
PUBLIC QUESTIONS – IN ORDER RECEIVED

1 MR JOHN PAYTON

To the Leader

‘The Leader of the Council has publicly stated: “The Council was visionary in recognising financial challenges facing local government. The Council needed to press ahead with cost efficiencies by maximising use of the Council’s assets and the Council has a long-standing proven history of prudent and responsible financial management and that will continue to be the continuing theme of the administration, despite current challenges.”

However this administration has overseen £1.6m and rising of costs for the Asset Delivery Programme, including £622,000 in penalties paid to the development partner GP Partnerships, for the removal of Mill Hall from the programme and over £460,000 paid to consultants. As of this date, there appears to be nothing to show for this troubling waste of public funds. Mill Hall is now facing hundreds of thousands of pounds of remedial refurbishment costs.

In a response at the 6th December 2022 Executive meeting, to Councillor Chris Stanley’s question: “Why has RDC not pressed Fusion to meet these obligations in the upkeep of Mill Hall?” the Leader responded: “I can confirm that Fusion remains responsible for repair and ongoing maintenance of the Mill and this Council will continue to ensure that Fusion carry out their responsibilities to maintain the building.”

Yet at a meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 1st February 2023, Phoebe Barnes, the Director for Assets and Investment – confirmed the backlog of maintenance issues were “waived” as part of the variation of the leisure contract with Fusion.

In March 2021 the Leader said publicly: “I think with the outsource provider Fusion, I’m not entirely sure that they’ve maintained it to perhaps the desired level... Looking back, I would accept that there hasn’t been good enough investment.”

Does the leader agree that his answer on 6th December is in contradiction to the statement by the Director for Assets and Investment and will he agree that by his own words, his administration failed to enforce the terms of the leisure contract which in turn has led to significant public losses?’

2 MS JILL WAIGHT

To the Deputy Leader

‘At the Executive Committee meeting on 19th January 2023, with regards to continuing the lease on RDC Asset The Fairview Pavilion, you stated that

“monitoring should take place to ensure that tenants carried out essential maintenance and repairs as per their contract.”

This was also noted in the meeting minutes.

Yet, RDC Officers have admitted there was a backlog of maintenance that hadn't been completed by the tenant responsible for another RDC Asset, the Mill Arts & Events Centre. This was despite regular site visits, inspections plus operational and strategic meetings with the tenant.

How can residents have confidence in the Executive's Asset monitoring abilities when they've allowed The Mill Arts & Events Centres' long term decline to the point that you personally stated it was 'dire and not fit for purpose?'

Or was this a deliberate strategy for The Mill Arts & Events Centre only, ensuring that the Asset Delivery Programme would be accepted by the residents?'