

## **COUNCIL MEETING – 20 SEPTEMBER 2018**

### **38. MATTERS RAISED BY THE PUBLIC**

The Mayor reported that in accordance with Rule 39 of Chapter 4 (The Full Council) of the Council's Constitution, a public question had been submitted for consideration at the Council meeting by Mr. R. Woods of Southport relating to the opening hours of The Atkinson as set out below:-

"The Atkinson in Southport is an excellent asset for Southport, after in excess of twenty million pounds being spent on updating and improving its facilities, with the its theatre, museum, studio cafe etc. It has recently put on a Viking exhibition which was well worth visiting. It did house the tourist office but I believe this is now only display units with information leaflets. I do know that many shows and events are put on and these must generate much of its income, but this is one of the main attractions in Southport, which is supposedly a tourist resort, yet it is not open on Sundays and most of it, including the cafe, museum and exhibition section closes at four on Saturdays. Is it not at the weekend when most tourists as well as locals would expect it to be open with its facilities and promoting events and amenities in Southport and Sefton"

Councillor Hardy, Cabinet Member – Communities and Housing responded to the question by Mr. Woods and indicated that as part of the Council's Public Sector Reform programme numerous savings have been agreed for the 3 year period 2017-2020. In regard to the Atkinson this totalled £414,000. The reduced budget meant Sunday opening hours would be difficult to sustain, especially given the enhancements that are attributed to Sunday working. Sundays are often a quieter day and an analysis of visitor footfall revealed that Sunday visits were sometimes half that of an average weekday. [550 compared to 1200]. Income generation levels were also significantly lower.

Mr. Woods posed a supplementary question and asked whether it would be possible for The Atkinson to be open on Sundays during the Summer months or when special events or exhibitions were held; and indicated that this would also be beneficial to tourists visiting Southport.

Councillor Hardy responded to the supplementary question by indicating that it costs over £700 in staffing, utility and maintenance to open the building on Sundays and with visitor spend generally low, The Atkinson was frequently making a loss of between £300 - £550 every Sunday. Therefore, it was felt that Sunday opening was not a sustainable option given the budget savings required; however, if funding levels increased in the future then the situation could be looked at again.

Motion by Councillor Booth, seconded by Councillor Ian Brodie-Browne:

That the question be referred to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) for consideration.

On a show of hands the Mayor declared that the Motion was carried by 17 votes to 1 with 39 abstentions and it was

RESOLVED:

That the question be referred to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) for consideration.