

Council – 3 April 2024

Councillor Questions and answers:

1. From Councillor Wimble to Councillor Jim Martin, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Otterpool Park and Planning Policy

With the current financial constraints on the council could you please tell us how much money it cost the council so ultimately the tax payer can put up a defence of the judicial review and enquiries surrounding princes parade to include officer time, legal services and external costs for a barrister and legal team alongside expert reports etc?

ANSWER:

Thank you for your question Cllr Wimble. I can confirm that the total cost for the council associated with the judicial review was £288,211.32.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

As the council won the JR do you think it should take every step possible to recover ALL the money from the team that lost as it is allowed to do under U.K. law? As this was public money and the council were totally vindicated of ANY WRONGDOING. it must be something to consider as it would equate to many tens if not hundreds of thousands of pounds. I am conscious that a time limit of 5 years dictates the appeal for costs.

ANSWER:

I am able to tell Councillor Wimble that the Council recovered all of their allowable Judicial Review costs under the AAHUS convention which allows people access to environmental justice.

2. From Councillor Tony Hills to Councillor Jim Martin, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Otterpool Park and Planning Policy

At a recent meeting of the Council, the council meeting agreed to support sustainable energy production in the district.

With the green area at Princes Parade now lying fallow. I wondered could it be used as a location for a wind farm to supply electricity to Hythe and the district?

ANSWER:

Thank you for your question, Councillor Hills, I clearly detect an element of the "tongue in cheek" in your question - no harm in that! The site is too small and not deep enough, there are also too many houses nearby, the Conservative government have effectively blocked all land-based wind farms for many years and the site poses it's own individual risks. All that said, there is a serious element to your question which I am grateful to you, for giving me the

opportunity to promote the consultation we will be holding before the end of this year regarding the future of Prince's Parade.

We will be asking local people what they want the site to be: an open space, a residential development, a park or indeed a wind farm! All suggestions will be welcomed! The point I want to stress is; this will be a genuine consultation where we, the Council, will be asking people for their ideas, suggestions and ambitions for the site. We will not be filling the room with expensive consultants trying to tell people what they want, we will be starting with a blank sheet of paper and taking people's views. If at that time Councillor Hills, you want to come along and suggest a wind farm for the site I will ensure it is recorded.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Would the Leader consider setting up a cross party Working Group to consider this?

ANSWER:

This is an excellent suggestion, but it was important to let local people have their say in the consultation first, and this could be considered at an appropriate time afterwards.

3. From Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee to ~~Councillor Holgate, Cabinet Member for Place Plan, Heritage, Tourism and the District Economy~~ In Cllr Holgate's absence, Cllr J Martin will read the response.

What an accolade for our Town to be crowned the best place to live in the south east of England by the Sunday Times. The judges talk about our "eye-catching culture-led regeneration". They praised our "artists' studios, the cool shops on the Old High Street and the Harbour Arm. The judges also noted the town's "impressive schools, state-of-the-art sports facilities and high-speed trains to London".

What is the current Administration doing to maximise this opportunity?

ANSWER:

Thank you, Cllr Hollingsbee, for your question. I think we all agree Folkestone is a fantastic place to live, work and play, this accolade has been welcomed, and will in its own right, raise the profile of the area. Accolades such as this have also been used in our recruitment content to help the council stand out in a competitive market and encourage candidates to embrace the idea of relocating.

Tourism plays a key part of my portfolio and work has started on developing a visitor economy strategy which is in the very early stages of development. Our strategy will capitalise on this type of positive press coverage to draw more visitors into the district which will help support the local economy. This work is

happening in tandem with the regeneration programme that is gaining momentum now, as we enter into the detailed design and tendering phase, the recently posted fly through YouTube video of the FABF scheme has had over 4500 views which is a really high number and probably can be linked to the Sunday Times article, so all very timely. This amplification will not only help the visitor economy but also inward investment, where new companies seek not just the usual attributes of an area, such as skills, transport links, supply chains etc but also the culture and lifestyle of the area as this will help retain their employees. So being named as a great location all helps the overall agenda.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

None.

4. From Councillor A Martin to Councillor Speakman, Cabinet Member for Assets and Operations

I understand that the Kent Wildlife Trust is terminating its lease for the Romney Marsh Visitor Centre. What are the councils plans for the site once this ends?

ANSWER:

Thank you for your question, Cllr Martin. Kent Wildlife Trust are surrendering their lease at the Romney Marsh Visitor Centre, officers have already engaged with KWT as part of the surrendering lease process. FHDC are now assessing the site and liaising with key stakeholders to fully understand the current site operations and constraints and will update members on any future plans as they develop over the coming months.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Can we ensure the involvement of Romney Marsh Councillors in the review, in order to champion local businesses, which as Romney Tweed?