

CABINET

7 October 2019 at 5.00 pm

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

Councillors Brooks, Buckland, Coster, Goodheart, Mrs Hamilton and Huntley were also in attendance for the meeting.

231. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Members, members of the public and press and Officers to the meeting.

232. APOLOGIES

An Apology for Absence had been received from the Cabinet Member for Technical Services, Councillor Stanley.

233. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

234. QUESTION TIME

The Chairman confirmed that two Public Questions had been submitted in line with the Council's Constitution. Both questions were from the same questioner and were for him as Leader of the Council to respond to.

The first question asked when and how the Council would be responding to the proposed Littlehampton Harbour Revision Order. The questioner also asked if the Council would consider municipalisation as an option to secure the public interest recognising the importance of Littlehampton Harbour to the economic wellbeing of the Town going forward.

Councillor Dr Walsh confirmed that the Council would respond to any proposed Harbour Revision Order when it was published for consultation. It was anticipated that this would be towards the end of this month with the Council intending to take a report to its next Cabinet meeting in December 2019. Regarding the municipalisation of the Harbour, Councillor Dr Walsh stated that he had concerns about this and that now was not the time to explore this as an outcome. Firstly, it would be necessary to understand the impact of any changes brought about the Harbour Revision Order before considering such a course of action.

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The second question related to the Exempt item on the agenda for the meeting [Disposal of Freehold Land on the West Bank of the River Arun] with the questioner asking the Council if it could ensure that as much information as possible be made available to the public.

Councillor Dr Walsh responded stating that the principle of openness in decision making was important to the Council and it was aware of the need to balance this with preserving the Council's commercial interests. The Council owned the freehold of the area west of the footbridge known as Littlehampton Marina and land running alongside the River Arun to the north of the A259. Councillor Dr Walsh confirmed that this item would be confirmed as being withdrawn for consideration at this meeting to allow further investigation and due diligence to take place.

Councillor Dr Walsh then invited the questioner to ask supplementary questions.

A supplementary question was asked in relation to the first question with the questioner referring to a recent Littlehampton Harbour stakeholder meeting in which it had been stated by the Board's legal representative that in order for the Harbour Board to even consider the Council taking over the running of it as an option, one of the Councillors would have to express an interest in this happening. Could an update be provided?

Councillor Dr Walsh outlined that he would take this on board.

235. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 2 September 2019 were approved by the Cabinet as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

236. BUDGET VARIATION REPORTS

There were no matters discussed.

237. PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENT AGREEMENT - PUBLIC HEALTH WELLBEING PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing, Councillor Mrs Yeates, introduced this item stating that Arun had enjoyed a Partnership Agreement with Public Health since 2011. The agreement allowed the Council to identify the key issues facing its residents and to agree a range of interventions to help improve the health and wellbeing needs of the community. Councillor Mrs Yeates stated that she was extremely supportive of this arrangement as it allowed the Council the opportunity to work with Public Health to consider the local picture rather than requiring a 'one size fits all' approach to the prevention agenda.

Councillor Mrs Yeates then invited the Group Head of Community Wellbeing to highlight the key sections of the report.

Members were advised that the main point to emphasise was that this was a long-term partnership with Public Health who commissioned Arun to provide a preventative service to its residents. This service focused on issues that were particular to Arun. An example provided was life expectancy differentials between the most and least affluent areas which were as much as nine years for men and eight for women. This had improved over the last nine years when the gap had been well over eleven years for men.

Members' attention was drawn to the Arun Wellbeing Business Plan attached to the report at Appendix 1 identifying all the activities of the team which had previously been agreed with Public Health, who very closely monitored the service outcomes. This conveyed that this partnership delivered services that improved and transformed lives and so it was hoped that Members would agree to entering into a new three-year agreement.

The Chairman thanked the Group Head of Community Wellbeing for his report and outlined that as a retired doctor he endorsed the Plan entirely and applauded the work of the Wellbeing Team in demonstrably improving health outcomes. There were large issues to continue to tackle such as childhood obesity and he outlined that it was partnership agreements such as this that assisted in tackling such long-term problems.

Other Cabinet Members agreed with this point of view and commended the work undertaken by the Arun Wellbeing Team. The varying life expectancy ages were of concern and it was hoped that by continuing with the partnership the differentials could be reduced further.

The Cabinet

RESOLVED – That

- (1) Agreement be given to enter into the Partnership Agreement Relating to the Public Health Wellbeing Programme for the period 2019 to 2022 with West Sussex County Council; and
- (2) The financial contribution of £323,360 from West Sussex County Council for the financial year 2019/20 and that subsequent contributions would be subject to the ratification of the Budget by West Sussex County Council was noted.

