

POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

20 October 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Gunner (Chair), Pendleton (Vice-Chair), Cooper, Dixon, Goodheart, Oppler, Roberts, Walsh and Needs (Substitute for Stanley)

Councillor Coster was also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

Apologies: Councillor Stanley

366. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting and extended a warm welcome to representatives from Mace Consult Ltd and Nicholas Hare Architects who were attending both in person and virtually to present the latest designs for Agenda Item 7 [The Regeneration of the Regis Centre, Bognor Regis].

367. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Dixon declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 7 [The Regeneration of the Regis Centre, Bognor Regis] as he owned a very small number of Whitbread shares and was a member of the Bognor Regis Civic Society.

Councillor Needs declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 7 [The Regeneration of the Regis Centre, Bognor Regis] as a Member of Bognor Regis Town Council.

Councillor Goodheart declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 7 [The Regeneration of the Regis Centre, Bognor Regis] as a Member of Bognor Regis Town Council.

Councillor Walsh declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 8 [Littlehampton Seafront Project] as a Member of Littlehampton Town Council.

368. MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting of the Committee held on 6 September 2022 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chair at the conclusion of the meeting.

369. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The Chair confirmed that no questions had been submitted for this meeting.

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370. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair confirmed that no questions had been submitted for this meeting.

371. BUSINESS RATES POOLING

The Interim Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented her report which sought retrospective Member approval for the Interim Group Head of Finance and S151 Officer, in consultation with the Chair of this Committee, to continue membership of a business rate pool with selected other West Sussex authorities. The retrospective approval was requested as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) required councils to indicate their intentions by 22 September 2022 for the 2023/24 financial year.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee. A Member spoke in support as it was financially beneficial to the council and the retrospective nature of the approval was a technicality.

Having had the recommendation proposed by Councillor Walsh and seconded by Councillor Cooper,

The Committee

RESOLVED

That Arun agreed to continue participating in a business rates pool in West Sussex from 1 April 2023.

372. PRESENTATION FROM MACE CONSULT LTD [COUNCIL'S CONSULTANTS] ON THE LATEST DESIGN FOR THE REGENERATION OF THE REGIS CENTRE, BOGNOR REGIS

The Chair welcomed again Katya Fenton, Senior Project Manager and Niall Mulligan, Project Director from Mace Consult Ltd and Katie Burgess-Graham, Architect from Nicholas Hare Architects) to the meeting and confirmed the format for this agenda item would be a 20 minute presentation given by the consultants on the latest designs for the regeneration of the Regis Centre followed by 30 minutes for questions from Members. The Regeneration Consultant reminded Members of the decision to proceed taken at the last Committee meeting on 6 September 2022 [Minute 236] and the request for monthly updates of which this was the first. He outlined some of the work undertaken since the previous meeting including initial designs, tendering work, and project managing processes.

After introducing themselves to the Committee, the representatives from Mace Consult Ltd and Nicholas Hare Architects delivered their presentation. Key points highlighted during the presentation included the repositioning of the box office with the new location giving full vision to foyer area, a redesigned café and improved catering offer, increased toilet provision, two lifts giving access to the upper floor, flexibility in

wheelchair spaces, four studios upstairs, a double height foyer with a feature staircase, and the use of 'true and honest' materials such as concrete and wood for both thermal mass and texture. Mace's Senior Project Manager outlined the project plan to ensure it remained with the Levelling Up funding timescales, with the process beginning in January 2023, appointing someone and signing contracts by spring 2023, beginning demolition in summer 2023, and contractor main works starting in autumn 2023.

The Chair opened up the question portion of the item by asking whether the proposed internal images, though nice, were worth the £15 million being spent on them and he was struggling to see that amount spent in the images. Following confirmation from Mace's Senior Project Manager that the internal spaces would be of a good quality, the Chair asked whether they could narrate the costings for the benefit of Members and members of the public. Mace's Senior Project Manager, though unable to provide detailed figures, explained that the cost involved not only the finishes but significant mechanical, electrical and plumbing replacement work due to the age and condition of the building, removal of asbestos and a part replacement of the roof. Having noted that demolition was not an expensive process in itself, the Chair continued to voice concern over the amount being spent on the project. He further queried why the building looked so different to what had been presented to Members previous and likened the new design to a 1920s cinema. He asked whether this new design was for reasons of cost saving on glazing or energy efficiency, and further asked for greater clarity on the costings of the project.

