

CORPORATE SUPPORT COMMITTEE – 27 June 2023

AGENDA ITEM 5 – PUBLIC QUESTION TIME – ORDER IN WHICH THE CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE WILL INVITE QUESTIONS BELOW RECEIVED IN WRITING IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING

1. From Mr Cosgrove to the Chair of the Corporate Support Committee, Councillor Francis Oppler

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 or other appropriate Members of the 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 Cosgrove to the Chair of the Corporate Support Committee, Councillor Francis Oppler

Mr Chairman, at the last full Council of the previous administration, Cllr Gunner completely misrepresented me by claiming I want Bognor Town Council to take over the neighbouring parishes. I make this public statement to refute that – I believe the electors of the 6 Bognor urban area parishes should be consulted to see what they want, one option being a new urban area parish-level council in place of all six.

Since the recent parish level elections in Arun District, the situation reported in my report of December 2022 has not improved in terms of public engagement. The number of councillors voted for, out of 265 total places, has fallen to 18%, the number elected unopposed is now 52%, leaving the rest to be filled by co-option. Can this be seen as public satisfaction with the situation as one Cllr has suggested? These Councils between them spend around £5 million annually. I understand that one parish had its first contested election in three decades in May. My amended report will be circulated to every Councillor and parish clerks.

In four parish wards, no candidate was put forward, they are unrepresented, one pc has only 1 unelected member, another 2, another 3 and another 4.

The Council has power of Review, it has used this before to merge two parishes, Barham and Eastergate, in recent years. Parish councils do much good work as my report details, but there is a democratic deficit.

Will the Chairman undertake that this issue is discussed by his Committee on the principle that it is the views of the electors that have priority not those of existing parish councillors?

Response

Thank you for your question Mr Cosgrove, As Chair, I note your request please be assured, I and the Committee will keep this under review but there are no current plans for it to be on the Committee's Work Programme.