

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 10 June 2019 at 9.00am.

Members Present:

Cabinet: Councillors: K Mason Billig (Chairman), Y Bendle, K Kiddie, L Neal and A Thomas

Apologies: Councillor: J Fuller

Non-Appointed Councillors: B Bernard, D Bills, S Blundell, C Brown, R Elliott, J Halls, T Laidlaw and G Minshull

Officers in Attendance: The Managing Director (T Holden), the Director of People and Communities (J Sutterby), the Director of Place (P Courtier) the Director of Resources (D Lorimer), the Assistant Director Chief of Staff (H Ralph), the Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (E Hodds), the Leisure Operations Manager (S Goddard), the Community Leisure Manager (M Heazle) and the Senior Planning Policy Officer (S Marjoram)

Also in Attendance: Mr K Worsley (Chairman of Long Stratton Town Council) and nine other members of Long Stratton Town Council.

2718 QUEEN'S HONOURS

Members wished to congratulate Cllr J Fuller and Mrs S Dinneen (the Council's former Chief Executive), both of whom had been awarded the OBE, in the recent Queen's Honours.

The Managing Director added his congratulations to both individuals for this outstanding achievement.

2719 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on Monday 18 March, and Tuesday 23 April, were confirmed as correct records, and signed by the Chairman.

2720 CIL CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS LONG STRATTON TOWN COUNCIL PAVILION

LONG STRATTON HIGH SCHOOL POOL REFURBISHMENT PROJECT

The Chairman explained that as the decisions for the Long Stratton Pavilion and the Long Stratton High School Pool Refurbishment Project were linked, both items would be discussed, before reaching separate resolutions on each.

Members first turned to the report regarding the CIL contribution towards Long Stratton Town Council Pavilion, which sought a decision on whether the Council should provide financial support towards the project.

The Community Leisure Manager outlined the background to the report, explaining that officers had been working with the Town Council and other partners for a number of years, on a sporting “Hub” concept, with £500k of CIL secured for capital expenditure across partner sites. He explained that £150K had originally been earmarked for the pavilion project, subject to conditions.

Members were advised that in response to concerns regarding project costs, from officers at both South Norfolk Council (SNC), and the Football Association (FA), the Town Council had reduced the footprint of the building. Although this reduced the total capital cost, the average square metre cost stood at £1900, some £400 over the Value for Money (VFM) benchmark, set at £1500 per square metre. Members noted that although meeting VFM had been a condition of funding, officers had failed to include a quantifiable measure in the original funding agreement and that this figure was not communicated to the Town Council until later in the project.

The Community Leisure Manager then referred Cabinet to the options on how to proceed, outlined at paragraph 5 of the report.

Cllr A Thomas referred to the option which involved an interest free loan for the Town Council, and she asked if there could be some flexibility on the repayment of such a loan, as future CIL receipts would be required to repay the loan from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). Officers agreed that this could be negotiated, recognising that the PWLB loan should take priority, to avoid additional interest charges to the Town Council.

Referring to the closure of the Long Stratton Pool, Cllr Y Bendle stressed that circumstances had changed since the original funding agreement was proposed. She stressed that members needed to balance budgets against what was in the best interests of residents from Long Stratton and the surrounding area.

The Community Leisure Manager then outlined the salient points of his report regarding the Long Stratton High School Pool Refurbishment Project. Members noted that officers had been working with Enrich Learning Trust to look at ways in which the pool could be brought back into school and community use. The total cost of refurbishment was a maximum of £713k of which £600,000 could be made available through external funding (if £150k originally earmarked for the Pavilion funding was diverted to the pool project).

The Community Leisure Manager explained that the financial returns of this project were marginal, however, he stressed that the social returns for the local community could be significant. He advised that although the pool was to cost £713k to refurbish, a new 25m pool was currently estimated to cost £3.75 million.

In response to queries from members, he confirmed that due to the location of the pool, a second access point could be created, so as not to encroach on school grounds. He confirmed that any refurbishment would ensure the building to be DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant.

During discussion, Cllr Thomas referred to the need for local primary schools to have a local swimming pool where they could take pupils for swimming lessons, explaining that schools were unable to afford the time or costs in transport, to take children to pools further afield for lessons. She felt that there was a duty to ensure that all primary school children were given the opportunity to learn to swim, and this did indeed form part of the key stage 2 school curriculum.

Cllr Bendle explained that it had been clear from responses to the consultation on the Long Stratton Leisure Centre, that a pool was a priority for residents. She felt that in addition to school use, there was a case for a successful swim school, such as that at Diss and Wymondham, in addition to other classes such as dementia friendly sessions. She stressed that this would all come at a cost, and she drew attention to the need for the Council to contribute towards capital costs, in order for the project to go ahead.

