

Questions for Corporate Scrutiny Committee from Cllr Julie Jones-Evans

- 1) How much money in total has been spent on the floating bridge project, and how much of an overspend is there? I know that in 2018 the press reported (and I think it was in the new floating bridge business case) that by then it had grown to £6.4 million., so almost a £2 million overspend by autumn 2018.

Thank you for the questions the council is well aware of the matters raised and as a result is seeking legal recourse which has been well documented. This matter is currently subject of legal process and mediation. Once these aspects have been addressed the administration will be able to provide a full report and announce proposed next steps regarding the future of the floating bridge. Matters relating to council budget will be addressed at a future full council meeting

- 2) There have been professional engineers – local and well-known international engineers – who all have said the floating bridge wouldn't work and have continuously warned the Council not to spend any more money trying to fix the unfixable. I remember back in 2017 at several public meetings and even at Scrutiny, they warned about things which hadn't gone wrong yet but their predictions about the hydraulics and prow amongst others came true. So why did the Council make decisions without engaging completely independent professional engineers and do a real engineering audit to see if the floating bridge was salvageable?

The IWC has taken notice of this advice, hence the appointment of independent engineering companies and consultancies and the ongoing legal action.

- 3) Several times the Leader said he would not do an independent engineering audit. In his report of 2017, Dave Stewart drew attentions to the failings of the staff in the design and build process, mostly from lack of engineering and engineering project management knowledge, and the Owner's Representative, Tim Light, was also not an engineer. So why in 2017, after his report, would the Leader decide to reject independent engineering expertise and instead guess what needs fixing, which just wasted money on things that engineers know are expensive to fix or can't be fixed?

The IWC has since the implementation of FB6 appointed independent engineering companies and consultancies to review the issues being experienced and propose solutions.

- 4) Did the sidethrusters come out of a completely unbiased independent engineering audit assessing the entire floating bridge, in order for the bridge to meet all of its requirements like being frequent and available, or did just decide on your own that you want to experiment with sidethrusters and therefore asked an engineer to design sidethrusters? If there was such an audit, may I please have a copy of it? Have you done an environmental impact report on the floating bridge and also one on the sidethrusters, and may I have a copy of those two? Have you done a financial impact assessment on additional fuel for potential side

thrusters, and may I have a copy of that? How long would sidethrusters take the floating bridge out of action?

The feasibility of side thrusters is a potential engineering solution that has been proposed and costed by an independent engineering specialist. All of the work has been completed but currently these options are being considered by our legal advisers and will be made available at the appropriate stage of the legal process.

- 5) As a SME business person, I'm really worried about the frequency of crossings as customers refuse to wait long times for the floating bridge, just like parking is an issue in Newport. Can the Council guarantee that the floating bridge consistently be frequent like the old floating bridge or even better?

As previously indicated the speed of the crossing is the same as it was during the later stages of operation of FB5. The change in how the vessel is loaded and unloaded was as a result of the MCA informing the Council that it was required to implement segregated embarkation and disembarkation of foot passengers and vehicles. This has continued with FB6. FB6 is currently making 4 x return crossings an hour for 15.5 hours per day, 7 days a week.

- 6) As seen in the floating bridge project minutes 1 December 2015 and elsewhere, why were the warnings given by Nick Symes, the former floating bridge manager, AND the Cowes Harbour Commission ignored, when they predicted the exact problems with water over the chains that we are having now and heavily questioned the plan to make the floating bridge bigger?

The project update meeting held on 1 December 2015 was with the Isle of Wight Council and the naval architects however Nick Symes was not present. Whilst a number of concerns were raised they were only identified as potential issues and were subject to additional work being undertaken by the naval architects to establish the validity and any necessary mitigations.

- 7) How much more money is this floating bridge costing to operate, compared with floating bridge 5? Of course, this includes staff, parts needing to replaced more often, extra Jenny boat hiring, etc. And how much are these extra costs going to amount to over 25 years?

Thank you for the questions the council is well aware of the matters raised and as a result is seeking legal recourse which has been well documented. This matter is currently subject of legal process and mediation. Once these aspects have been addressed the administration will be able to provide a full report and announce proposed next steps regarding the future of the floating bridge. Matters relating to council budget will be addressed at a future full council meeting