

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
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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.