

COUNCIL – 21 NOVEMBER 2013

QUESTIONS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

1. Question submitted by Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Tourism (Councillor Maher)

“Please can the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Tourism provide the following information with regard to the Southport Market:

1. the outturn capital costs of the project including fees?
2. the annual revenue borrowing costs?
3. the original three year business plan projections?
4. the number of original stall holders currently occupying the Market?
5. current occupational levels against the original projections?
6. what financial assessment of the Cabinet Members decision to reduce the rents by 30-40% was presented to the Member?
7. what justification of the new rent levels was used to support the recommendations made?
8. who decided on the new signage and its locations?
9. what was the capital cost involved and was it subject to a tender process?
10. what budget did the amounts come from and what budget was used?
11. what provision has been made for any annual revenue maintenance costs and what assessment has been made about replacement costs and within what timescale?
12. what consultation took place with existing stall holders in respect of signage design and locations?
13. what consultation was there with Dukes Ward Councillors?
14. based on the latest verifiable figures, what is the best estimate of the profits/loss on the Southport Market and will the full running costs including debt charge repayment, management fees, maintenance charges will be fully incorporated?
15. in the event of there being a projected loss how will this be met and from what budget?”

Response:

- 1) "The cost of the project, based on the spend incurred to 31 March 2013 and therefore reported was £3.075m. Approved budget was £3.032m (Cabinet 5/8/10). Some residual expenditure attributable to the project may be incurred during the remainder of 2013/14 which is unlikely to exceed £5,000.
- 2) The annual borrowing costs are estimated to be £237,000.
- 3) This was reported to Cabinet on 5 August 2010. I will forward to Cllr. Watson a copy of that Cabinet report.
- 4) 8
- 5) Current occupancy levels stand at 83%. The original projection was 92%.
- 6) A briefing paper was provided to me and again I will forward a copy of that briefing paper to Cllr. Watson.
- 7) This is contained within the aforementioned briefing paper.
- 8) Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism, in accordance with the initial brief as set out in the Southport Area Committee report of 17/11/10. The locations for the markers were decided on the basis of viability (services/utilities under footways severely restricted choice of locations).
- 9) The cost of the work associated with the new signage is £100,806. This included £78,748 for the design, manufacture and supply of the signs together with the costs of footway alterations. The work was tendered for.
- 10) The costs incurred were part of the total project cost referred to in the answer to Question 1.
- 11) No specific provision has been made for annual revenue maintenance costs. The Gateway Markers have been designed to avoid significant maintenance costs. The bulb replacement and cleaning will be funded from the revenue budget. The Markers have been designed to have a life span of approx 20 years. (Per the report presented to Southport Area Committee 17/11/10).
- 12) A consultation event was first held on 15/07/2009 with traders and local businesses to help define the scope of the public realm element of the project. A further event, held on 15/06/2010, confirmed the scope.
- 13) Councillor Pearson was involved in the Public Art Steering Group, created by the Southport Partnership, which scrutinised the submissions and recommended the appointment of Broadbents, the artists. The Duke's Councillors were also involved in the Southport Area Committee consideration of the outline Broadbents proposals and invited to the consultation event on 15/06/2010 confirming the scope of the public realm including the signage.
- 14) There is a forecast deficit in 2013/14 of £133,900.
- 15) This will be met from revenue reserves in line with other Council under/overspends."

2. Question submitted by Councillor Crabtree to the Leader of the Council (Councillor P. Dowd)

“Does the Leader of the Council consider it good practice when Planning Committee Members prior to a Planning meeting regularly fail to visit designated sites while recognising this is part of their duties and a “planning bus” is provided by the Council?”

Response:

“No”

3. Question submitted by Councillor Papworth to the Cabinet Member for Transportation (Councillor Fairclough)

The Cabinet Member will be aware that there are serious problems with car-parking in the areas surrounding both Hall Road and Blundellsands stations. He will also be aware that there is a 3-year-old Planning Consent for a new car-park adjacent to Hall Road station, which would obviate these problems. Will he discuss with our Merseytravel representative and other relevant people whether any way can be found to accelerate the construction of this car-park?

Response:

“Yes”

4. Question submitted by Councillor Robertson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor P. Dowd)

“Can the Leader of the Council give details of his promised review of the Sefton Central Area Committee?”

Response:

“No, because the conclusion of a review is not going to take place until the end of the 2013/14 Municipal Year.”

5. Question submitted by Councillor Dawson to the Cabinet Member – Performance and Corporate Services (Councillor Tweed)

1. What is the present square footage or square meterage of unoccupied office space in the Southport Town Hall – and how long has each component of this been empty?
2. Could the Cabinet Member report on the latest position in respect of the potential improvement of the Cambridge Arcade? Has there been any expression of interest in the vacant Council-owned shop which spoils the look of the arcade.

