

To All Councillors.

Briefing Note to Council

Cllr. O'Keefe has given notice that she wishes to ask Cllr Nicholson the questions shown below at the Council meeting next Wednesday (16th October).

Cllr Nicholson will respond briefly at the meeting. However, Cllr O'Keefe's question is very detailed and Cllr Nicholson and officers thought it would be helpful to Councillors to circulate this detailed briefing note about the various issues raised prior to the meeting.

The questions asked by Cllr O'Keefe are as follows:

- 1. Please can you explain how the situation has arisen that across the Lewes District there are approximately £2.5 million pounds of unspent funding for play areas and open spaces derived from 106 planning agreements, both in general and also specifically in Lewes £176,569.51 (from applications in 2004, 2006, 2007, 2010) (91.5% of original value for these applications unspent)
Newhaven £78,042.75 (from applications in 1999, 2003, 2006) (100.4% of the original value for these applications unspent)
Newick £45,538.04 (from application in 2010) (101% of the original value for this application unspent)
Peacehaven £1,839,206.53 (from applications in 2004, 2008, 2009) (102.5% of the original value for these applications unspent)
Plumpton £15,555 (from application in 2006) (101.9% of the original value for this application unspent)
Ringmer £9636.70 (from application in 2001) (20.9% of the original value for this application unspent)
Seaford £330,568.89 (from applications in 2001, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009) (52.5% of the original value for these applications unspent)
Telscombe £932.38 (from applications in 2005, 2006) (1.8% of the original value for these applications unspent)
Wivelsfield £43,019.65 (from application in 2009) (90.8% of the original value for this application unspent)***

A full breakdown of the monies received and allocated for spending on a town by town / parish basis is shown on the attached spreadsheet.

- There is currently a balance of £2.8 million of unspent monies to be used on new / improved play facilities. This money has all been allocated to specific projects.
- Two-thirds of this unspent money (£1,902,361) is allocated to The Big Parks Project in Peacehaven, as the money has been raised through Section 106 funding from local housing developments in the vicinity of the "Big Park" and the donation of a large area of land by Southern Water in connection with development of the waste water treatment plant in the town. This project is large and complex, and work is

progressing with the aim of completion in spring 2015. This project will bring some great recreational facilities to a town which has historically lacked them.

- A further 5% (£149,190.4) has been allocated to local Town or Parish Councils to spend on their local sites. Design advice is given to these councils by LDC as required.
- Money is also set aside for ongoing maintenance.
- This leaves actual unspent funding (not including monies from the Big Parks Project and monies given to local Town and Parish Councils) of £751,862.

2. Please can you further set out how this situation is to be rectified and the money spent, with approximate timescales, both in general and also specifically in

Lewes

Newhaven

Newick

Peacehaven

Plumpton

Ringmer

Seaford

Telscombe

Wivelsfield

Please note in giving this answer that the explanation that a list of projects is being drawn up with the assistance of a project officer for prioritisation has already been given more than once in the last 5 years and has not appeared to move the process on sufficiently given the remaining underspend. Please include in this answer the manner in which all necessary timescales will be met and an explanation for how any money which appears from publicly available documentation to have run out of time already is being safeguarded

A timetable for forthcoming projects is attached although it is stressed that this is indicative only and may need to be revised because of competing work priorities and/or weather conditions.

In 2013 the Big Parks Project and the Mumfords event required significant input from officers who were diverted from project tasks.

No monies have been lost as a result of over running their spend deadlines. On those projects where the deadline has seemingly been reached, monies have been allocated and there has been preliminary survey and design work assuring that the monies received are secure.

3. Please can you explain what provisions are being put in place to prevent this backlog of incomplete and unstarted projects from recurring across the District in both general and specific terms with respect to play areas and open spaces.

As stated in question 2, a revised indicative timetable has been drawn up for all outstanding projects.

We have top sliced some money from Section 106 funding to allow us to second a Project Officer to work full time on the design, local consultation, and delivery of new facilities.

4. Please can you explain how Town and Parish councils have been and will be involved in the planning and as appropriate execution of the projects necessary to utilise this funding.

We have a very good record of working closely with our partners in the Town and Parish Councils. Where money has been allocated to a Parish or Town Council, the scheme can either be designed / procured through them direct, with LDC advising as appropriate, or LDC can carry out works on their behalf, given the specialist knowledge required.

Recent partnerships have included play area improvements at:

- The Crouch Gardens – Seaford Town Council
- Valley Road – Newhaven Town Council
- Eastern Road Wivelsfield Play Area – Wivelsfield Parish Council
- Chatsworth Park Play Area - – Telscombe Town Council

5. Please can you explain the processes planned and beginning to be executed for liaison with the National Park over monies which have already been and will in the future be given over to the National Park to administer, both with respect to the District Council and to any Town and Parish Councils which the District Council could be working with as appropriate.

Section 106 Agreements are very specific in the location and type of facility that the monies received can be used for, and we have to meet certain legal tests set out in Government regulations. We use this requirement to allocate the monies to the most suitable local site and / or to provide play provision on the site of the development. We work closely with the South Downs National Park Authority and have a protocol with them on negotiating, agreeing, and spending funding from developments in that part of the district where the NPA are the local planning authority, and we provide a planning service on their behalf.

For future reference councillors are reminded that they can find information about section 106 payments received on the Council' website. This gives a parish by parish breakdown of payments received and the information is updated quarterly. The website page can be found at <http://www.lewes.gov.uk/planning/11297.asp>

