

## Chichester District Council

Full Council

23 January 2024

### Public Question and Answers Sheet

#### Question from Simon Lloyd- Williams:

The Novium Museum cost the local Council taxpayers £6.9 million to build. How much of the taxpayers money has been spent since 2012 in keeping this white elephant afloat?

#### Response from Cllr Brown-Fuller:

Thank you for your question, Mr Lloyd – Williams.

The Novium Museum and Tourist Information Centre (TIC) opened in its new building on Tower Street in the centre of Chichester in July 2012. Through a strong vision the museum and TIC service continues to strengthen its relationship with and relevance to our local community while growing its reputation both locally and nationally.

Over the last decade, the service has taken great strides forwards in delivering its objectives across all areas of the service. The Novium museum delivers significant educational, social, and economic benefit to the local community. During the last ten years there have been over 340,000 visitors to the museum and in addition this many local schools and education settings have embraced the outreach service provided. The museum and TIC was greatly impacted by covid during this time and was only able to open for just 89 days during 2020/21, as a result of three national lockdowns, however the service is now on the way to visitor numbers recovering and the museum's free admission policy enables the heritage of Chichester District to be accessible to everyone.

Between April 2013 and March 2023, the cost to deliver the museum service averaged of £650k per annum, details of the service costs for each year are available on our website. In 2018 an economic impact assessment was completed using the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) toolkit, based on the visitor numbers from 2015/16 of 45,433 visitors, the museum's economic benefit alone was estimated to be between £320-£455k. This does not include any social, educational or health benefits. We are currently undertaking a further economic impact assessment and a social value impact for the museum and results from this will be available later this year.

Museums increase our sense of wellbeing, help us feel proud of where we have come from, inspire, challenge and stimulate us, and make us feel healthier, the true value of a museum to a city which is steeped in its historical and cultural activities which are so important to the local community and visitors' is difficult to value.

### **Question from Richard Plowman:**

“At the last Cabinet Meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> January in response to Reverend Canon Bruce Ruddock’s question on the IPPD proposal for an Ice rink in Priory Park on page 67 of the Cabinet Papers item 2. 7 and Appendix 4, you made a promise that there would be extensive conversations including Priory Park Society.

True to your word, yourself, the Deputy Leader, Jonathan Brown and Officer, Sarah Peyman attended the meeting. Evidence and facts were presented which gave an entirely different and opposite view of the success of the Ice rink in Priory Park and its effect on the Christmas economy of Chichester and showed that the IPPD was based on spurious uncollaborated data. In fact, if you looked at the footfall figures from the published BID report, there was in 2018 a 9% drop in footfall at Christmas compared to 2017 with no Ice rink. The events strategy, which is the policy, specifically precludes an Ice rink in Priory Park for good reasons. To say that the grass is not part of the fabric of the Priory Park lacks credibility and is a farcical reason for ignoring the events strategy passed unanimously by Council. It was all about the damage to the grass and loss of amenity. Far better sites on hard standing were put forward without all these issues of Priory Park and the need to spend £125,000. My question Leader is, given your promise to consult fully and for views to be a significant part of the evaluation of the IPPD, what you are going to change because of the conversations with the Priory Park Society. Indeed, they are asking the same question but believe nothing will change. Everybody wants an Ice rink in Chichester in Christmas, it has failed once in Priory Park and alternative sites ruled out in 2018 should now be explored. There is plenty of time to do this.

### **Response from Cllr Brown-Fuller:**

Thank you Richard for your question and for your continued scrutiny of the proposed ice rink in Priory Park. You indicate in your question there are two reasons for not having an ice rink in Priory Park which was mainly the damage to the grass and amenity. We are confident that the IPPD will enable us to reinstate the grass by either re-sowing as required or returfing, and this will be allowed for in the tenders going forward. We can also ensure that during set up and break down protection is provided to the grass to ensure minimal damage is done. Like you, we wish to ensure that the grass and open spaces are open to all as soon as possible after the ice rink is taken down and as an amenity to local residents the park is for all residents of Chichester so they should be able to enjoy it.

