

Council – 15th November 2017

1. Question from Councillor Colin Hartley to Councillor Janice Hanson

The Bay Gateway has been open over 12 months now and it's clear from the amount of HGV traffic using the road that the economy around the Port is benefiting. The Heysham Gateway development will enhance this and bring more economic benefits (especially employment) to the area. Are you able to provide an update on progress and in particular when we might expect to see clearance and building work start?

Councillor Hanson replied:

Since the opening of the Bay Gateway, and as a result of effective marketing during its construction period, both the City Council and County Council have agreed disposals of previously low demand employment sites attracting around £250 million of inward investment and demand from companies seeking to relocate/expand, in turn creating around 800 jobs in the locality. These disposals should shortly lead to a first wave of planning applications.

Proactive investigations are also taking place with landowners and potential investors to add a potential truck stop facility to the existing land allocations to complement the recent £20 Million investments in the Port of Heysham. This will enable port traffic to be handled more efficiently without dispersing parking into the surrounding areas.

The Lancashire Regeneration and Property Partnership is also now preparing a detailed master plan for remaining areas in private and public sector control to generate a coordinated approach to dealing with infrastructure deficiencies relating to highways, land drainage and ecology with the aim of stimulating the regeneration of around 260 hectares of underused brownfield land. A Cabinet report detailing this approach will be considered in December.

Continuing investment enquiries for further redevelopment are now being received and the two councils working with the Lancashire Regeneration and Property Partnership will be aiming to match requirements with the regeneration opportunities being identified in the master plan.

2. Question from Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox to Councillor Darren Clifford

Given information that the lease on Salt Ayre landfill site reverts to the city council in December, will Cllr Clifford ask officers to investigate the feasibility of using it to site renewable energy generation?

Councillor Clifford replied:

Your question is well-timed. This was discussed last week. Yes; officers are already coming forward with ideas for the use of this land that would generate income in the future. However, as it's a recently used landfill site there are technical and operational issues that need to be considered in conjunction with these ideas.

Councillor Hamilton-Cox put a supplementary question, asking about the commitment to review the viability of Middleton Solar Farm during the current financial year.

Councillor Clifford said that this issue was under review all the time and had been discussed recently. With plans for renewable energy business rates to come to Councils in the future, these types of schemes were looking more viable.

3. Question from Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox to Councillor Janice Hanson

Will Cllr Hanson in principle support an Article 4 designation for housing in a substantial part of Bulk ward, including Freehold, in order to require planning approval for further conversion of residential housing (class C3) into student accommodation (class C4 or sui generis); in recognition, and support, of emerging planning policy which directs new student accommodation into the city centre?

Councillor Hanson replied;

Article 4 Directions may be used by local planning authorities to introduce additional planning controls where there are issues that can effectively be addressed by extending planning controls to development which would not normally require consent. I could, in principle, support the consideration of an Article 4 direction, however, the introduction of additional planning controls must be justified, appropriate and proportionate to the issues that they are designed to redress. I will therefore need to give proper consideration to the request once I am advised of what the issues are and how the proposed Article 4 would redress these issues.

This would include consideration of the supply and demand of such accommodation particularly in light of the number of new build schemes that have been approved and delivered. We still have not seen the most up to date accommodation study from the University of Lancaster. I would also want to consider whether such a Direction should include other wards experiencing demand for student lets, and the lead in time for making a direction without opening the Council to claims for compensation for any subsequent refusals of planning permission.

Councillor Hamilton-Cox put a supplementary question, asking Councillor Hanson if she would be prepared to press the University to provide student accommodation, because it was essential.

Councillor Hanson said she could certainly ask them but did not know their requirements.

4 Question from Councillor Caroline Jackson to Councillor Janice Hanson.

In view of the heartfelt plea from the Prime Minister of Fiji, currently hosting the COP 23 talks in Bonn that as all nations and all civil society we “accelerate the possibility of positive change and act more boldly than we thought possible”, how does the Cabinet member justify advocating the inclusion of 250 extra parking spaces in the Canal Corridor Scheme?

Councillor Caroline Jackson had agreed to a written response to her question and also to a supplementary question, which she asked at the meeting:-

When will Cabinet take a proactive bold line where we can reduce carbon emissions through initiatives such as the Middleton Solar Farm and schemes like providing free buses for late night festive shopping, as raised earlier in the meeting?