive it.

Until that happens, and despite your incessant attempts, I am not able to provide you with an appropriate answer to your repeated question.

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**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO
COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14.3**

Supp

Q I apologise for clearly riling Councillor Edwards because I have. My assumption is that the £320,000 has come from somewhere, would then Councillor Edwards please share any information we have on the current Bersted Brooks project with Council, with the Friends of Bersted Brooks and Bersted Parish Council.

Supp

A As I have already stated, the moment that we have all of this information all stakeholders will be made aware.

Q4 **Councillor Dixon to the Vice-Chair of the Housing & Wellbeing Committee, Councillor Gregory**

Q4 Can the Chair please confirm if the District Council has an up-to-date accessibility policy?

A4 We have provided bullet points to assist in the overall response for Q4

- ADC have an Equalities and Diversity Policy, which has been updated and is available on the Arun District Website
- The Allocations Policy has information in respect of access to suitable housing for those with disabilities as does the Tenancy and Lettings Policy.
- As part of the recent new website redesign a key priority was to make the website as accessible, a link to can be found on our website [Accessibility | Arun District Council](#)

Q5 **Councillor Stanley to the Vice-Chair of the Housing & Wellbeing Committee, Councillor Gregory**

Q5 Can the Chair please confirm how much of the money budgeted will be spent resolving the accessibility issues that have recently been highlighted in the District Council's sheltered accommodation?

A5 A full options appraisal of Sheltered Housing has been commissioned this will be presented to the Housing and Wellbeing Committee once completed. It is not possible to quantify how much will be spent on accessibility until projects are drawn up in detail.

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**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO
COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14.3**

Q6 Councillor Stanley to the Chair of the Environment Committee, Councillor Edwards

Q6 Can the Chair please confirm when the first meeting of the Beach Access Working Party will be held and what timescales he hopes the work will be completed in?

A6 Thank you Councillor Stanley for your question.

The Beach Access Working Party was put in place at the Environment Committee meeting on 17 November 2021 and it was decided to have its first meeting in the spring when the tide in Bognor Regis was favourable, allowing us to access the beach past the shingle.

We are currently looking at 9 May 2022 as the date to attend the beach in Bognor Regis and as soon as this is confirmed all Members of the Working Party will be informed.

With regard to the timescales in which the work will be completed, I cannot give a definitive answer because at the moment we have no idea what options we are going to be discussing. The original seven options were all dismissed by the Environment Committee and Officers were tasked to go back and then bring forward new options.

All I can do is assure you and every other member that once we get the Working Party underway, we will endeavour to reach an agreed position as quickly as we can, at which point we will know the likely cost and the time required to complete the works.

Bearing in mind that because of the Committee system, now one Councillor can simply push the button and get things going. Therefore, the findings from the Working Party will have to be reported back to the Environment Committee to be discussed and voted upon. The date for this discussion and vote is therefore also dependent on the schedule for the Environment Committee meetings.

If the Environment Committee approves what is recommended, a supplementary estimate will need to be put before the Economy Committee, discussed and agreed and then will need to be agreed by Full Council.

The 9 May 2022 is the date that is being worked towards for this first meeting.

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**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO
COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14.3**

Q7 From Councillor Stanley to the Chair of the Planning Policy Committee, Councillor Bower

Q7 Does the Chair agree with me that the consultation undertaken by developers in reference to the Felpham Golf Course was completely inadequate?

A7 As with all live planning applications and in accordance with the established custom and practice of this council, we do not discuss or comment on such applications in public. So, in accordance with the Planning Code of Conduct and in the interest of planning probity, I ask that this question be withdrawn. I decline to give my opinion on the subject of the question, and I ask you Chair not to accept a supplementary, otherwise Members of the Planning Committee, including myself, will have to retire before that supplementary question is posed.

Q8 From Councillor Stanley to the Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee, Councillor Clayden

Q8 Can the Chair please provide Council with an update on the progress of the District Council's Equality and Diversity Audit?

A8 Thank you for your question, Councillor Stanley. This matter was considered previously by the Overview Select Committee on 23 March 2021. This should now be referred to the Policy & Finance Committee for consideration as part of its future work programme. As Chair of this Committee, I feel that we need to have more training on the Constitution and the Committee system as there seems to be a lack of understanding on how the new system works.