The Regeneration Consultant confirmed that he had instructed representatives from Mace to not bring full costings with them to the meeting but that a breakdown of costs, including contingency costs, could be provided to Members outside of the meeting. As for why the design differed from the previous one seen by Members, the Architect from Nicholas Hare Architects explained that windows and solid elements were where they needed to be, that windows were included only where they were required to control daylight coming into the building and so were limited to the north façade and avoided in the narrow area behind the auditorium, and that the use of brick on the facade was a nod to many of the Victorian buildings in the town. Lastly, the Chair asked whether the Alexandra Theatre had been renamed as it was presented as the 'Alex' in all images within the presentation. The representatives explained that the name of the theatre had not changed and that the images had just not been updated.

The Chair then invited questions from the Committee. One Member spoke of being massively underwhelmed and how the design showed a total lack of vision that did not provide something great for Bognor Regis. He also noted that the design missed the brief as it did not provide more seating in the auditorium which had previously been deemed necessary to attract more and higher profile artists and performers to the venue. Also concerned about cost, he asked how Officers would ensure against further increased costs through the procurement process. Mace's Senior Project Manager reassured Members that the cost would not be increased. When asked why the 450 seat target had not been reached, Mace's Senior Project Manager explained that the funding agreed was before inflation had increased and, following surveys undertaken, the work involved in creating a larger auditorium (structural works to allow for wall seating) was beyond the funding agreed. The Member sought clarity on how much

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more money would have been needed to allow for these additional works. The Officers and representatives present were unable to provide these figures at the meeting but the Regeneration Consultant confirmed that these costs would be worked through and provided to Members.

Another Member outlined the two main objectives behind the original application for Levelling Up funding - to increase the seating capacity and to improve the external appearance of the building, and then noted their disappointment at the minimally increased seating capacity and completely different style of building to the original proposals that due to its solid mass of brick walls, especially to the north elevation, made the building look less inviting. Concluding that Bognor Regis deserved better than an upgraded community theatre that did not make the most of its seaside location, the Member asked whether it was too late to do something fundamental with the design for the auditorium to improve seating capacity. The Regeneration Consultant observed the difference of opinion between Arun's Members and Arun Arts who had worked on the designs, but noted the point made and confirmed options would be explored. Following on from this point, the Chair asked whether there was time to make such significant changes of the proposals. The Regeneration Consultant responded that those working on the project would find the time. A 'can do' attitude was welcomed by Members.

The next Member to speak disliked the design and likened it to a World War 2 Pillbox that would confront residents and tourists alike as they came out of the Arcade. He stressed that the people of Bognor Regis deserved better and that an increase in seating capacity was a must as the town was paying such a high price for the development with a hotel that was not wanted.

Another Member listed the four reasons they supported the Levelling Up fund bid and questioned the Officers and representatives on each – the need for 450 seats in the auditorium as shows routinely sold out and the sales from the annual Panto had to be maximised, the inclusion of a new art gallery as a tourist attraction and something different to the current offer, the transformational building of the original proposal with its glass façade, and the increased floor space. Mace's Senior Project Manager noted the following in response - that the business case did not have the requirement of a separate art gallery or additional floor space but that there were flexible spaces throughout the building that could be set up as temporary galleries (flexible foyer space, wall space upstairs, studios could also be used for different artists, and the feature stairway connecting the journey through the foyer and upstairs), and that glass would not be an acoustically good material for theatres and studios and its use would require the need of additional other materials acoustically support it which would increase cost. On this final point, the Chair queried if a glass building was not great acoustically, why one had been presented to Members in the first place. The Regeneration Consultant explained that no projects were ready to go when the Levelling Up money became available and so an architect was given a small amount of money to put an application together but that no surveys or in-depth work was done at that time to ensure the timescales for the application were met. The Director of Growth added that the original bid document had been prepared by a different firm of architects and to seek a more thorough answer to the Chair's question he would have to go through the paperwork to see what had originally been asked for.

Another Member again raised concerns with the number of seats and the appearance of the building being too austere for a seaside location. Suggestions to increase space in the auditorium were made including relocating the control room and extending the building on the first floor so that it overhung the pavement. The relocation of the box office in the new design was spoken of as a positive. Further concerns were the moving of the entrance onto Place St Maur and the wind tunnel effect this might generate, the use of cladding and the need to lighten up the materials used, the need for more windows to attract passers-by in and soften the building's appearance, the need to make more of the seaside location with better viewing opportunities of the sea from within the building, and perhaps some sort of function space (terrace, bar, garden) on the roof. The Member concluded by wondering if this was refurbishment rather than regeneration as there was still much to be thought about. The Architect in response noted that views to the sea had been considered but that these were only oblique rather than direct and that much would depend on Phase 3 of the site's regeneration as to availability of views from the site in the long term, that brick had been chosen as it was robust, aged well and was low maintenance, and that the roof space was needed for services (energy, ventilation etc).

