

COUNCIL MEETING – 19 JULY 2023

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14.3

Q1 Councillor Greenway to the Chair of the Environment Committee,
Councillor Wallsgrove

Q1 The Trees Estate in North Bersted is seeing a noticeable increase in tagging and graffiti in the locality. I know this is also representative in other parts of Bognor Regis.

Would the Chair of the Environment Committee advise what is being done to tackle this and would the Chair work with me to see how we can improve the level of response and clean up this public nuisance?

A1 The Council is aware of an increase in graffiti across the whole District and not just at the Trees Estate. We are working with partners to address this, and the Community Safety team have recently successfully bid for a grant fund of £10,000 with the specific aim of tackling the issue. A joint meeting was held with partners, the funding is to be split between Arun District Council, Littlehampton Town Council and Bognor Regis Town Council.

In conjunction with Arun Housing a clean-up morning took place on 17 July 2023 at the Trees Estate, this included work by Tivoli, Biffa and Arun Cleansing Services. During the event some graffiti removal did take place. A thorough survey of the estate has taken place and the housing department are looking to engage a specialist contractor for the painting and removal of other graffiti.

Arun District Council do not have a statutory responsibility to remove graffiti. The Council does, however, commit where possible to remove graffiti from all Arun assets, including Parks, Car Parks, Foreshores, Seafront Shelters, Bins and Bus Shelters.

An agreement has been put in place with Biffa that an operative will spend one day a week cleaning 'non-contract' areas up until the end of October. The Council is also making graffiti wipes more readily available to outdoor staff to allow them to remove it easily and quickly when undertaking routine visits.

S1 Would the council be prepared to work with Community Groups and Parish Councils to help with this issue as well?

SA1 Yes, I think that's a very good idea, I know a lot of Parish Councils undertake litter picking and I think we take pride of place in where we live so yes, maybe we should all work hand-in-hand together.

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**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO
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Q2 Councillor Gunner to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee,
Councillor Stanley

Q2 Can the Leader of the Council confirm the total amount of additional and new expenditure this Council has committed to since 1 June 2023?

A2 Members will recall that Full Council agreed the 2023/24 revenue budget and Capital Programme on the 9 March 2023. For the sake of clarity, my response refers to additional and new expenditure that is supplementary to that approved by Full Council on the 9 March 2023. To this end, the total amount of additional and new expenditure commitments is as follows:-

Capital Programme - £7.691 million, net of potential capital receipts;
HRA Capital Programme - £1.583 million;

Revenue Budget - £29,000
HRA budget – a surplus of £22,000

Members will note that this will deliver 14 new council house units and 35 other new homes and is thus very much in line with the Council's corporate objectives. The schemes included in the above totals have previously been reported and are, of course, subject to approval by Full Council. The Group Head of Finance and section 151 Officer will continue to work with other officers and report further changes to Members as and when appropriate, including regular budget monitoring reports. Members will appreciate that the commitment to any new expenditure that is additional to the approved budget will need to be reviewed for affordability, including those within the above figures. This is due to the ongoing volatility in the economy giving rise to the potential for sudden and unexpected costs increases. This especially applies to capital schemes, and particularly those which the Council seek to fund from borrowing. If a scheme were subsequently shown to be unaffordable in terms of current resource availability, a report would be brought back to Members setting out other potential options.

S2 I make the Gross figure around £13 million. How much more money is he planning on spending this year?

SA2 Just to clarify, I am not spending the monies. Committees have opted to progress projects. Again, our external auditors are very satisfied with our financial position and we as a Council need to appreciate that every decision comes with a degree of risk. What is important is that we manage the risk, we produce sound business plans alongside our experts, legal advice, financial advice and those are monitored and checked as projects progress. I have no issue with the current Capital Programme.

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**Q3 Councillor Gunner to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee,
Councillor Stanley**

Q3 During the local elections, the Liberal Democrats promised that they would "Freeze Council Tax and reverse the illegal decision this year to raise it". Is it still the Leader of the Council's view the decision was illegal, and when can we expect a debate on reversing the rise?

A3 Again, Chair, this isn't Conservative versus Liberal Democrats, it's not Councillor Gunner versus myself. We are in a cross-party administration, the broadest cross-party administration in the history of this authority. And what our focus is at the moment is on delivering for the people of Arun. As Councillor Gunner knows, as he was present, the budget process was agreed at the recent Policy and Finance Committee meeting and any discussions around Council Tax will take place in accordance with that process. Thank you.

S3 The Leader of the Council hasn't even attempted to answer the questions about the Liberal Democrat Policy, but he said that they are in a coalition with local parties. So is it right in saying that the Liberal Democrats have been prevented from implementing their policy to freeze Council Tax because of their coalition partners?

SA3 I didn't say we were in a coalitions. I said we were in a cross-party administration, and we are working with parties we have far more in common with, than we have got against.