The Cabinet supported the recommendations in the report and then confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/017/071019, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

(During the course of the discussion on this item, Councillors Oppler, Purchase and Dr Walsh all declared their Personal Interests as Members of West Sussex County Council).

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238. INNOVATING OUR HIGH STREETS - TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION APPROACHES

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dr Walsh, introduced this item and stated that everyone was aware of the devastating effect that the internet was having on High Streets. Although it was unlikely that High Streets could be brought back to how they once were, there were some moves that the Council could make to help the situation.

The Chairman invited the Chief Executive to present his report which outlined what could be done to kickstart the High Street economy following a study tour he had attended with the District Council Network.

The Chief Executive explained that his report focused on the work of an acknowledged expert in the retail market and the outcomes of a study tour of Roeselare in Belgium which he had attended on behalf of the Leader of the Council to explore the key findings of the work and schemes that had been undertaken to see if there were any initiatives that could be explored at Arun. The key findings from attending the tour were then highlighted. A short video clip was shown to the meeting highlighting what the shopping experience could be like for the next generation.

The report recommended the development of Town Centre Plans with Town Councils and other partners that would look at event suggestions put forward by the public and the community. Officers would also investigate setting up a Business Rate Fund for new start-up businesses to help reduce business costs in the early stages of promoting a new business. If approved, Officers would report back with their findings at some point in the future.

Although Cabinet very much welcomed the report and ways in which the High Street could be innovated, it was felt that this could present other problems to resolve. There would be socialisation aspects to consider. For some people to remove the social side of the shopping experience could cause isolation in addition to unemployment. It was explained that the idea of community cafes, allowing exhibitions and art/craft events to take place whilst offering free wi-fi, was what was attracting people to towns now. Members agreed the merits of charity shops which not only acted as amazing recycling centres places but also ticked the sustainability box that was a high priority for young people in particular. With advances in technology, it was accepted that a cash free world would eventually happen.

It was agreed that for the District's Towns, it was now a top priority to think of new and fresh ideas. In looking at working with other partners, the University of Chichester and business school and church groups were suggested as there could be young people that had entrepreneurial ideas and vision that could work. The Chief Executive confirmed that dialogue was ongoing with the Bognor Regis Town Council, the Bognor Regis Improvement District (BID) and Littlehampton Town Council.

Councillors Coster, Brooks and Goodheart had indicated that they wished to speak and this was agreed by the Cabinet. The points that they highlighted were that:

- the provision of adequate free car parking spaces was key to attracting visitors to shopping areas.
- New events needed more support and more volunteers to make them successful. The increasing cost of health and safety was a problem and threatened the future of events.
- The Council needed to make maximum use of its website and web pages such as 'Sussex by the Sea' as a portal to promote people to the existing web site.
- The District's three Towns needed to work together looking at lessons learnt and new incentives.

In response it was agreed that events were key to success and that it was an essential aim to focus on providing new and fresh projects that would attract people into the District's Town Centres. Digital support and access to free wi-fi were vital to the future of Towns.

In summing up the discussion held, the Chairman stated that it was vital for Arun to commence some form of dialogue with similar seaside towns such as Lowestoft, Hunstanton and Margate as they had made huge progress from putting on free festival type events that had generated opportunities for their nearby communities. It was felt that in the short-term the suggestions put forward in the report would be a good starting point for the Council.

The Cabinet

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the principle of supporting our three Towns in Arun to improve their shopping experiences be agreed;
- (2) Officers be requested to investigate ways to develop Town Centre Plans with Town Councils and other partners;
- (3) Officers be requested to consider a £60k budget within the 2020/21 Budget considerations; and
- (4) Officers be requested to investigate setting up a Business Rate fund for new start-up businesses (in a defined Town Centre area) to help reduce business costs (possibly through the West Sussex Business Rate Pool).

The Cabinet confirmed its decision as per Decision Notice C/018/071019, a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.

239. ITEMS PUT FORWARD BY THE OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUPS

There were no items to consider.

Subject to approval at the next Cabinet meeting

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240. DISPOSAL OF FREEHOLD INTEREST IN LAND ON WEST BANK OF THE RIVER ARUN, INCLUDING LITTLEHAMPTON MARINA

The Chairman reconfirmed that this item had been withdrawn.

(The meeting concluded at 5.52 pm)