

## Council Meeting – 25 February 2015

### Questions from Members of the Public (Agenda Item 5)

Questions submitted by Ian Linton. To be put to Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

#### **“Special Expenses**

##### **1. Independent Peer Review**

In response to the Petition against Special Expenses from concerned residents, LDC decided to commission an Independent Peer Review (IPR). Unfortunately the reviewer chosen is too closely associated with LDC to be seen as independent by any reasoned measure. Furthermore, the Terms of Reference were so narrowly defined as to be meaningless as they restricted consideration of the wider issues. Consequently the IPR proved to be somewhat subjective, lacking in supporting evidence and *more importantly one-sided as not one LDC taxpayer was consulted.*

In asking the following question, I am mindful of the Seven Principles of Public Life (the “Nolan Principles”) for which I understand Councillors were briefed upon election.

#### **Who is to be held accountable for this Independent Peer Review?**

##### **2. Grounds Maintenance Contract**

LDC has recently stated that it is “seeking to devolve all [open spaces] assets over the next two financial years”.

Towns and Parishes taking over devolved assets will no doubt wish to consider using their own resources and/or other contractors to reduce costs further.

**Has LDC made this eventuality clear to the recently appointed Grounds Maintenance Contractor, and that the actual term could be drastically shortened from 5-8 years down to 2 years?**

##### **3. Devolved Assets**

The Minutes of the LDC Scrutiny Committee meeting on 15/2/15 (Page 31, second paragraph) state “The Head of Finance explained that, due to the reduction in costs of the Grounds Maintenance Contract, *some of those savings [my italics]* would be passed to the residents who would be affected by an increase in their council tax due to the introduction of special expenses”.

**Will LDC confirm that the LDC Budget savings achieved by devolving three assets this year (Landport Bottom - Lewes, Malling Recreation Ground – Lewes and The Forges – Ringmer) will be applied solely to the Towns and Parishes involved and not be spread over the District as a whole?”**