As for the economic value of the ice rink we know with certainty that the car parking figures for 2018 were considerably higher than that of 2017 and 2019. We have also checked with the BID who confirm that they recorded an increase in visitor numbers in 2018. We are confident that an ice rink in Priory Park will boost the local economy, be well supported by local residents and provide a positive vibe to Chichester during the Christmas period.

With regard to alternative sites, you suggest that there are numerous alternative sites. Following an internal review, we are clear that Priory Park is the one site that we can bring forward in time for this year 2024 based on timescales and the known challenges for alternatives sites. With regard to the Events Strategy and the Events

Policy they are two different documents and we have carefully reviewed both documents and are satisfied that an ice rink in Priory Park does conform to both, but I would invite the Leader attended your Priory Park Association meeting who may want to add something.

**Cllr Moss added the following response:**

Thank you very much. Mr Plowman you ask if we are going to consult, and we are absolutely going to consult and have been consulting. Residents will have every opportunity to express their views over the coming weeks. The views of Priory Park Society are important as are the views of the wider residents of Chichester to whom Priory Park was given as a place of recreation. The reasons we have started the process of reviewing the ice rink now is to ensure we provide the best experience for residents and safeguard the park and reduce disturbance to local residents. If we are not confident that that can be achieved it will not go ahead. We very much look forward to working with all residents over the coming weeks on the proposed ice rink. We assure you that consultation will be free and open. Thank you.

**Question from Simon Oakley:**

Given the ongoing scale of littering, what is CDC's current Policy regarding the installation of new litter bins where requested to do so by Parish Councils? If the Policy is not to install new litter bins, what are the reasons for not doing so?

**Response from Cllr Chilton:**

Thank you for your question, Mr Oakley.

With regards to fly tipping, the council's street cleaning team is currently operating at capacity; regularly servicing more than 800 litter bins across the district. Therefore the installation of additional bins would require additional resource to empty them. Litter bins can be effective in areas of high footfall where it would be considered unreasonable for people to hold onto their waste, so this is where most of our bins are positioned. Where people can reasonably take their waste home with them we would prefer to see this happen as it means the waste is much more likely to be recycled.

Our monitoring shows that litter levels in village centres is very low and that roadside litter on rural roads is the bigger problem. This said we have recently completed a districtwide inspection of our roads and found levels to be lower than we would expect at this time of year. We put this down to a couple of things; our effectiveness in litter picking highway verges with our own traffic management team and public behaviour change through promotion of the Against Litter campaign and roadside signs warning of fines if litter is thrown from a vehicle.

In summary, installing additional litter bins would require additional resource and it would not address the problem of litter being thrown from moving vehicles. However officers are happy to discuss concerns with parish councils where there is a demonstrable need i.e. a significant litter problem in an area of high footfall, where it

would be considered unreasonable for people to take their waste home with them and recycle it.

**Question from Colin McKenna:**

**Context**

We have seen the average world temperature rise in 2023 by nearly 1.5 degrees centigrade, a rise many, including a recent prime minister, were hoping to avoid before 2050 by which time net zero achievements would have stopped any further increase. The projections now are that net zero is very unlikely to be reached by 2050 so temperatures will continue to rise beyond then. It is also projected that the 2 degree rise could occur by 2050 and not 2100 as previously thought. There is an inevitability now that we will experience more and more extreme weather events such as flooding in the winter and more extreme heat in summer as well as more rapidly rising sea level rises with its consequential impact on coastal communities arriving much sooner than projected a few years ago.

The government states in its Climate Change Adaptation strategy that it is "important we all take action to address climate change. Alongside the government's leading role, councils and communities can work together to prepare for and adapt to climate change."

I am a member of the Chichester U3A Climate Change Group which sees the need for the public in this area to be given information on the increasing risks we now face and be told how the district and county councils are working together to adapt local infrastructure and services to these risks. We believe that councils should work together to provide guidance and support to local parish councils on what can be done by the public and landowners to adapt to the expected climate extremes. However, the current CDC climate plan is silent on adaptation issues. It has a focus solely on reducing carbon emissions mostly within the council's own organisation which, though laudable, regrettably will have no measurable effect on the world temperature rise.

