

COUNCIL MEETING – 11 MAY 2022

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14.3

Q1 Councillor Coster to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Gunner

Q1 I would like to know your own personal view, as Chair of Policy and Finance, and the view of your Conservative Group who usually vote *en bloc*, Cllr Gunner, on the item in the 17 March 2022 Housing and Wellbeing meeting re the approval of the increased budget for the proposed new Integrated Housing Management system. For the record ALL the committee members who are in your group – five of them - voted in favour of a budget increase from £600,000 to £1.2 million. But what about you Cllr Gunner, as Chair of Policy and Finance, are you in favour of the scheme and its budget increase, and are ALL the members of your group in favour of it? And if you personally are in favour of it please tell me your reasons why. But if you and/or your group are not in favour of it, what action will you take?

Please don't tell me you don't know, or say you are only the Leader and it is the committee that decides. It's your job to know, and you are paid public money to know, £6038 as Leader, not to mention £5004 as Policy and Finance Committee Chair and £1651 as Economy Committee Vice Chair, all of them special responsibility allowances, plus £5631 basic allowance - £18,324 in total. So, failing to provide a proper answer to the question is not an option, and I should be grateful for a clear answer now.

A1 Verbal response to be given at the meeting

Q2 Councillor Coster to the Chair of the Economy Committee, Councillor Cooper

Q2 I am pleased to note from your Economy Committee meeting on 29 March that you are addressing the matter of installing additional beach huts in the Arun District to provide much needed income for the Council. 17 are proposed at Littlehampton, I understand, although I also understand from an officer's report that we have a waiting list of over 200 people.

For 17 huts, from the officer's report it appears that the cost per hut is some £10,921, although it also indicates that they would be cheaper if ordered in greater numbers. Can you please tell me how much per hut it would be if we ordered 50 of them? Please ignore any re-design issues for the moment, and just focus on the regular basic huts.

Also, can you please tell me when those 17 huts are likely to be installed and providing income? I appreciate that there are accessibility and re-design issues to be dealt with, not to mention planning consent, but would they, say, be providing income by the beginning of the 2023 season? Or would it be later than that and, if so, when?

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And finally, I am given to understand that there are many further potential sites for beach huts in the District. How many have been identified and for how many huts, what steps have been taken to exploit them, and when, as a rough estimate, could they be in place and providing income?

And please don't try to excuse yourself by saying you're only the Chairman. For that honour you receive a special responsibility allowance of £5004 on top of your regular allowance of £5631 – some £10,635 of public money, so it's your job to know the answers and to be ensuring that your committee is addressing the right issues in a proper manner. I should therefore be grateful if you would provide clear answers.

A2 I thank Cllr Coster for his question. The Councillor's insistence that the question is answered by the Chair of the committee at a full Council meeting is a failure on his part to appreciate how the committee system works. This is understandable as we are still in transition.

Beach Huts comes under the terms of reference of the Economy committee. The role of economy committee is to performance manage the work relating to the beach huts. Therefore, I will ask officers to submit a progress report to the Economy committee and to incorporate answers to your questions.

Q3 **Councillor Coster to the Chair of the Environment Committee, Councillor Edwards**

Q3 Re the Place St Maur, Bognor Regis. When the improvement works on this site commenced, we were given to understand that the intention was that the completed site would be ready by Easter this year.

However, there is clearly still some way to go with this as it still looks like a building site, which is a shame for holidaymakers visiting so far. Please can you tell us all when the works will be finally completed.

In addition, it was understood that sufficiently powerful electrical supply would be built in to power the Christmas Ice Rink, as it was felt that our carbon neutrality policy did not fit well with encouraging the use of the Ice Rink's powerful and polluting diesel generators there. Has that supply been installed, and if not, why not?

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- A3** I thank Councillor Coster for his question. The Councillor's insistence that the question is answered by me at a full Council meeting is a failure on his part to appreciate how the committee system works. This is understandable as we are still in transition.

The Place St Maur comes under the terms of reference of the Environment Committee. The role of the Environment committee is to performance manage the work relating to this project. Therefore, I will ask officers to submit a progress report to the Environment Committee and to incorporate answers to your questions.

- Q4** **Councillor Coster to Chair of the Environment Committee, Councillor Edwards regarding the ecological considerations and to the Chair of the Planning Policy Committee, Councillor Bower regarding the planning considerations**

- Q4** Natural England has previously advised 32 LPAs that, where protected sites are in unfavourable condition due to excess nutrients, development should only go ahead if it will not cause additional pollution to sites. In March 2022, Natural England advised a further 42 Local Planning Authorities that their areas are covered by this advice.

The advice from Natural England means that new residential development must achieve 'nutrient neutrality'. It has had a significant negative impact on the number of homes granted planning permission in areas already affected.

In Arun we have protected sites, notably Pagham Harbour, where the Southern Water WWTW is known to have been frequently discharging untreated effluent into the ecosystem, and there are similar problems in other parts of our District.

Have we been in touch with Natural England for their advice as to whether we should put the brakes on development where problems are known to exist? Or if we have not, what steps are we currently taking to ensure that we are achieving nutrient neutrality throughout the District, and if we have none in hand, what steps are we taking to ensure that we will be achieving nutrient neutrality as soon as possible?

- A4** The Councillor will be aware that each planning application is considered on its merits and that Natural England is a statutory consultee who is expected to give advice on a site by site basis. As you will know the general advice given by Natural England is good guidance to developers to know which of their sites are likely to comply with Natural England Advice.