

CABINET

8 July 2019 at 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors Dr Walsh (Chairman), Oppler (Vice-Chair), Mrs Gregory, Lury, Purchase, Stanley and Mrs Yeates

Councillors Batley, Brooks, Charles, Chapman, Clayden, Coster, Dendle, Dixon, Goodheart, Gunner and Huntley were also in attendance at the meeting.

72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Stanley confirmed that he wished to make an Open-Minded Declaration in relation to Agenda Item 7 [Pavilion Park Project, Bognor Regis] and read out the following statement "I wish to make this meeting aware that I may have made public statements as part of my election campaign and may have expressed my concerns in relation to proposals for the Pavilion Park. These were my views that I held at that time, however, with regard to tonight's meeting I do have an open mind regarding this item and will listen and consider all of the relevant issues and I confirm that I will reach my decision on merit. Councillor Stanley requested that his declaration be recorded fully within the Minutes of this meeting.

Councillor Oppler confirmed that he too needed to declare an Open-Minded Declaration in relation to Agenda Item 7 [Pavilion Park Project, Bognor Regis] and read out the following statement "I wish to make this meeting aware that I may have made public statements as part of my election campaign and may have expressed my concerns and in other circumstances may have supported or opposed elements of the proposals for the Linear Park/Pavilion Park. These were my views that I held at that time, however, I confirm that I have an open mind regarding this item and will listen and consider the relevant issues and I confirm that I will reach my decision on merit. Councillor Oppler requested that his declaration be recorded fully within the Minutes of this meeting.

73. 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).

The Chairman confirmed that one question had been submitted in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Constitution.

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This question related to the Regis Centre and Hothampton sites in Bognor Regis with the questioner asking if he could be told the total sum of money that had been spent to date on the development of these sites including money spent on consultants. The questioner also asked if the residential element of the scheme was removed what calculations had been made of the sum of money that would be lost to fund any future proposals.

The Chairman responded stating that analysing the Council's spend for the period 2015/16 onwards, the Council had spent or committed a total of £659k of which the approved total costs of the current contract with the landscape consultant for the Pavilion Park project was £329k, although the final account was still awaited. Any future proposals for both sites remained undefined and unfunded.

The questioner then asked a supplementary question. He stated that the sums confirmed were large amounts of public sector money which could not be afforded to be thrown away. The questioner then referred to the health centre stating that if there were plans to remove this from the site then there needed to be close liaison with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), as it had plans to redevelop and relocate the health centre in one of its Strategies. Finally, the questioner stated that he was surprised that Cabinet would be resolving this decision this evening, he felt that this should be a decision that Full Council should have the opportunity to debate.

The Chairman responded to the supplementary question stating that NHS Estates and NHS England did not have capital funding available to progress any redevelopment or relocation of the health centre. He stated that the questioner was making the assumption that money spent to date would be wasted, however, he could confirm that this was not the case as the work undertaken to date would be used in progressing the scheme.

74. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 3 June 2019 were approved by the Cabinet as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

75. BUDGET VARIATION REPORTS

There was no item for this meeting.

76. PAVILION PARK PROJECT, BOGNOR REGIS

The Chairman invited the Director of Services to present her report. She confirmed that it had been requested by the new administration in response to their wish to review the status of the Pavilion Park scheme. The report therefore reviewed this and it set out proposals for an alternative way forward.

Before debate on this item commenced, Councillor Purchase confirmed that he wished to make an Open-Minded Declaration as he had acted as Councillor Stanley's Election Agent during the 2 May District Council Elections. Councillor Purchase stated that despite any views that he may have expressed at that time, he had an open mind regarding this item and would listen and consider all the relevant issues and would reach his decision on merit. He asked for his full declaration to be recorded within the minutes of this meeting.

