

Council – 23 February 2022
Councillors' Questions with Answers:

1. From Councillor Jim Martin to Councillor David Monk, Leader of the Council

Can the Leader explain how the calculation for the affordable housing provision equates to 30% when the affordable housing allowance was moved from Imperial Green onto Princes Parade?

Answer:

Thank you Cllr Martin for your question.

The s106 contribution of £1.4m from Imperial Green was designed to provide Affordable Housing off site within the locality of Hythe.

The publically available planning committee report for the Princes Parade Development highlights that a funding gap existed due to the enabling development aspect of the proposal, i.e. providing a leisure centre. This funding gap could have resulted in no affordable housing being provided on Princes Parade at all, whilst still enabling the leisure centre aspects to be developed.

Rather than have development at Princes Parade with no affordable housing, and as the District Council needs to find a site to deliver the Imperial Green s106 contribution, the decision was taken to deploy the £1.4m Imperial Green contribution into affordable housing provision at Princes Parade. This provides the affordable housing from Imperial Green on a site within close proximity to its original location.

Princes Parade is required to provide 30% affordable housing. Following reserved matters approval 30% of the approved units will be affordable.

Supplementary Question:

Can the Leader explain how he will ensure that this moveable of affordable housing allocation will simply not get moved on again and actually deliver the much promised affordable housing on Princes Parade at 30% plus the 1.4 allocation from Imperial Green?

Answer:

I will seek to clarify the 1.4 allocation.

After the meeting, the following response was provided:

The 30% provision is secured by the s106 and includes the provision provided for by Imperial Green as set out in the Committee report and clarified in earlier responses. A variation of the s106 agreement would need formal approval by the Council.

2. From Councillor Jim Martin to Councillor David Monk, Leader of the Council.

We understand that both Prince's Parade and South Rd have been sold to a mystery buyer for £26.6M. Can the Leader explain how this figure was derived?

Answer:

Thank you for your question.

I would draw Councillor Martin's attention to section 2.6 of Cabinet paper C/21/75 of 26 January 2022 which sets out the process for the marketing of the residential land. To repeat, this was through a wide scale marketing exercise whereby the final bids were evaluated and a successful bidder selected. We are now in discussion with the selected purchaser and are drawing up the Heads of Terms with a view to agreeing these shortly. As is normal with these commercial considerations, there is commercial confidentiality that needs to be observed until the contract is finally signed. This is normal process and I can reassure Cllr Martin there is no question of it being a "mystery buyer".

The figure of £26.6 million refers to the value of the offer from the selected provider for both Princes Parade and the South Road site. I can inform Councillor Martin that the split between those figures was £20 million for Princes Parade (including hotel and commercial space) and £6.6 million for South Road (including a replacement café, toilets and beach huts) and, as the council is required to do, I can also confirm that this offer represented the best value for the council.

Supplementary Question:

Why has the site been given away?

Answer:

It hasn't been given away we followed all correct procedures, we as a public body have procedures we have to follow including getting a surveyor to give us the land values that are applicable, you are in fact impugning their professional integrity.

3. From Councillor Jim Martin to Councillor David Monk, Leader of the Council.

Everyone will have seen the photographs of the badgers on Prince's Parade. Can the Leader tell us how a badger sett was completely missed by the Council's Environmentalists on Prince's Parade?

Answer:

Thank you again Councillor Martin for your question.

You will be aware that the council's consultants had previously identified a badger sett on Princes Parade and as part of the development we sought to relocate those badgers to a new badger sett away from the development. This has been

carried out successfully under licence from Natural England, and supervision of our consultants, and the good news is that the new sett is being actively used by the badgers.

However, Councillors will be aware that much of the site is covered by thick tangled and deep scrub which means it is not always apparent what is there until it is cleared. Lloyd Bore, who are the council's ecologists for the development, carry out regular checks of the site and identified the potential of what could be another badger sett. This has been monitored for some time to establish if there is further badger activity in and around these setts and they have identified there is some potential movement. At all stages Natural England have been notified of any new potential activity and are satisfied with our response and strategy moving forward.

In the meantime, appropriate measures are being put in place to protect the areas around all the existing badger setts with exclusion zones and the development is being undertaken in a way so as to not disturb any potential new setts. At a later stage a further licence will be sought from Natural England to relocate any remaining badgers from the development site to a suitable location in line with the terms of the licence from Natural England.

Supplementary Question:

As the licence to relocate these badgers cannot be applied for to Natural England until 1 July what will the impact of the delay to the project be?

Answer:

None.

4. From Councillor Lesley Whybrow to Councillor David Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing and Special Projects.

As a result of the clearance work on Princes Parade last week there has been a lot of concern from local residents about the health risk from the contamination and from airborne particles in particular. There has also been ongoing concern about this since the works carried out in the reptile area in the autumn which has clearly exposed items from the former landfill. In order to reassure local residents would you please ask the contractors to install the active dust monitoring immediately?

Answer:

Thank you for your question.

