



LETTER SENT BY EMAIL

Mr Nigel Lynn
Chief Executive
Arun District Council
Arun Civic Centre
Maltravers Road
Littlehampton
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13th March 2013
PH/JH/L27

Dear Nigel

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL DRAFT LEISURE STRATEGY

Last Thursday evening, the Town Council heard that at a meeting attended by your Council Leader, Cabinet Member for Leisure and you with the Chief Executive of Inspire Leisure, it was agreed that, amongst other things, cinema and theatre were removed (from April 2013) from the list of core activities that Inspire are contracted to provide.

My Council believes that this is an amazing and very concerning revelation for a number of reasons and has asked me to write to you accordingly. Our concerns are:

- (1) At the public meeting at Littlehampton Town Council on 2nd October last year and at many subsequent meetings including the recent ADC/LTC Liaison meeting, considerable emphasis has been put upon the lack of willingness, by Inspire Leisure, to buy a digital projector. It was frequently claimed that this was not a matter for the District Council and, furthermore, that Inspire had the funds to buy such equipment. It was just that they chose not to do so.

This appears, however, to not be the case. It would have been very surprising if Inspire had decided to purchase a digital projector, given that to address Arun's funding cutbacks it had been relieved of its duty to provide such a service back in July 2012.

- (2) It is very difficult to see why the Leisure Strategy was required. It would appear that key decisions have been taken well in advance of its findings. Surely it would have been relevant for the public and other consultees to have been made aware that this decision had been taken. This would perhaps have taken the discussions in a different direction. It appears that we have been fed a red herring to distract us from the other elements of the review. Many members of the public have spent a huge amount of time campaigning to save the Windmill, cinema and theatre in the Town, hoping to sway the

decision makers. This is how democracy should work. We have to ask why they were not informed that they were too late?

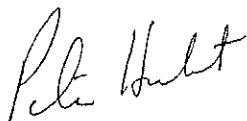
- (3) On the question of the decision back in July, why was this not made public and why did it not go through the normal decision making procedures at the District Council? We and others would have been able to pick this up and comment and lobby accordingly. Even if it is claimed that this was not a full and final decision, the impact of it was that, well in advance of the new financial year, decisions were being made that impacted significantly on services, particularly in the case of Inspire when they were agreeing their budget. Have the District Council considered whether the handling of this decision would satisfy the Ombudsman or legal challenge?

This also raises several other questions. When would this decision have been reported to Council or through the appropriate mechanisms? Is it a decision that is now open to call-in as it has only just been publicised? Are there any other major decisions that have been taken that affect the general well-being of the Town, but have not been made public?

- (4) Whilst there are many other issues that this raises, not least the validity of the Leisure Strategy exercise, we would still ask, as an example of our disquiet, why the cinema was allowed to cease functioning in mid- February when even the hidden decision says that it would cease from April 2013. This exemplifies the apparent disregard of the public, the emerging Leisure Strategy and due process that has been at the forefront of shutting down highly valued local services in an unacceptable and underhand way.

We would be very interested in your response to these points and hope that they will be considered at your Council meeting on Wednesday.

Yours sincerely



Peter Herbert
Town Clerk

cc Littlehampton Town Councillors
Cllr. Mrs Brown
Cllr. Dendle
Roger Green
David Warne
Larry Haas
Other press contacts