

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 7th July 2015 at Pippbrook, Dorking from 7.00pm to 9.26pm

Present: Councillors Chris Townsend (Chairman), David Draper (Vice-Chairman), Stephen Cooksey, Clare Curran, Rosemary Dickson (substitute for Jatin Patel), Paula Hancock, Mary Huggins, Duncan Irvine, Malcolm Ladell and Paul Potter.

Also present: Councillors Lynne Brooks, Margaret Cooksey, Howard Jones, Sarah Seed and Michelle Watson

14. Minutes

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 2nd June 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Jatin Patel.

16. Disclosure of Interests

Councillor David Draper declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 4 – Call In: Redevelopment of Meadowbank Football Ground, Dorking, as he was the Chairman of Governors of St John's School, but was not required to leave the meeting during consideration thereof.

Councillor Duncan Irvine declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 4 – Call In: Redevelopment of Meadowbank Football Ground, Dorking, as he was the Vice-Chairman of the Westhumble Residents' Association, but was not required to leave the meeting during consideration thereof.

17. Call In: Redevelopment of Meadowbank Football Ground, Dorking

The Committee was asked to consider the call-in report relating to resolutions 3, 4 and 5 of the Redevelopment of Meadowbank Football Ground item that had been considered by the Executive at its meeting on 16th June 2015. The three Executive resolutions called in were:-

3. Offer a viable long term sub-lease for the use of Meadowbank to Dorking Football Club (DFC), enabling the Club to return to its long term home.
4. Delegate the negotiation of the detailed terms of this lease (acceptable to Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) and SCFA) to officers in consultation with the Leader and the Executive Member for Town Centres.
5. Authorise officers to work with SCFA to develop a range of agreements (and potentially further sub-leases) with other adult and junior football clubs in order to maximise utilisation of the Meadowbank facility.

It was confirmed that the call-in request had been signed by five Council Members as prescribed in the Council's Constitution on the grounds that the decision had been based on inaccurate or incomplete information and would have negative social or financial implications for the Council or the community.

Councillor David Draper commented that the resolutions taken by the Executive made no mention of offering a sub-lease to Dorking Wanderers Football Club (DWFC) and as the intention of the redevelopment of the ground was to provide a community facility, it was felt to be unfair if one of the two main adult clubs in Dorking were not given the same opportunity as the other, namely Dorking Football Club (DFC). It was also felt that as DWFC were currently the more successful club within Dorking, by not having them using the facility it would have an impact on the Council's financial income.

It was also stated that during the Executive's discussion of the item it had been suggested that the facility may not be usable by DWFC as 3G pitches were only allowed to be used by clubs up to a certain level in the football league structure and if DWFC continued its upward progression through

the leagues they would be unable to use the pitch in the league above their present one. However it had subsequently been confirmed that the Football Association had revised these rules and 3G pitches were permitted to be used in leagues three levels above DWFC's current position which meant that there was scope for the ground to be used by DWFC for the foreseeable future.

The Executive Member for Town Centres, Councillor Howard Jones, acknowledged that 3G pitches could be used higher up the football league structure than had previously been stated, but even so this would not have significantly affected the decision. DFC was prepared to enter into a 25 year sub-lease with the Council to use the new Meadowbank facility, which secured the Council a long term financial income. As DWFC were not willing to commit to a similar 25 year lease an agreement had yet to be reached. It was advised that the Leader of the Council, Councillor James Friend, had met with both clubs and it now looked likely that an agreement to use the facility on alternate Saturdays would be reached.

The Executive Member read out the following statement from the Leader of the Council concerning his discussions with the clubs, that had been publicly released through Twitter and as a press release:-

'As Leader of Mole Valley District Council, on Monday 22nd June, I met with representatives of both Dorking Football Club and Dorking Wanderers Football Club to explore opportunities to deliver the council's priorities for the future use of Meadowbank as a venue for youth football, a home for Dorking Football Club and as a potential venue for the Dorking Wanderers football club first team, in addition to Women's senior football. The two football clubs mutually identified a willingness to schedule arrangements and, in due course, agree specific details to enable the council's priorities to be delivered. Given the decision of the District Council's Executive Committee to grant the main lease to the Surrey County FA, both clubs identified that prioritising appropriately scheduled use of any new facility for the more than fifty local youth football teams would require detailed planning from Surrey County FA and would require a holistic view to be taken over the proposed facility and other space available locally. It was jointly envisaged that a solution that would significantly extend the local capacity for youth football could be reached in such a way as to deliver an appropriate return for the district council on the capital investment associated with the project.'