While the Local Plan deals with new development and presumably its protection from extreme weather, the same does not apply to existing housing, businesses and other premises which remain at increasing risk.

**Question for the Council**

In the light of the above context what, if anything, has been done by this council to prepare an adaptation strategy for the increasing risks of extreme weather, when will it publish this and when will it publicise an action plan to meet its strategy so local communities can begin to prepare for what is on its way?

**Response from Cllr Jonathan Brown:**

Thank you very much for your question, and what I fear is a depressingly accurate statement on the context around the lack of progress made towards addressing climate change.

The world, the country and this council have all begun to act far, far later than we should have. Given where we are I start by saying that I believe we have been right to *prioritise* reducing carbon emissions rather than adaptation. On our own, cuts to CDC's emissions will make a negligible difference to the global picture, but the principle is important – not just because we ought to be seen to be doing right thing, but to build momentum so that everyone makes their contributions. If everyone believed themselves justified in doing nothing, nothing would happen and adaptation will become more expensive and difficult to achieve. We need to play our part to encourage everyone to play their part. We have and had to start somewhere.

And on adaptation we have not been doing nothing. There is some overlap between actions taken to reduce carbon emissions and to adapt to climate change. For example, better home insulation will reduce carbon emissions and will help occupants cope with more extreme periods of hot and cold weather. We are conscious of these opportunities, but it is true that they do not sit within a dedicated climate change adaptation strategy.

That said, were we to have one, we would undoubtedly want to focus on what we could do or influence and so would be doing actions like these. We have virtually no influence over transport, health provision, etc. and an overarching strategy would need to cover these and other areas. As with the Climate Change plan, it would not make sense to dedicate a lot of resource to a policy area that we as a Council had no responsibility for or power or resource to deliver on.

In any case, as with the approach to carbon emissions, any plan of action will inevitably need to be supported by a range of schemes – large and small. Absent serious policy or financial support from national government and with finite resources at our disposal, our view is that 'big wins' should be prioritised over multiple smaller projects that even together do not add up to very much. We want to focus on policy areas where we can have real influence and to deal with the biggest threats.

In our district arguably the biggest climate change threat is flooding – particularly coastal and river flooding. We are already working on addressing these issues. On the agenda for today's Council we have a proposal for a Selsey Coastal Scheme. This is a colossal, multi-million pound project that will run over many years. It is probably the single most impactful action this Council can take – in partnership – to help our communities adapt to climate change. We will shortly – I hope by March – be ready to kick off a new Chichester Harbour Investment and Adaptation Plan too. This will look at almost the whole of the district's coast, with a view to helping all of our coastal communities adapt to climate change. If we are successful, this will be another multi-million pound, multi-year partnership project. It will be coming to the first public Environment Panel meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> January – so I would encourage you to attend if you can.

I hope that we will also be in a position to say something in the relatively near future about some work on rivers in the district too.

Apart from this, one of the other main policy areas we can influence in the district is – in theory – planning, although everyone can see the dysfunctionality of the Planning

system. As you will be aware, the LP addresses new builds. However, new posts recruited to the Environment team will have some positive influence on planning applications working their way through the system. And they will help us try to maximise the taking up of govt. schemes, such as home insulation for existing properties. We are also doing a great deal of tree planting – 25,000 planted in the district since 2021 – including for shade and shelter.

We will also proactively support the efforts of other bodies, working in partnership with WSCC and the other Districts and Boroughs in West Sussex on water usage and drainage.

I do acknowledge that we haven't been able to say very much on the subject of adaptation over the last few months, not as much as I would have liked, but I hope that this goes some way to explaining what we have been doing and that you will soon start to see much more information on the schemes we have been working on.

You are right – we have all left it too late to keep the earth's temperature within sensible boundaries so we will have to adapt. To answer your question plainly, we do not have a dedicated adaptation strategy and while I don't rule out doing some more formal work on a climate adaptation framework in the future, for the time being I think we are right to prioritise work on the schemes that will make the biggest difference, even if they're going to be long, complex and expensive projects. We cannot do everything, certainly not at once and afford to delay.

As the chair is not permitting follow up questions now I am happy to follow up with you outside of this meeting.