

Cabinet

23 November 2015

Public Question Time (Agenda Item No 5)

Question submitted by East Chiltington Parish Council. To be put to Councillor Smith, Leader of the Council:

“In the case of a tendering process by a public authority for a contract of the size and nature of the ‘New Homes’ project (the largest financial single transaction ever undertaken by LDC), it would be normal that a minimum of at least 3 full tenders would be sought in order to ensure the transparency and accountability of the decision made.

East Chiltington parish council understand from the documents that you have supplied in response to our FOI request that there were five submissions of a Pre-Qualifying Questionnaire (PQQ) and two submissions were taken forward to the Invitation to Submit an Outline Proposal stage (ISOP), of which only one was then pursued.

Please explain why only one published advertisement was placed to seek tenders and why no further tenders were sought through additional advertising and promotion, as should have been the case.”

Question submitted by Mr Ian Martin on behalf of East Chiltington Action Group. To be put to Councillor Smith, Leader of the Council:

“In 2011 and again in 2013, studies commissioned by LDC concluded that any residential development on the Hollycroft site was undesirable, unsustainable and contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework. The reasons given included isolation, lack of services including public transport, objections from highways and objections from Southern Water who maintain a treatment plant on that site.

At a public meeting in East Chiltington on 21st July this year, spokespeople from LDC and Karis Developments were asked what new evidence had led LDC to invest public money in a proposal which is in direct opposition to its own studies and planning advice.

Their responses were vague to say the least. Gillian Marsden described the gap between prior knowledge and the current proposal as a "difference of opinion". Josh Arghiros from Karis Developments could only say "it looked suitable for housing....it looks like it could sustain housing, it feels right and that is the point where we start"

We, the residents of East Chiltington, did not think these responses remotely approached the level of planning and professionalism we as taxpayers might expect regarding a project promoted by Lewes District Council or indeed any other public administration. This is why we are repeating the following question both to the Cabinet and later to the full Council.

Given that the planning advice given in the past to LDC has consistently concluded that residential development on the Hollycroft site is unsustainable, what additional evidence had led LDC to invest public money in a proposal to do exactly the opposite?"