

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

28 AUGUST 2014 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Mr MR Lay - Chairman
Mr C Ladkin – Vice-Chairman

Mr PR Batty, Mr PAS Hall, Mrs L Hodgkins, Mr MS Hulbert, Mr DW Inman, Mr JS Moore, Mr K Morrell, Mr K Nichols and Mrs J Richards (for Mr Bessant)

Also in attendance: Councillor JG Bannister, Councillor DS Cope and Councillor Mrs WA Hall

Officers in attendance: Steve Atkinson, Bill Cullen, Simon D Jones, Karen Mason, Rebecca Owen, Katherine Plummer and Judith Sturley

137 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Bessant, with the substitution of Councillor Richards authorised in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.

138 MINUTES

It was moved by Councillor Nichols, seconded by Councillor Morrell and

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meetings held on 3 and 17 July be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

139 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared at this stage.

140 ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY - ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Scrutiny Commission received a report on the Economic Regeneration Strategy which highlighted work undertaken over the previous year, ongoing initiatives and progress towards achieving the aims of the Action Plan.

Discussion ensued regarding the roll out of superfast broadband and in response to a member's question it was explained that whilst it wasn't possible to say how many properties would benefit, the contribution of £58,000 from this authority was small in comparison to the total project funding and also represented excellent value for money. It was reported that Leicestershire County Council was bidding for more funding with the intention that eventually the whole of the county would have superfast broadband. It was also reported that the county council would update its website as the roll out progressed. This would start in the next few weeks.

With regard to the work at MIRA, it was noted that officers had supported the successful bid for the new £10m training centre that North Warwickshire & Hinckley College would manage the training centre on the site, which was of benefit to this borough, and that the site in its entirety would draw employers from outside of the Midlands.

A member asked how many self-employed people were operating in the borough and what was being done to support them. In response it was stated that two events had been held for small businesses to help them to grow and that the BID also supported small businesses in partnership with the council.

In response to a question regarding farm diversification and contact with the National Farmers' Union (NFU), it was reported that annual meetings were held with the NFU and also that if the LEADER project was successful, more work would be undertaken in that area.

RESOLVED – the report be noted and welcomed and progress on economic regeneration activities within the borough be endorsed.

141 PROGRESS TOWARDS DELIVERY OF NEW LEISURE CENTRE

Members received a report which provided an update on progress towards delivery of a new Leisure Centre. Members were reminded that the main topic for debate was the outcome of site investigation work and associated budget implications, however it was acknowledged that a commitment had been given to answer outstanding questions on the facilities to be provided within the new Leisure Centre and to allow for debate thereon.

Representatives from the Project Board were present, and representatives from Hinckley Swimming Club and the Amateur Swimming Association were invited to speak at the meeting. It was acknowledged that this was a departure from the Procedure Rules, but agreed that it would be useful to hear representations directly from those making them.

With regard to the ground conditions on the site of the former Council Offices, it was reported that due to the running sand found on site, piling would be required to a depth of 20m. The cost of the additional works would total £889,678. It was explained that this would be funded partly from the contingency set aside, and the remainder from the Hub rental future management reserve, which was no longer required for that purpose.

Some members stated they had heard that, following enquiries over ten years earlier, it had been indicated that the ground conditions in Hinckley were abnormal and the outcome of the ground condition surveys should have been foreseen or perhaps surveys should have been carried out sooner. In response officers stated they had no knowledge of the meetings where this was raised and that the former Council Offices had stood on the same footprint without issue. In addition, the presence of that building on the site prevented a full site survey which had then been taken at the earliest opportunity. It was explained also that undertaking a procurement process with costs based on normal ground conditions, with the expectation of carrying out ground condition surveys at a later stage, was not unusual. It was suggested that in future consideration be given to undertaking ground condition surveys at an initial stage.

During further discussion, the following points were raised and responses provided:

- The revised opening date of the leisure centre having to be deferred slightly, but being no later than spring 2016. The current leisure centre would continue operating until the new centre opens, with existing staff transferring to the new operator
- The change of name would not affect guarantees and the guarantee would be direct from the parent company
- In response to a confusion with regard to the reduction in footprint, it was explained that the reduction had occurred during the development stage (following the initial bid), but this had resulted in an increase in internal floor

- space. The net saving from the reduction in footprint would go towards making more effective use of the additional internal floor space
- The restrictions on sponsoring competing facilities would not affect small facilities, as it was only applicable to similar facilities within a two mile radius
 - Concern was expressed that similar ground condition issues would affect sale of the current leisure centre site. It was stated that this would be factored into the consideration of options for disposal.

In considering the facilities within the new leisure centre, the representations made by Hinckley Swimming Club were discussed at length. The main requests of the club, as a basis for a compromise to be achieved, were for a moveable floor in the main pool and for raised ends to the pool. It was also suggested that retractable spectator seating would be an additional, but not essential, requirement. The swimming club felt that, whilst enhancements had been made to the facilities originally agreed and that the facilities provided would be of a similar standard to those they had currently, these additional requests would ensure sustainability for aquatic sport in Hinckley for the future. In response to the representative's claims that consultation had not been properly undertaken, it was reported that full consultation had been carried out and had been documented in the report before members.

Representatives of PFPLM explained that the pool had been developed as a competition pool with flexibility for training, schools and club galas in order to meet the needs of the community, with the additional compromise of increased spectator seating. It was also noted that Sport England had been supportive of the proposals and the process undertaken.

There appeared to be discrepancy between the level of work and associated costs contained within the report and that which was being requested by the swimming club and as such it was suggested that the council, the development partner and the swimming club meet as soon as possible to discuss the requests in more detail. It was also felt that member oversight of the process would be beneficial to all involved. Officers were supportive of the suggestion but expressed caution with regard to delaying any decisions after the scheduled meeting of Council on 2 September. They also emphasised the hard work of all involved to get to this stage and the need to progress the development.

Having reached 9.30pm, it was moved by Councillor Nichols, seconded by Councillor Richards and

RESOLVED – the meeting be permitted to continue until conclusion of all business to be transacted.

In summarising the discussion, officers and representatives of PFPLM explained the considerations given during development of the plans, the amendments already made and consultation undertaken. They agreed to arrange the requested urgent meeting with the swimming club and ASA in advance of the Council meeting on 2 September.

RESOLVED - officers be urged to convene urgent discussions with the ASA, Hinckley Swimming Club and the Developer partners, preferably in advance of the Council meeting on 2 September 2014.

RECOMMENDED -

- (i) Council endorses these discussions in seeking to secure a compromise resolution to the requests of Hinckley Swimming Club that the scheme includes
 - a) 'raised ends' to the pool;
 - b) a movable floor

within an overall cost envelop that provides value for money and protects the level of management fee income to the Council from the operator
- (ii) That there be continuing cross-party political oversight of the progress of discussion and implementation
- (iii) That, in future projects, ground condition surveys be undertaken prior to commencing the procurement process.

(The Meeting closed at 9.37 pm)

CHAIRMAN