Another Member, though excited that the council was delivering for Bognor Regis, commented that with its bland design, the designers had made a box rather than thought outside of one and what Bognor Regis needed was a design icon to both lift and anchor the area. The Regeneration Consultant confirmed that Officers would take this away. The wheelchair space provision was raised by another Member. With wheelchairs getting bigger and sometimes taking up more than one space, three spaces was not enough. Also, describing wheelchair spaces as 'possibilities' was concerning to disabled people and should be regarded as a must rather than an option. The size and shape of wheelchairs also needed to be taken into account so that they did not obscure the views of either their owner or other audience members. The Architect clarified that the 'possibility' wording referred to the flexible nature of the seating as wheelchair spaces were provided by removing standard seats. Clarification over what was being proposed with the 100 seat studio was sought by another Member and who would be providing the non-fitted features (portable seating, stage etc). It was confirmed that Arun Arts would be providing these.

One Member gave a definition of 'regeneration' as 'improving the social and economic wellbeing of an area' and stressed that there was a world of difference between regeneration and refurbishment. Officers noted that Members were entitled to their views but commented that a lot more facilities would bring more people into the town. The issue of a public consultation was raised by a number of Members. It was noted that public consultation would take place as part of the planning process, though some Members were unhappy as this type of consultation was limited to after the design had been at a large extent finalised. The possibility of completely starting again and whether there was time for this was also raised by Members. Officers confirmed they would look into this.

Two non-Committee Members given permission to speak further echoed many of the points that had already been raised. They spoke of their disappointment with the design, that the people of Bognor Regis had been let down, whether what was being

proposed (in addition to what was already there) was value for money, and the need for public consultation. The Vice-Chair took a moment to dwell on many of the words Members had used to speak of the building they hoped to see (inspired, excited, iconic, a landmark, building to stop and look at, beautiful, enough seats, bigger and better) and reflected that the opportunity had not been taken and the design needed to be looked at to better meet these inspiring words. The Chair concluded the item by thanking the representatives from Mace Consult Ltd and Nicholas Hare Architects for attending the meeting and affirmed that the Committee looked forward to hearing more at the next regular update.

373. LITTLEHAMPTON SEAFRONT PROJECT

The Principal Landscape and Project Officer presented her report which provided an update on the progress of the Littlehampton Seafront scheme since the last meeting of the Committee on 6 September 2022. She highlighted the two stakeholder sessions held the previous week, the findings from which were currently being collated, the public consultation for the scheme that was launching the day after the Committee, and how much more challenging the procurement process was this year.

Many Members (including one non-Committee Member) spoke in support of the project and offered their thanks to the Principal Landscape and Project Officer and her team. Points noted by Members during the discussion included thanks for the internal stakeholder meetings the previous week that were well conducted and very useful, support for a public consultation, the contrast to how projects were developing in Bognor Regis (as discussed in the previous item), the creativity of the design and how this could and should be replicated throughout the District, the design of the toilets, and accessibility as a key component throughout the project and appreciation of full answers regarding toilets that had supported constituency work.

The Committee noted the report and Chair added his thanks to the team for all their work on this project.

374. CARBON EMISSION UPDATE - 2021-2022

The Climate Change and Sustainability Manager presented his report which provided an update on the emissions (Scope 1, 2 and 3) of the Council for the 2021-22 financial year. He began by providing some historical context by explaining that the council had adopted a Carbon Neutral Strategy back in October 2021 and a Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan in February 2022 which had a commitment to continue to monitor the council's emissions and reduce them in line with the Carbon Neutral target of 2030. He went on to define the three scopes used in the report – Scope 1, emissions directly connected with the burning of fuel for heating council buildings and the running of our fleet; Scope 2, emissions from the generation of energy purchased by the council; and Scope 3, emissions from activities of the council but not occurring from sources owned or directly controlled by the council. He highlighted the improvements made in the reduction of the council's emissions within Scopes 1 and 2 and that within Scope 3 purchased goods and services remained the largest source of emissions being responsible for 91.2% of total emissions, with Biffa being the largest

contributor within this section. The council's Leisure Centres were the second largest single emitter being responsible for 3.66% of the council's total emissions.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee. Members raised a number of points including whether Arun had a programme to install photovoltaic panels on all its buildings, why solar panels had not featured in the Regis Centre designs, water usage and neutrality, reductions in flow rates and water pressure in things like urinals and WCs to be welcomed, clarification over how Scope 2 emissions were determined given that in Appendix A 0 emissions came from electricity (Scope 2), and solar panels on new social housing.