Mr K Worsley, Chairman of Long Stratton Town Council, then addressed the meeting. He explained that the pavilion project had begun four years previously, after an extensive consultation process had indicated overwhelming support for a community pavilion. Since then, the Town Council had worked hard with officers from South Norfolk Council (SNC), the Football Association (FA), the Football Foundation, and architects, to provide a community building that would not only support Long Stratton Football Club, but also the health and wellbeing of other community groups and residents of Long Stratton and the surrounding area.

Mr Worsley outlined the issues that had arisen since the original designs for the project had been produced, and advised Cabinet that back in 2015, the cost of the project was scrutinised, to ensure VFM. There had been a series of emails between the FA, the Football Foundation, SNC and the Town Council, where assumptions were made that the average cost of the pavilion would average at £1600 - £1700 per square metre, and this was deemed acceptable by the Football Foundation, and not challenged by SNC.

In 2016, SNC had issued a funding agreement, stating its intention to provide funding of £150k, with terms and conditions stating that the project was to achieve VFM. This was not quantified in the agreement, however, the Town Council assumed this to be £1600 - £1700 per square metre, as had previously been discussed, and agreed by the Football Foundation. Mr Worsley explained that it had therefore been a shock, when a letter from SNC arrived some 18 months later, stating that in order to receive the funding, the project had to achieve a cost of £1500 per square metre, to demonstrate VFM. This was some £200 less per square metre than what the Town Council believed to have already been agreed.

Mr Worsley urged Cabinet not to go back on the Council's original agreement and to contribute the whole £150k, as was the original intention. He felt it would be unjust to withdraw a funding offer that had failed to include a quantifiable VFM measure from the beginning. He stressed that failure to fund the project as previously agreed, would result in CIL receipts having to be used to pay loans which could otherwise be used to fund infrastructure needs elsewhere in Long Stratton.

Referring to the Long Stratton Pool project, Mr Worsley agreed that there was considerable support from residents to bring the pool back into use, however, his personal view was that this was a Norfolk County Council issue, and he felt it unfortunate that the problem had been left to others resolve.

The Chairman thanked Mr Worsley for his comments, stating that this was a very difficult decision for SNC, with two very worth while projects, both of which would hugely benefit Long Stratton and the surrounding area. It was clear that the Town Council had worked hard to progress the Pavilion project, and it was regrettable that SNC had failed to communicate the £1500 per square metre condition earlier. However, she noted tht the project costs still equated to £1900 per square metre, which, even four years later, was still considered high. Referring to the pool refurbishment, she felt this to be a "now or never" scenario, and in light of the significant social returns for the residents of Long Stratton, and the surrounding community, she felt that this opportunity should not be missed. She stressed the need for compromise, if both projects were to be delivered.

Discussion followed, and Cllr Bendle expressed her support for the hybrid support package to enable the Town Council to deliver the Pavilion project, whilst also allowing the pool refurbishment to progress. She added that it was unfortunate that SNC was no longer able to contribute the £150k in full, but stressed that circumstances had changed, and that the pool closure had not been foreseen at the time of the original agreement.

Referring back to Mr Worsley's comments regarding the pool and Norfolk County Council, Cllr Thomas explained that now that the high school had become an academy, the pool was no longer the responsibility of the County Council. As one of the local members for Long Stratton, she expressed her gratitude for the considerable investment in sports and leisure facilities in the town and was mindful that other areas in the District lacked such facilities. She agreed that some lessons should be learned from the pavilion project, but now felt that looking forward, a pragmatic approach was required. She therefore indicated her support for the hybrid solution, subject to SNC negotiating terms with the Town Council regarding the repayment of the interest free loan, recognising that CIL receipts should first be used to repay the loans from the Public Works Loans Board.

The Chairman referred members to the recommendations and options for the Pavilion project, and it was unanimously

RESOLVED:

- 1) To note the issues raised in the report;
- 2)
 - a) To offer a hybrid financial support package for Long Stratton Town Council, as outlined in paragraph 5.5 of the report;
 - b) That officers work with the Town Council to agree terms regarding the repayment of the interest free loan;
 - c) To delegate the implementation of the above to the Director of People and Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health, Housing and Wellbeing.

The Reason for the Decision

To support a project that will contribute to the health and wellbeing of the local community, whilst also allowing the delivery of an additional project (the Long Stratton Pool).

Other Options Considered

As outlined in the report.