On a number of occasions I have sought and been given assurances from BAM that the appropriate health and safety measures will be put in place including any monitoring requirements. Councillor Whybrow will recall the information provided at the Cabinet meeting of 26 January from the specialist within the project team with regard to pollutant monitoring, including air pollutant monitoring, and the

measures to be put in place. This will of course become more crucial once the construction work commences and greater levels of excavation are taking place.

In addition to the measures outlined previously around the site, officers and BAM have been in discussion with senior representatives of Seabrook School with a view to putting in additional air quality monitoring on the school site. At all points, where and when needed, we will ensure measures are put in place to have effective monitoring and actions over matters which may cause health and safety issues.

Supplementary Question:

Will you ask them to do so immediately and do you not consider the wellbeing of the people isn't just their health and safety but on their mental health and the worry this is causing them?

Answer:

I do not argue with that and am confident measures will be put in place as and when required but not simply to address those perceptions but we can address those issues with Lord Bore and you can ask them yourself directly when you are with them at the site visit on Friday and hopefully they can give you assurances other than the ones I have already given.

5. From Councillor Laura Davison to Councillor Mrs Jenny Hollingsbee, Cabinet Member for Communities.

Please could you provide a list of the dates and times that SWEP (the severe weather emergency protocol) has been activated in our district since Jan 1st 2022?

Answer:

Thank you for your question Councillor Davison.

I can confirm that the Council's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol has been activated on 5 nights since the 1st January of this year. The dates are as follows:

- Firstly on the 20th January for one night.
- Secondly from the 17th February until the 20th February for 4 nights.

Accommodation is made available from the afternoon that policy is implemented until the following morning. Four people were assisted over the 5 nights that SWEP has been activated this year.

Supplementary Question:

It would be helpful to have the breakdown of how many people were accommodated on each of these occasions that have been referred to.

Answer:

I will ask for that information and get back to you.

After the meeting, the following response was provided:

“The 4 people assisted through SWEF were accommodated on the night of the 20th January . Although SWEF was activated from the 17th-20th of February inclusive, due to the adverse weather conditions, no one requested accommodation during this period. Also, our outreach team did not locate any clients sleeping rough and in need of accommodation through SWEF during the period 17-20th February”.

6. From Councillor Laura Davison to Councillor David Monk, Leader of the Council.

Residents around the Leas pavilion development continue to have concerns about the impact of construction across a range of issues. They don't feel listened to. What can be done to address this?

Answer:

Thank you Councillor Davison for your question.

The Council's Planning and Environmental Health Teams have, to date, carefully considered all local resident issues raised regarding the construction phase. An example of this is the Planning team seeking and agreeing different hours of construction with the developer post approval through the conditions process. A Construction Management Plan (CMP) was approved with "Good Neighbour Policy" provisions included such as: informing residents about construction commencement or changes, resident workshops and complaints tracker. Full details are on the planning website.

We have encouraged the developer to have a community liaison in place during construction to ensure communication with local residents is in place. The developer has agreed to act on our suggestion.

The developer also agreed that the contractor will issue a monthly newsletter which will be posted on the site hoardings.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you for your answer I think the reality is that people are submitting queries and questions across a range of different bodies and they are not always getting the timely responses their looking for so can there be a commitment from the council to respond to the residents queries within a fixed period of time, that is a reasonable period of time.

Answer:

I will see if that can be done.

Following the meeting, the response below was given:

There are no fixed time periods for responses to enquiries however Officers do seek to respond as quickly as possible and encourage the contractor and other agencies to do so as well.

7. From Councillor Connor McConville to Councillor John Collier, Cabinet Member for Property Management and Grounds Maintenance.

Could the council please provide an update on the work being undertaken with regards to the Ship St site? Our website states that work will begin in late 2021 and be completed by 2024.

Answer:

Thank you Cllr McConville for your question.

The site was purchased in March 2021 following a lengthy negotiation process with Southern Gas Networks.

FHDC went out to the market in April 2021 to gauge interest from potential development partners. In July 2021 responses indicated that it would be necessary to carry out additional site investigation work to further de-risk the site. The procurement process for site investigation works has now taken place and we are currently out for clarifications. We will look to appoint a contractor for this work week commencing 7th March.

Capacity studies have been undertaken by architects so that we can consider housing numbers, tenure mix and site viability. Early conversations have taken place with Homes England and One Public Estate regarding funding opportunities that may be available for the site.

A project plan is being developed that will provide a full understanding of the site conditions, a detailed development brief, selection of a development partner and a planning submission. This will include a detailed communications plan covering further public consultation expected to commence in the next two months. The detail of the project plan will be shared more widely once agreed, and the Ship Street page on our website will be updated.

Supplementary Question:

It would be amazing if the ward councillors could be involved in the development of the project plan so that they have as much information as possible for the site in their ward moving forward before the plan is going to be shared more widely.

Answer:

No objection to this and sounds like a suitable way forward and I will ensure our officers do maintain contact with ward councillors as requested by Councillor McConville.