Response:

- 1) "481 sq. metres (or thereabouts) is currently vacant. Officers do not record how long any particular vacant office has been empty."
- 2) Improvements

"Certain urgent repair works have been undertaken to the glazed roof following the completion of the Atkinson restoration project and the removal of scaffolding. There are, however, further works required. Estimated funding of £17,500 has now been identified within the corporate properties maintenance contingency. Preparations have been made to carry these works out. Other more wide-ranging refurbishment of the arcade is being investigated hopefully to produce a feasibility study. It is anticipated that the cost of the survey/feasibility study will be £7,500 and that will be met from the Property Intervention Fund."

Vacant Unit

"There are two vacant unit in the Arcade (NB - The Council does not control the letting of Cambridge Walks). There is currently competing demand for Unit 7/9 and an informal tender exercise is to be carried out to assist in the selection of a tenant.

Unit 2, the vacant unit at the Lord Street entrance to the Arcade, is currently tied up in a legal agreement. Until the unit is released from this legal agreement it is not lettable, but negotiations are in hand to put the Council into a position to achieve this.

Certain mitigation works have been carried out to try to improve the appearance of Unit 2, but a more pro-active intervention cannot be achieved until the Council has unfettered possession of the unit."

**6. Question submitted by Councillor Dawson to the Cabinet Member –
Transportation – (Councillor Fairclough)**

1. In heavy rain, there is a sizeable section of the renewed paved area outside Broadbents store in Chapel Street, Southport, which temporarily floods because it has no dedicated drainage. Is there any prospect of the two drains at either end of this section being joined?
2. Is there any particular financial advantage to Sefton Council in procuring and erecting street furniture on the borough's highways, the metal content of which appears to be so particularly prone to serious corrosion?

Response:

- 1) "I don't know where you mean."
- 2) "Yes"

7. Question submitted by Councillor Dawson to the Cabinet Member – Corporate Services and Performance – (Councillor Tweed)

Has the Council addressed with the contractors all outstanding issues of water leaks and small areas of poor quality workmanship in arriving at a final settlement of our account on the Atkinson development?

Response:

“We are now in the defects liability period and we have twelve months from practical completion and handover of the building to identify any defects within the contracted works for the Contractor to put right.

We have over the past 8 months identified a number of works to be undertaken and these have or are in the process of being done.

Matters that we believe have arisen as a result of a failing or omission by Capita Symonds are subject to a separate agreement with them and consequently these may take a little longer to resolve.

The only other thing I would add is that the original roof leaks have already been attended to. Further issues have been identified relating to areas outside the scope of the original restoration contract. In order to be able to carry these works out as quickly and cheaply as possible a separate roofing contractor has been engaged.”

8. Question submitted by Councillor Dawson to the Cabinet Member - Communities and Environment – (Councillor Hardy)

Did the Council receive any complaints from pet animal owners or near-neighbours in respect of the noise emanating from the excellent Musical Fireworks on Victoria Park, Southport this year?

Response:

“6 complaints during sound check stage and none during actual event.”

9. Questions submitted by Councillor Jones to the Chair of the Planning Committee – (Councillor Veidman)

1. How is it possible for an application for 5 a side football pitch to be rejected unanimously, and 2 years later it is voted for by the same council with a suspect application based on temporary lights. Then when the Sports Club contravened planning rules several times, they were allowed to submit "retrospective" permission to carry on with the go ahead to erect the 5 a side football pitches? Several Council members have visited the site and all are amazed how close these pitches are to residential properties, yet nothing has been done on behalf of council tax paying residents. Until the football is closed down are the residents due council tax rebates?

2. Could the Chair of the Planning Committee explain why the planning department approved a planning application for a development based on just an end elevation, which is clearly not in compliance with National requirements and Sefton's own requirements document? AND also explain why at least 4 of Sefton Council's own policies for Unitary Development Plan / Strategic Policies were ignored for a planning application which the council knew would cause noise and light nuisance.
3. Can the council please explain how a planning application was passed when incorrect information was given on start date, when the council had previously visited the site more than a month before the start date stated by the applicant? Sefton Planning application clearly states that the information should be true.

Response:

- 1) "If Cllr. Jones gives specific details in relation to the sites he is referring to, I will look into the matter.
- 2) See my answer to the question above.
- 3) See my answer to the question above."

10. Question submitted by Councillor Jones to the Leader of the Council – (Councillor P.Dowd)

"Does the Leader of the Council think it's acceptable that the Mayor of Sefton officially opened the Ainsdale3g five-a-side pitches, while a number of the council departments are currently dealing with planning breaches and noise and light nuisance caused by this construction."

Response:

"I will refer on to the Civic Services Office."