Councillor Purchase stated that he had listened very carefully to the concerns of the people in and around Bognor Regis who had expressed a very clear love for the Sunken Gardens and had very clearly stated that they wished to see them improved but also retained in some way. The request to revisit the future of this site would be a positive step and the aim was to work up a project brief for the future in a democratic way providing the public with the opportunity to have their say and to show that the Council was taking on board their concerns. The Sunken Gardens contained history and nostalgia and should be replaced by something that could significantly enhance the area.

These views were strongly supported and it was stated by Councillor Oppler that he had genuinely looked and researched into this issue for well over a year and that he had listened together with other Ward Councillors to verbal and written comments made by local people in greater Bognor Regis. The very strong message being delivered was that the Sunken Gardens needed to be saved. On 2 May 2019, electors had been given a distinct choice to make whether to vote for a party that promised to review this scheme or to vote for the old administration that would continue with the Linear Park proposals. It was clear from the survey results seen that the majority of residents in the area wished to see the Sunken Gardens to be retained in some form. The report before Members presented the best solution, which was that a new brief would be pulled together setting out three options for Cabinet to consider before being subject to public consultation. The consultation exercise would allow the public to have direct input into what would be proposed for the future. Looking at costs, the Council was reminded that it had spent £659k on regeneration plans to date, with very little to show for this money. From now onwards, there would be a significant change of direction in that the Sunken Gardens would be kept for future generations to enjoy.

Councillor Stanley confirmed that he welcomed the recommendations and he stated that this was a positive moment for this Council. There had been very clear options on the table for the community to consider. The result being that the public had voted for a party that would save and enhance the Sunken Gardens and this was precisely what would now happen but in a very democratic way as well as retaining the health centre in the area.

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RESOLVED – That

- (1) The Council revisits the future of Hothamton site in Bognor Regis and develop three alternative proposals for the areas previously designated for the Pavilion Park, which focus on the Sunken Gardens and Hothamton play areas only, which is to retain the split levels (Map at Appendix 2). These proposals will not include any residential development and the health centre will not be affected by any of the plans put forward;
- (2) The previously approved option and consultant appointment be terminated; and
- (3) A brief for Cabinet to consider be drawn up prior to public consultation.

The Cabinet then confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/006/080719), a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

77. THE FUTURE WEBCASTING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Chairman introduced this item stating that Cabinet had asked Officers to continue to provide the webcasting of Full Council and Development Control Committee meetings but to also investigate expanding the webcasting of other Committees as appropriate. This report suggested a short-term way of making this a reality.

The Chief Executive explained that the Council had managed to renegotiate a new contract with Auditel Systems which would allow it to be able to webcast an unlimited number of meetings at a one-off total cost covering the next twelve months. This would improve transparency and the availability of the Council's processes. In the coming months, a corporate Officer Team would be looking at how the Council could invest in longer term solutions such as the ability to webcast meetings in the remainder of the Committee Suite and to allow for the introduction of electronic voting. Once the work of this Group had been concluded, a further report would be brought to Cabinet setting out the findings in taking forward future webcasting arrangements.

The report was very much welcomed and the view expressed was that Cabinet was now glad that this work was being progressed enabling the public to better participate and be involved in decision making.

The Cabinet welcomed the review that would be undertaken to address expanding webcasting to other meetings of the Council and would look at introducing electronic voting.

The Chairman referred to West Sussex County Council's Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee which he stated was probably the most popular meeting that was webcast at WSCC. When webcasting had firstly been introduced there had been very few viewers, however, this had increased substantially over time with archived recordings being viewed very regularly. It was hoped that as webcasting progressed within the Council, viewing figures would increase and as more feedback was received from the public.

Following some further discussion,

The Cabinet

RESOLVED

That Officers be instructed to procure an agreement with Auditel Systems to webcast Full Council and Development Control Committee meetings for the next year at a one-off total cost which could be contained within the Committee Services Budget.

The Cabinet then confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/007/080819, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

(During the course of the discussion on this item, Councillor Dr Walsh declared a Personal Interest as a West Sussex County Councillor and as Vice-Chairman of the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee).

(The meeting concluded at 5.30 pm)