

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8 FEBRUARY 2023

PRESENT:

Councillors M Wilcox (Chair), Norman (Vice-Chair), Eagland, Evans, Ho, Robertson, Silvester-Hall, Tranter and A Yeates.

(In accordance with Paragraph 16 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules Councillor Eadie and Councillor Spruce attended the meeting)

38 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Cross, Grange, Leytham, A Little and Ray.

The Leader, Councillor Pullen and Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks, Councillor Smith also sent their apologies.

39 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Wilcox declared a personal interest in Minute no. 42 CIL allocation 2022 as he had encouraged the bid from Staffs County Council - Burntwood Improvements Scheme.

Councillor Ho declared a personal interest as he is a member of Burntwood Leisure Centre.

40 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 January 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

41 FUTURE OF THE COMMUNICATIONS FUNCTION

Councillor Eadie, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Development introduced the Future of Communications report. It was noted that currently interim members of staff were being utilised to help carry out the current communications function and the council were looking at a way of retaining staff with the relevant skills to ensure the council communicates appropriately. It was proposed that Cabinet approve the transfer of the provision of communications functions to the Council's wholly owned trading company (Lichfield West Midlands Traded Services) for the period 2023 – 2028 to be able to shape the recruitment packages and give more flexibility, however, the function remaining an in-house function still retaining a portfolio holder.

Members made the following comments/observations:-

- Members welcomed anything to improve the communications which were vital as a lot of problems had been incurred in the last year.
- Members raised concerns that there is an element of the districts' residents who are not digital and did not want to be. It was agreed that this council must communicate to these residents as well. A print medium that reaches all of the district was needed.

The Chief Executive, Simon Fletcher, agreed to look at the Communications Plan and investigate how the council can communicate with those residents not IT literate in the future.

- Members agreed that the Recycled bin stickers were an effective way to communicate and should be looked at more.
- Members feared that the transfer to LWMTS would take the communications service further away from members who are the community links to the residents. Members would then lose control as to what was going on.
- Members asked for a further report if the proposal is accepted on the progress and processes. It was noted this could be alongside the effective communications going into the community.
- The KPI factors were discussed and it was agreed there was also significant scope to look at these again if this proposal is accepted by Cabinet.
- Members suggested that the new team meet with the Ward Members as they know their residents and how best to communicate with them.

RESOLVED: The comments and observations be noted by Cabinet when considering the report.

42 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) ALLOCATION 2022

Councillor Eadie, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Development introduced the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Allocation 2022 report which was a proposal for the allocation of this round of CIL funding (September 2022). The amount of money available, the bidding process and details of the bids from community groups and other organisations were detailed. The ranking based on criteria and the three top-scoring proposals were discussed. It was proposed that the CIL funds be allocated to the specific projects that support delivery of a new leisure centre at Stychbrook Park in Lichfield City and to Chasetown Football Club for the development of a 3/4G football turf pitch and members were asked for their views.

Members made the following comments/observations:-

- It was noted that all of the leisure activities had scored high – and The Oak Community pub in Burntwood had not. The scoring was queried.

It was confirmed that the scoring is done by Officers so no political interference; some of the criteria was deliverability/reliant on other funders/how many people will use the particular facility and evaluated accordingly. The LDC leisure bid was a whole package and it was known that The Oak Community pub had specific funding allocated in the UKSPF bid.

- It was noted that no monies to major improvements had been allocated to Burntwood even though many houses had been built and no infrastructure provided. More balance when allocating the future CIL monies was requested.
- The committee requested a copy of the criteria and scoring matrix so members could help and support future bidders. It was noted that SCC and LDC scored higher than any community groups/organisations.

The Cabinet Member said this was available on the Council's website and the Chief Executive was asked to distribute it to all members together with the scoring matrix.

- It was agreed that the top priorities for residents was "access to GP services" and should be considered. Members required more involvement in the CIL allocations going forward and suggested the resurrection of the cross-member group that worked with officers in evaluating the bids.
- It was requested that all members be notified of CIL "Expressions of Interest" within their wards.

RESOLVED: The comments and observations be noted by Cabinet when considering the report.

43 NEW LEISURE FACILITY - STYCHBROOK PARK

Councillor Eadie, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Development introduced the New Leisure Facility – Stychbrook Park report which seeks support to fund a new, purpose-built leisure centre to replace the Friary Grange Leisure Centre to encourage more people in the district to live healthy and active lives. Members were asked for views.

Members made the following comments/observations:-

- It was agreed that this new Leisure Centre is needed as it was promised to all Lichfield residents who have been waiting three years.
- It was noted the delegated authority is strong but the agreement needs to have it stated very clearly who is responsible for what as regards to maintenance and the council must put aside a sinking fund to cover any maintenance costs.
- An updated MTFs is required.
- Communication of the whole project needs to be done in a timely and correct manner.

Members asked the following questions:-

- A query was received about the longevity of the build.
The Cabinet member confirmed that it is predicted at 25 years but it was known that many centres go on a lot longer and the LGA state an average is 38 years.
- With the pool above the ground level, it was asked how does this affect the energy costs?
The Cabinet member confirmed that it is more economical as less heat is lost.
- It was asked if the council were still looking for the funding for the 4G pitch from elsewhere i.e. Football Foundation, HS2, Sport England?

The Cabinet member said yes, some of CIL allocation could be used (as per previous report) and the council would be looking to the Football Foundation.

RESOLVED: The comments and observations be noted by Cabinet when considering the report.

44 IN-SOURCING LEISURE PROVISION

Councillor Eadie, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Development introduced a report – In-sourcing Leisure Provision. He informed the committee that because of the increasing energy costs, most leisure operators were finding themselves in a challenging financial position. He said Freedom Leisure, who currently manage and operate the council's leisure portfolio at Burntwood Leisure Centre and Friary Grange Leisure Centre, had approached the council to agree a termination of the contract with them on 1 April 2023. He stated it was proposed to Cabinet to transfer this in-house to Lichfield West Midlands Traded Services (LWMTS) and asked for comments/questions.

Members made the following comments and asked questions:-

- Had the Council offered to help Freedom Leisure as it was known that other local authorities had subsidised them?
The Cabinet member confirmed - yes, the council had already given subsidy to Freedom Leisure to support but now it had come to a point to consider further subsidising or returning to an in-house service.
- As the activities had not reached pre-covid levels, does this not raise concerns?
The Cabinet member advised that if this proposal was approved, then the council must encourage residents to want to use our facilities by communicating effectively and getting the pricing right, offering flexibility also.
- Members reported that it was known there were instances of anti-social behaviour at the Burntwood Leisure Centre and the safety of users as well as affordability must be paramount.
- As the staff transferred were possibly of a younger age, members asked for confidence in the legal stance if transferred to LWMTS.
The Cabinet member said legal advice had been sought and staff will be TUPE'd with protected terms and conditions.
- Would the correct remuneration packages be offered?
The Cabinet member said, yes and LWMTS employees would be reviewed.

RESOLVED: The comments and observations be noted by Cabinet when considering the report.

45 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, which would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

IN PRIVATE

46 NEW LEISURE FACILITY - STYCHBROOK PARK - FULL REPORT

The Committee discussed the confidential financial elements of the Cabinet report.

47 IN-SOURCING LEISURE PROVISION - FULL REPORT

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(The Meeting closed at 8.35 pm)

CHAIR