

(5) PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Questions have been submitted, and responses provided to questions (1) - (4), as follows:-

(1) Question from Mr David Fowles of Poulton to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

'It is now nearly 6 months since the Cirencester Futures conference at which there were 120 delegates present. Just prior to the election, the CEO of the Town Council, officers from CDC's Forward Planning Team and I (as the then elected representative) met to plan the next steps for the creation of the Cirencester Futures Partnership.

Could the Leader please update the town on what is happening?'

Response from Councillor Joe Harris

'We are currently taking stock of the various Cirencester-related initiatives, and this will form the key item for the first meeting of the Cirencester Master Plan Working Group, to be held shortly.'

(2) Question from Mr David Fowles of Poulton to Councillor Mark Harris, Cabinet Member for Car Parks and Town and Parish Councils

'There continues to be a shortage of car parking in Cirencester town.

As the long-standing Chairman of the Cirencester Parking Board and the newly appointed Portfolio Holder for, amongst other things, car parking, could you please update the town on what progress has been made on the various car parking initiatives in the town?'

Response from Councillor Mark Harris

'Thank you for your question Mr Fowles.

Several updates have been made to Town organisations regarding the various car parking initiatives. Most recently, a public meeting was held at the Rugby Club on 5th June; Cirencester Town Council was updated on 11th June; Park Community Group on 19th June; and Watermoor Community Group on 24th June.

The two main initiatives are the formalisation of the car park at the Rugby Club and the Waterloo Car Park proposals. The Rugby Club initiative will allow us to decant permit holders while the other project, the Waterloo Car Park, is built - this was reported in the Wilts & Glos Standard on 20th February and, around the same time, we produced leaflets and distributed them to local residents and businesses outlining the plans. Those plans have not changed.

A planning application has been submitted for the Rugby Club proposal. Between 15th and 26th July, there will be displays relating to the Waterloo Car Park in the Fleece Hotel and a drop-in consultation will be held at the same venue on 18th July. We hope to show the first ideas from the three Architects who have been selected to compete for the job to design the wrap for the building which will make full use of the latest technology, solar panels and water recycling.

You'll appreciate that timings change, but with a fair wind and no hold-ups, we would hope that the Rugby Club could start a 12-week build at the beginning of October. The Waterloo has more hurdles to jump, but again we could begin a 9-12 month build in the summer of next year.

You will also be aware that the Bathurst Estate has a planning application awaiting decision for 250 car parking spaces at The Kennels site. If approved, this will remove 200 commuter parkers from the town centre as the new spaces are being leased by a local company.

You can email parking@cotswold.gov.uk at any time with any specific questions that are not already addressed on the parking section of the website, and of course you can ask me for an update at any time.'

(3) Question from Mr Patrick Moylan of Cirencester to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

'This question concerns the viability assessment connected with the Chesterton strategic site and the Bathurst Development.

Planning Practice Guidelines say that 'Any viability assessment should be prepared on the basis that it will be made publically available other than in exceptional circumstances'. The courts have grappled with the issue of whether viability assessments should be confidential and increasingly the move has been toward demanding openness. It is not clear what those exceptional circumstances might be. It is questionable whether what was previously viewed as confidential and trade secrets would now be accepted as 'exceptional' and, therefore, a valid reason to withhold information. Indeed, notwithstanding the PPG, requests to disclose under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 leave little room for discretion.

Will the Council undertake to make public the viability assessment documentation relating to the Chesterton development?'

Response from Councillor Joe Harris

'Whilst the viability assessment had originally been considered to be a confidential document, following discussions with the Council's external legal advisor (in the light of then recent case law), and with the consent of the applicant, the decision was taken to make the document publicly available. This was done in advance of the September 2017 Special Council Meeting, and the document appears as Appendix 2 of the Additional Pages dated 22nd September 2017. The document was available on the website from that date. Specific reference to this change is contained within the Minutes of the Special Council Meeting, on page 37. A 'hard' copy document can be provided to you should you so wish.'

(4) Question from Mr Patrick Moylan of Cirencester to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

'The previous Leader of the Council, Tony Berry, agreed in early April that a straightforward document which compares the Chesterton S106 heads of terms with the S106 agreement would be helpful and promised that he would arrange for one to be produced. Indeed, we are surprised if one doesn't exist in some form, otherwise how could the officers and former Leader be sure that the legal agreement accorded with the heads? The new Leader of the Council has stated that such a document will be made available. Given the public disquiet over at least three matters - the education contribution, the health centre and the socially rented affordable housing numbers - would the Council please make getting this document out a priority, and when can we expect to see it?'

Response from Councillor Joe Harris

'Officers have been working on, and have recently provided me with, two documents which compare the Heads of Terms presented to the Special Council Meeting in January 2018 to the final S106 agreements signed in April 2019.

For ease of reference, I have asked Officers to try to combine these two documents into one, and I will ensure that either one composite document, or the two original versions, are provided to you, and also uploaded onto our website against the application, by the end of next week at the latest.'

(5) Question from Mr Ray Jenkins, Chairman of Down Ampney Parish Council, to Councillor Jenny Forde, Cabinet Member for Health, Well-being & Public Safety

'Local residents, who are current users of the Fairford Leisure Centre and who have benefitted from this important facility, are shocked to hear that it is closing. Could the Cabinet Member please confirm whether or not this centre is closing; and, if so, why?'

(6) Question from Mr Ray Jenkins, Chairman of Down Ampney Parish Council, to Councillor Jenny Forde, Cabinet Member for Health, Well-being & Public Safety

'In the Liberal Democrat manifesto 2019 entitled 'Because the Cotswolds deserves better' you pledge on page 8 to provide 'better health, well being, social mobility and community safety'. Specifically, there is a bullet point in which you pledge 'to promote healthy lifestyles by working with the District's leisure centres, gyms and fitness clubs'.

How does this pledge equate to the rumours about Fairford, how can you justify these rumours and what are your proposals for the well being of residents in Down Ampney?'

Notes:

- (i) Questions (1) – (4) above were submitted by the time by responses are guaranteed to be provided to the questioner at least 24 hours before the Council Meeting (by virtue of the Council's Procedure Rules). As such, written responses will be provided to all Members either in advance of, or at, the Council Meeting.

(ii) If the questioners are present at the Meeting, they will be entitled to ask one supplementary question arising directly out of either the answer given or their original question.

(iii) The Member to whom any supplementary question is addressed will try and answer any supplementary question at the Meeting; but if this is not possible, then the Member will answer as much as possible at the Meeting and then provide a full response within five working days. If, for any reason, a full response cannot be provided within those five days, then a holding response will be sent to the questioner, along with the reason for delay and a likely timescale for the full response.

(iv) Questions (5) and (6) above were submitted in sufficient time for them to be presented at the Meeting, but after the deadline by which responses could be guaranteed to be provided either in advance of, or at, the Meeting. As such, responses will be provided either at or within five working days of the Council Meeting.

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