

PUBLIC QUESTIONS – IN ORDER RECEIVED

1. MR JIM CRIPPS

To the Leader

‘Can you please explain why a covertly produced, pre-COVID ‘output specification’ is being retained – despite a clear 9:1 ‘against’ public feedback response (with backing from our MP), in a post-COVID climate of austerity measures?’

2. JILL WAIGHT

To the Leader

‘Will the Leader commit to the Mill Arts & Events Centre being removed from the Asset Delivery Programme, removed from the Fusion leisure contract, renovated and aligned to Freight House BREEM levels, and put out a tender for an experienced Events Company to manage and protect Rochford District's only Theatre venue?’

3. SAMANTHA REED

To the Leader

‘The Mill Hall was refurbished in 2003. Since then both Fusion & the Council have failed to maintain this leisure asset, allowing it to become ‘dire’ & ‘not fit for purpose’ or as one Cllr commented ‘very expensive toilets.’

- a. Was this deliberate neglect or systemic failure to maintain this Council Asset by Officers/The Executive Councillors to sell off our Community asset for development?’

4. MR JOHN PAYTON

To the Leader

‘Regarding the proposed redevelopment of the Rayleigh Civic Suite and gardens site into commercial units and flat blocks - can the council address why there has been no change in proposals despite overwhelming public objection to the proposals? The council appears to be outright ignoring objections if they plan to proceed with the Civic suite plans. In the Council’s own engagement survey for The Civic Suite, 86% opposed the principle of redevelopment. 89% opposed the current proposals. The site is listed in the Council’s spatial options document for potential development. Essex County Council Place Services has advised through the spatial options heritage assessment: ‘development on this site will cause substantial harm to a

heritage asset' and 'proposals causing this level of harm to the significance of a heritage asset should be avoided'.

Rayleigh Town Council has also stated in its response to the spatial options consultation that 'sites within the existing Rayleigh Conservation Area should not be considered' for development.

In a recent BBC article, The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors stated that due to the issue of 'Embodied Carbon' it is now promoting a 'refurbish first' policy to the government (a campaign backed by 14 Stirling prize winners) and the Royal Academy of Engineering is in agreement. The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers say "We have to avoid demolition and new-build". The Civic Suite proposals mean Rayleigh will lose car parking space and green space. Rayleigh is the only tier 1 settlement in the district and must have a civic presence. This was agreed when Rayleigh Urban Council joined with Rochford Rural to become Rochford District Council.

The Council should refurbish the Civic Suite for continued Council use. Isn't it time this Council abandons plans for the Civic Suite on behalf of Rayleigh residents by acting on advice from ECC and Rayleigh Town Council and commit to protecting the designated Conservation Area?'

5. Richard Lambourne

To the Leader

'Can the Leader please comment as to why the Planning and Legal departments haven't the resources or experience to manage such a project more proactively saving considerable external costs?'

(Background - When the Council first proposed the ADP it had a budget of £3.4 million, but of that £0.6 million was for professional fees, this is a massive 18% of the initial budget. Should a council of Rochford District's size be able to manage such projects in-house thus saving the Council Tax Payer considerable amounts of money especially in a project where all the land is owned by the Council.)'