The Climate Change and Sustainability Manager and Chair confirmed that audits were being undertaken for some of the Council's buildings (Arun Leisure Centre, the Wave and the Civic Centre) and photovoltaic panels would be considered where appropriate. He also confirmed that Scope 2 emissions were calculated by specifically looking at the generation of the electricity, so for electricity that is 100% generated from renewables there would be no associated emissions. The Climate Change and Sustainability Manager then went on to confirm that this project did not cover council housing stock and that questions about social housing would be better directed to the Housing and Wellbeing Committee.

At the end of the discussion, the Committee noted the report and the Chair thanked the Officers involved.

375. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2022-2026 - QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL TO 30 JUNE 2022

The Interim Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer, on behalf of the Group Head of Organisational Excellence who was unable to attend the meeting, presented this report which provided an update on the Q1 Performance Outturn for the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which made up the Corporate Plan for the period 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2022.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee. One Member identified the issue of staff resourcing as a thread running through many of the red areas and asked how successful the council had been in recruiting permanent staff rather than having to use agency staff. The Director of Environment and Communities firstly dispelled the assumption within the question about agency staff not being as effective when many were experts brought in for specific projects, and she secondly noted the general problem with recruitment nationally and the need to take on agency staff when recruitment had failed. She stressed that the most important thing was having the right people in the right roles with the right skills though ideally this would be within a stable workforce. The Director of Growth added that as an organisation the council needed to make itself more attractive in a competitive jobs environment, but that that also meant looking at initiatives such as apprenticeships and developing people locally which took time to achieve outcome. He noted one issue with the current environment of flexible working meant catchment area could be significantly broader so the market was very

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different right now but that the council was looking at all opportunities to improve the situation.

CP36 [Number of new homes completed] and the council failing to meet its housing targets was raised by a Member who asked if the Committee could have an update on the larger developments in the pipeline. The Director of Growth confirmed the latest on key strategic sites around the District. For West Bersted, a planning application was expected imminently after chasing following a delay and that this was expected to add 2000 homes to delivery numbers. For Ford, that Planning Committee had approved in principle an application but that this was being delayed by complex negotiations around an outstanding Section 106 Agreement. For BEW, which could deliver up to 1250 homes, this would not go to Planning Committee before Christmas as there still remained a number of questions. For the site in Angmering close to the raceway site, that this was moving forward. He concluded that it was a mixed picture and that the council continued to push developers to bring forward their proposals where they had yet to as this was the only way to make a dent in the 5 year housing land supply.

That a number of the Indicators missing their targets were within Planning or areas under the Director of Growth was raised by another Member. The Director of Growth explained that many were Planning related and that multiple issues, rather than a single one, were the cause of this including the number of vacancies of senior planning staff, the recruitment of planning staff being a national issue with the industry not producing enough planning officers which also affected the speed of receiving consultation responses from professional third parties, the use of external consultancies being useful but never being a complete replacement for having staff in-house, and the timescales involved in apprentices becoming officers. He stressed that Arun had continued to offer a constant service and had not done what some other councils had and shut down their communications when in similar situations. When asked by another Member whether delays to getting planning through were due to the lack of staff in the Planning or Legal departments, the Chair confirmed that there were a substantial number of vacancies in both.

Another Member raised concerns CP6 [Compliance with Health and Safety programme] and how our compliance was very important and needed to be as close to 100% as possible. The Chief Executive explained that this was the responsibility of the senior management team who would continue to look at and achieve compliance.

At the end of the discussion, the Committee noted the report.

376. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received and noted its Work Programme for the remainder of the Municipal Year. The Chair updated the Committee that the meeting on 8 December had been moved to 13 December 2022 in order to accommodate sufficient time for the Housing Revenue Account item to initially go to the Housing and Wellbeing Committee for consideration, that an Extraordinary meeting of the Committee would be held on 3 November 2022 at 8.00pm following an Extraordinary meeting of the Housing &

Wellbeing Committee at 6.00pm regarding Cost of Living and following the Motion to Full Council on 29 September 2022, and that the review of the Procurement Strategy would be reported to the meeting on 9 February 2022 and not the December meeting.

One Member asked whether the next Regis Centre update should be added to the Extraordinary meeting on 3 November rather than having to wait until 13 December. The Chief Executive suggested a pragmatic approach in response, that where dates could be shortened we should do so and if the situation arose that the calling of Extraordinary meetings was in the gift of the Chair. Another Member spoke in support for back-to-back Extraordinary meetings as a way of maintaining the urgency of an item but queried any implications caused by the slippage of two major projects to later meetings. The Interim Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer reassured the Member that the projects would not be affected as Officers were aware of the situation. The benefits of Extraordinary meetings and Members seeing urgent items as early as possible were discussed, but the Chair also noted that where no decision was being made an informal Member briefing may be more appropriate.

(The meeting concluded at 8.31 pm)