

FULL COUNCIL – 14 JULY 2021

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 Economic Committee, Councillor Cooper
2. From Mr Meadmore to the Chair of Planning Committee, Councillor Chapman
3. From Mr Hagger to the Chair of Economic Committee, Councillor Cooper
4. From Mr Cosgrove to the Chair of Economic Committee, Councillor Cooper
5. From Mr Cosgrove to the Chair of Economic Committee, Councillor Cooper

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 appropriate Committee or the Vice-Chair in their absence
- 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 Economic Committee, Councillor Cooper

Why has Arun submitted a bid to the Levelling Up Fund which is not about Regeneration re the Regis Centre when this is a designated Regeneration site?

Response

Mr Cosgrove, thank you for your question. I respect you're right to believe that the proposals for the Regis Centre are not 'regeneration'. However, I suspect there are many others [including myself] who would disagree with you. Regeneration is about renewal and the proposals are clearly that. What is proposed accords with the objectives of policy EMP SP2 of the Arun Local Plan.

QUESTION TWO

From Mr Meadmore to the Chair of Planning Committee, Councillor Chapman

What is the Council's position and policy in relation to the increasing incidence of discharges of untreated (or only partially treated) wastewater and sewage into its waterways during periods of heavy rainfall? Will the Council:

- (a) defer all large-scale developments which have not yet started (including those already OPP approved) until such spills are fully investigated, risk assessed and ideally eliminated and, meanwhile, allow only developments within a wastewater catchment area where there is clearly no or little 'spill' incidence; OR
- (b) disregard the problem and continue to permit developments in the clear and certain knowledge such decision will increase pollution and environmental impact upon River Rother, Arun, Lod, Adur, Pagham Rife, Broad Rife, Pagham Harbour, Aldingbourne Rife, Ryebank Rife and any other connecting waterways where such discharges occur.

Response

Mr Meadmore, thank you for your question. The Council consults with the Environment Agency on all planning applications and our actions as a Local Planning Authority are informed by their comments and guided by relevant national guidance. In respect of any general pollution incidents we provide support to the Environment Agency as appropriate.

QUESTION THREE

From Mr Hagger to the Chair of Economic Committee, Councillor Cooper

At the Full Council meeting on the 17 March it was resolved that Officers be asked to prepare a private seminar, at the earliest opportunity, for Members to discuss the presentations and provide guidance for Officers and set up a Working Party to prepare a report for a future meeting of Full Council regarding what type of regeneration activity the Council might want to pursue in Bognor Regis, and any relevant procurement requirements and associated funding issues. My question is simply that considering all the hard work that has been put in by the various organisations in putting together and submitting proposals, what progress has been made in arranging the seminar and, in the spirit of local government, why the privacy?

Response

Mr Hagger, thank you for your question. The seminar took place on the 22 April 2021. Priority has understandably been given to the submission of the Levelling Up Fund bid which it is important to note did include elements which were closely aligned with one of the presentations referred to and offers up the opportunity to support others. Consideration is now being given to the establishment and work of a Working Party. In terms why the seminar was private, it was an opportunity for Members to exchange open comments which might not have been expressed in a public forum, but as a seminar it has no decision-making function. This will be done in public session at the appropriate time.

Supplementary Question

I was surprised that there was a meeting on 22 April 2021 as I did not hear anything about this meeting. Do you recognise the anger and frustration of many people living in and around Bognor Regis in the manner that privately funded investment opportunities have been proposed for whole scale regeneration of our Town have been blocked, kicked into the long grass and generally treated with disdain by the authority and some Councillors.

Supplementary Response

Thank you for your supplementary – I can see and sense your frustration with the situation. The reality is that nothing has been kicked into the long grass, it may feel that that has been the case, but I can guarantee you that this current administration will be doing all it can to facilitate regeneration in Bognor Regis which will move forward. You may feel that this is not the case, but I guarantee that this administration will be delivering as fast as it can and I hope that the communities will put their faith in us to do just that.

QUESTION FOUR

From Mr Cosgrove to the Chair of Economic Committee, Councillor Cooper

Why was the non-Regeneration Levelling-Up bid given priority over the Regeneration Presentation ideas given the Regis Centre is a Regeneration site, why did the Working Party on the Presentation ideas not happen, and when, if ever, does the Council intend to consider these seriously on the basis of a level playing field prescribed by the Council but which still does not apply to the Sunrise proposals on which Arun said it would not enter into agreement despite it having planning permission - will Arun rescind those unfair decisions from 2018?

Response

Mr Cosgrove, thank you for your question which has multiple parts. Firstly, the Levelling Up Fund had a deadline for the submission of bids which any other Council initiative at this time did not. Secondly, the Councillors held a seminar on the 22 April 2021 to discuss the various presentations and Councillors will decide on the way forward in the Autumn. Please remember the presentations were not just about the Regis Centre site. Thirdly, the decisions which you refer to from 2018 have been overtaken by events such as the Levelling Up Fund bid. If the Council decides in the future it wants to develop this site in a different way, then the Council will need to follow the relevant procurement rules as has been explained to you on previous occasions.

QUESTION FIVE

From Mr Cosgrove to the Chair of Economic Committee, Councillor Cooper

In the likely event of rejection of the current Levelling Up bid, does he have an alternative plan to take the Council forward?

Response

Mr Cosgrove, thank you for your question. We anticipate hearing the outcome of the bid in the autumn and the Council will consider the issue of alternatives, if required, at that time.

Mr Cosgrove confirmed that he wished to ask a supplementary question which related to all of his questions asked and so it is minuted here.

Question - How can you describe the Levelling-Up proposal as regeneration when it is merely a cladding exercise for the Regis Centre when there is no evidence or proof that this will bring in more business, visitors or trade into the Town. It is monstrous that £90m is being looked in the face and ignored – these people are likely to walk away – is this what Arun Council and Arun Councillors actually want?

Response - You may refer to the Levelling-Up Fund as a cladding exercise, but it is significant for the area and it will deliver a much needed, better facility on that site. It does not, by any means, detract from the wider regeneration of Bognor Regis and what will roll out. All plans will be considered in due course should they come forward. The Levelling-Up Fund due to its nature and timescales involved must take priority at this time.