Although Members welcomed the fact that this statement seemed to demonstrate that progress towards reaching an agreement between the two clubs was being made, there was disappointment that this information had not been directly distributed to all Members. It was agreed that a hard copy of the statement would be sent to Members after the meeting.

Following the discussion it was proposed that the Scrutiny Committee should accept recommendation A as set out in the report, which was to resolve that the call-in matter requires no further scrutiny and can be implemented. Following a counted vote in which six Members were in favour of this option and three Members were against, this recommendation was carried.

Resolved: that the call-in matter requires no further scrutiny and can be implemented.

18. Infrastructure Needs Assessment

The Committee considered an Executive report setting out the scope and methodology for the creation of an Infrastructure Needs Assessment (INA). Members were asked for their observations or recommendations which would be reported to the Executive during its consideration of the item on 21st July 2015.

From the discussion of the report it was clear that the Committee had a number of concerns about the INA, especially what it would be used for once complete. Members were advised that as Mole Valley District Council was not responsible for much of the infrastructure work required in the district, this document would be used by the Council as an evidence based resource to influence partner organisations' infrastructure priorities by demonstrating the priorities for local communities. It would also be used to inform the prioritisation of infrastructure projects set out in the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). In response to this it was highlighted that by undertaking the consultation with local communities, it might raise expectations about what could be achieved and that this would need to be managed during the preparation of the document.

Disappointment was expressed that the INA had not been prepared in time to be fed into the CIL consultation. However it was explained that much of the information around infrastructure was already included within the CIL consultation document, to be considered elsewhere on the Scrutiny Committee agenda, and this piece of work would help to inform the priority of any infrastructure projects contained in CIL.

Another concern related to the possible duplication of work, particularly with the Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP) being completed by a number of local communities. It was advised that the INA would be compiled by consulting with local community groups and any work such as the NDPs would be used to inform the final outcome.

A final concern for the Committee related to the scope of the work required to complete the INA and whether it could be completed by February 2016, as set out in the report. It was advised that while the target was challenging, it was expected to be completed on time. The INA consultation would be with community groups such as parish councils and their equivalents.

Although it was not mentioned in the document, it was suggested that the Local Plan Work Group could feed into this piece of work. In response the Executive Member for Planning, Councillor Sarah Seed, agreed that there would be consultation with the Planning Policy Working Group as appropriate during the preparation of the final document.

Resolved: That the comments of the Scrutiny Committee be reported to the Executive during its consideration of the item.

19. Community Infrastructure Levy: Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule

The Committee received an Executive report setting out the preliminary draft charging schedule for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which will be put out to public consultation. Members were asked for their observations or recommendations which would be reported to the Executive during its consideration of the item on 21st July 2015.

The report was welcomed by Members who recognised that a huge amount of work had been required to compile the information set out in the document. It was noted that another CIL report would also be brought forward in early 2016 setting out the proposed governance for CIL and framework for prioritising infrastructure projects.

Apart from some slight concerns about the age of some of the information used to inform the report and queries about specific projects such as the provision of gym equipment in playing fields across the district, the Committee did not object to the recommendations set out in the report.

Resolved: That the content of the report be noted.

20. Year End (Month 12) 2014/2015 Budget and Performance Report

The Committee received an Executive monitoring report setting out how the Council had performed against its budget and performance targets for 2014-2015. Members were asked for their observations or recommendations which would be reported to the Executive during its consideration of the item on 21st July 2015.

There were a number of queries raised during the discussion of this item to be fed back to the Executive, including a question on the current status of the discussions to progress the Links playing field project that had resulted in an underspend of £100,000. As the report confirmed that there were 15 families accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation as of March 2015, an update on the current status was requested. It was noted with concern that the Council was currently underperforming against its target for reducing CO2 emissions with it being questioned whether the target was achievable. An update on the current status of the work being undertaken to achieve this target was also requested. Finally, clarification was requested on whether or not tree maintenance was included in the highways horticultural contract that Mole Valley District Council had recently taken over from Surrey County Council.

Resolved: That the comments of the Scrutiny Committee be reported to the Executive during its consideration of the report on 21st July 2015.

21. Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2015/2016 and Summary of Work Undertaken in 2014/2015

The Committee received a report setting out its proposed work programme for the forthcoming year, as prepared by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee. It was noted that the Car Parking and Highways Delegation Scrutiny Panels would be replaced by monitoring reports, which meant that the Committee could set up additional Panels during the year if required.

Resolved: That the content of the Work Programme be noted.