

Full Council

28 April 2016

Member Question No. H

Councillor Osborne asked the Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships, Councillor Rodney Chambers OBE, the following question:

A recent Freedom of Information request has revealed that the annual ongoing operational cost for the Chatham-based 'Medway Big Screen' is up to £30,000 per year. Does the Portfolio Holder believe that this is really a valuable use of tax-payers money or does he agree with me that is it time to look invest the equivalent sum to member ward improvement funds so that we can spend on real community initiatives?

Written response from Councillor Gulvin, on behalf of Councillor Chambers OBE:

“Chatham Big Screen is externally funded from the Growing Places Fund – it isn't Medway Council money.

We successfully bid for £2.9 million of government funding that is solely to be used for regeneration projects. With this funding we have made improvements to the river walk, Sun Pier, Pier Chambers and Medway Street – and it also funds the Big Screen Chatham. In addition, the success of the works delivered with this funding has enabled the Council to drawdown a further £4m as part of the Local Growth Fund; Chatham Placemaking Project.

Big Screen Chatham is helping us push ahead with the regeneration of our city centre, and is an effective and affordable way for the council to communicate with residents about the range of services available to them.

It gives residents useful public information – on everything from how to stay well, how to get the right skills for the jobs being created by our regeneration programme, to what to do in Medway – from events, theatres, parks and more. It is seen by thousands of our residents daily (as well as visitors) – something that would cost the council much more if we produced multiple leaflets instead.

Chatham Waterfront has the potential to become a hub for entertainment, culture and leisure. It is our aim for it to become a central focus for Medway, linking the town centre to the river. In time we believe this will become a platform for town centre events – both on-and-off screen – creating a vibrant, dynamic and safe public open space for residents and visitors.

If we hadn't bid for this funding and already made massive improvements with it – with much more to come – the money would have gone to another area. This is benefitting our residents”.