Q9 From Councillor Stanley to the Chair of the Economy Committee, Councillor Cooper

Q9 Following his proposal of the urgent agenda item to sell the Bognor Regis Coach and Lorry Park can the Chair share his aspirations for this site?

A9 As an individual Member of the Council governed by the Committee system, my personal aspirations are of little consequence, but I am aware that the Economy Committee is due to consider a report on this matter at its next meeting to be held on 29 March 2022 and I look forward to hearing the views of other Committee Members to inform my own view.

Supp

Q As the proposer I would assume there would be an end goal in this urgent agenda item and so can the Chair confirm that there was no aspirational aim when putting this up for sale other than to receive a capital receipt.

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**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO
COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14.3**

Supp

A The aim was to prevent dither and delay and to get on with the business of this Council to move things forward. That was why it was an agenda item that was brought forward urgently, and I hope that Councillor Stanley accepts that.

Q10 From Councillor Stanley to the Chair of the Economy Committee, Councillor Cooper

Q10 Would the Chair look favourably on a proposal for a future agenda item to explore the expansion of the Windmill Theatre to enable a Theatre and Cinema to be able to run concurrently, as well as the inclusion of a purpose built foyer to allow for a bar/café?

A10 I can confirm that I am a huge fan of the Windmill Theatre but that aside, any Member of the Economy Committee can ask for an item to be added to the work programme and then it is for the Committee to decide whether that should happen. However, any new work items would need to be adequately resourced. Given the large amount of work that has already been committed to the budget, we would need to consider any additional staff implications seriously.

Supp

Q I acknowledge the potential both budgetary and resource constraints that Councillor Cooper mentions. As per his suggestion, I will be submitting this as an additional agenda item for the Economy Committee and may I ask if he has any concerns about this prior to the meeting that he comes to me and potentially we can work together to submit something that we both might find acceptable.

Supp

A Moving this item here is not acceptable. When he puts it in writing to the Committee, I will look at it and see if we can come to a mutual agreement to make something happen that is acceptable not only for us but for the staff and the resources.

Q11 From Councillor Stanley to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Gunner

Q11 Following the recent Member Training session where a Councillor was overheard talking about possible referendums and the subsequent lack of budget for any referendum, can the Leader of the Council confirm if it is the intention of his administration to hold a referendum on the governance structure of this council?

A11 I think that it is extraordinary that the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats wants to ask me yet again about processes and yet again about the Council and committees. This council is doing important work in terms of refurbishing the leisure centre in Bognor Regis; in terms of money for our high streets; in terms of our support for business across our entire district and the Liberal

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Democrats want again to talk about referendums and committees. Not only have the introduced the Committee system at incredible cost they are now asking loads of questions about a referendum. There is no budget for a referendum and so it is clearly not going to be happening in the next year but if he really wants a referendum, I suggest that he propose one at the Policy & Finance Committee and we will look at it.

Supp

Q A simple yes or not would have sufficed. Can I ask him again, within his administration does he plan on holding a referendum on the Governance structure of this council?

Supp

A I refer Councillor Stanley to my previous answer.

Q12 From Councillor Stanley to the Vice-Chair of the Housing & Wellbeing Committee, Councillor Gregory

Q12 Following the announcement that £1m has been budgeted for upgrades to the Arun Leisure Centre and the subsequent information that we do not know when or even if £700k will come to fruition, can the Chair inform us when the council plan to invest their £300k into this project and precisely what it will be spent on?

A12 The project will remodel the swimming changing rooms at the Arun Leisure Centre to improve accessibility, capacity, and customer experience. The project will be completed in the financial year 2022/23; the changing rooms require investment to bring them up to the standard of a modern leisure centre.

The budget report clearly states that the scheme will initially be funded through internal borrowing and identifies the phasing of the anticipated s106 receipts, and the risk attached to the timing of this funding. Housing & Wellbeing Committee agreed to proceed, and Policy & Finance committee agreed that the risk was acceptable and let it go forward to Full Council for approval. It is our intention to plug the funding gap with further s106 sums and CIL if available and other grant funding.

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