Turning to the pool refurbishment project, it was then unanimously

RESOLVED:

- 1) To agree that the project should be delivered in partnership with Enrich Learning Trust, at a maximum total cost of £713k;
- 2) That the project be funded as set out in paragraph 5.5 of the report
- 3) To delegate to the Director of People and Communities, in consultation with Portfolio Holder for Health, Housing and Wellbeing, the sign off of any contractual arrangements relating to the delivery of the project, including a robust management agreement with Enrich Learning Trust.

The Reason for the Decision

The project will deliver significant social returns to the community of Long Stratton and the surrounding area.

Other Options Considered

As outlined in the report.

Following these decisions, it was agreed that the reasons for the decisions should be carefully communicated to the public and it was agreed that South Norfolk's Communication Manager should work with Long Stratton Town Council and the Enrich Trust (once final agreements were in place), to issue a joint press statement.

2721 WYMONDHAM LEISURE CENTRE CAR PARK EXPANSION PROJECT

Members considered the report of the Leisure Operations Manager, which sought Cabinet approval to fund a carpark expansion at Wymondham Leisure Centre, utilising Section 106 monies.

The Leisure Operations Manager presented his report, explaining that in order to cater for the increasing demands on Wymondham Leisure Centre's facilities, it was proposed that the current small 3G pitch at the Centre, which required significant investment to repair, upgrade and future proof, should be converted to create additional car parking spaces. In response to a query, members were informed that the 3G pitch was currently used for a maximum of 14 hours per week, and whilst it was still safe to use, it had reached the end of its life. Members noted that a full sized 3G pitch was opened at Kett's Park in 2018, which was why the smaller pitch was not being fully utilised.

The Leisure Operations Manager outlined the reasons why additional car parking was required, referring to customer dissatisfaction, the affect on business growth and the growing number of unsafe parking practices due to the limited spaces.

The portfolio holder, Cllr Y Bendle, expressed her support for the proposals, explaining that the plans included an electrical charging point for electric vehicles, and also an increase in the number of spaces reserved for disabled parking.

Members expressed their support for the proposals, and it was

RESOLVED: To agree the utilisation of designated Wymondham Leisure Centre enhancement S106 monies to fund the additional car parking provision at Wymondham Leisure Centre.

The Reason for the Decision

To increase the Centre's appeal and cater for the increasing demands on its facilities.

Other Options Considered:

- Investigate options for purchasing additional land
- Investigate the creation of a multi-level car park
- Investigate options for sharing car park facilities with neighbouring organisations.

2722 UPDATE TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Members considered the report of the Senior Planning Officer regarding proposed amendments to the current Local Development Scheme (LDS) (October 2018).

The Senior Planning Officer presented his report, explaining that proposals included an amendment to ensure that the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) did not supersede the adopted Area Action Plans for Long Stratton and Wymondham, although it was proposed that the GNLP would be able to propose changes within those areas, for example the possibility of further land being allocated for development in these locations.

Members noted that although there was no intention for the GNLP to replace Development Management Policies, it was proposed to revise the LDS, to reflect that some consequential changes might be necessary, particularly following the allocation of new sites.

In response to a query, the Senior Planning Officer confirmed that should amendments be required to the Area Action Plans, as with all Local Plan Documents, the public would be fully consulted.

Cllr J Halls expressed concerns that the amendments proposed at paragraph 4.1 of the report were too vague, and required further detail, particularly with reference to the protection of green infrastructure and open space.

Cabinet felt that such an addition would fail to add clarity, noting that green infrastructure policies were already in place within the Area Action Plans, and that these would not be replaced by the GNLP.

It was

RESOLVED: **TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL** approves the proposed amendments to the current Local Development Scheme (October 2018)

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that the document remains up to date, is less complex and more flexible.

Other Options Considered

- To not to make the proposed amendments

2723 UPDATE TO STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVMENT

Members considered the report of the Senior Planning Policy Officer, which proposed a number of amendments to the current May 2017 Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

The Senior Planning Policy Officer presented his report, explaining that the proposed amendments reflected the advice and support that the Council could give to communities involved in the preparation or modification of Neighbourhood Plans or Neighbourhood Development Orders in the District. Amendments were also required to reflect the deletion of the Planning Policy consultation database, which was no longer appropriate, following the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations.

RESOLVED: TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL approves the proposed amendments to the current Statement of Community Involvement (May 2017)

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that the document is updated to reflect changes in legislation.

Other Options Considered

To not make the proposed amendments.

2724 CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members noted the latest version of the Cabinet Core Agenda.

(The meeting concluded at 10.35 am)

Chairman