

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Wednesday 13 June 2018

Present:-

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor (Cllr Hannaford) (Lord Mayor)
Councillor Rachel Lyons (Deputy Lord Mayor)
Councillors Begley, Bialyk, Branston, Denham, Edwards, Foale, Hannan, Harvey,
Mrs Henson, Holland, Lamb, Leadbetter, Mitchell, Owen, Packham, Pattison, Pierce,
Prowse, Robson, Sheldon, Sills, Sutton, Thompson, Vizard M, Vizard N, Wardle, Warwick,
Wood and Wright

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APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Foggin, D Henson, Morse, Musgrave, Newby and Pearson.

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THE BUILT SPORT AND LEISURE FACILITIES

Minute 56 (The Built Sport and Leisure Facilities) of the meeting of Executive held on 12 June 2018 were taken as read.

The Leader stated that the decision before Members was for the closure of Clifton Hill Sports Centre and for the investment in the future of the other existing sports facilities in the city. The vote would be taken in two parts, one for the closure and the second for the future investment in the Council's sports facilities.

The Leader of the Council moved and the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Communities and Sport seconded the recommendation from Executive 12 June 2018 in respect of the Built Sport and Leisure Facilities.

In accordance with Standing Order No. 8, the following questions were put by Councillor Thompson to the Leader.

Question – How has this not been considered a key decision bearing in mind the levels of financial expenditure which appear to exceed £1m?

The Leader responded that, in accordance with the Council's procedure rules, Council had to consider any requests for approval of funding which was not included in the budget - this was the case here. As such, Executive did not take a decision on this matter but made a series of recommendations to the Council. This meant that this was not a key decision, as the Council would be taking the decision not the Executive.

Question - How does the Council propose to mitigate the loss of these community facilities i.e. golf range, ski slope, rifle club etc.?

The Leader responded that should the Council, as landlord decide to terminate these lease agreements, officers would assist the tenants where it was possible to do so to find alternative premises where possible.

Councillor Thompson asked a supplementary question to explain the consequences of where the tenants would go?

The Leader clarified that officers would investigate suitable alternative premises for any displaced tenants.

Question - What are the business rates which will be avoided as a reason to demolish the building with a given budget to demolish of £150,000?

The Leader responded that they were £30,000 per annum.

Question - How will the Compensation payment be calculated?

The Leader responded that the compensation payment would be calculated in line with the contract terms.

Councillor Thompson asked a supplementary question with regards to the final compensation amount.

The Leader clarified that this would be negotiated with the contractor within the terms of the contract.

Question - Has an estimate of a capital receipt been assessed taking into account the facility is built on a former landfill site, which could affect the ease/cost of building residential development - has the Risk Register evidenced gas landfill emissions?

The Leader replied that no formal assessment of land value/capital receipt had yet taken place. Officers would only do this once the authority to do so had been delegated to them. The golf driving range was the site of an old Victorian rubbish tip and could therefore not be built on for many years.

Question - Should the usage/demand/desirability of some or all of these functions (driving range, ski slope, rifle club) be assessed for the impact on the Citizens of Exeter before agreeing Delegation to the City Surveyor?

The Leader replied that all these facilities were privately run and the Council as landlord would assist the tenants where it was possible to do so to find alternative premises.

Question - How does the City Council propose to ensure the land (if sold) will be used for residential accommodation and not student accommodation by a future owner, who is at liberty to submit a subsequent, revised planning application at a later date?

The Leader replied that there was no intention to build student accommodation on the land and a report from officers would come forward in due course with possible options.

Councillor Thompson asked a supplementary question that if Exeter City Council sell the land will a parcel of land be retained for a dominant and servient tenement arrangement to ensure a covenant could stand up in a court of law.

The Leader stated that he would circulate to all Members information regarding covenants that could be put on the sale of the land.

Question - *For what period is the £100,000 quoted in the report for receipts from the facility?*

The Leader clarified it would be for 12 months.

Question - *On what basis has the assessment been made to suggest the building designed by Sir Nicholas Grimshaw and insitu for 34 years is 10 years past its expected life span?*

The Leader stated that it was based on Professional valuations and that only two leisure centres of this design remained in the country, with this being one of them.

Question - *If this gym is making such a loss, does this throw a question mark over the project for a gym as part of the new leisure centre on the Bus Station site- is this closure to enhance the interest of the proposal for the Bus Station redevelopment?*

The Leader replied no because the new centre at St Sidwell's Point would be an integrated centre offering a range of wet and dry facilities which would attract multi-use memberships, being a first class facility.

The Local Ward Members raised the following points:-

- the proposals for the additional funding towards the development of a Community Building were welcomed;
- it was regrettable that Clifton Hill Sports Centre could not be repaired;
- it was important that the local community was consulted on any development of the site and local green spaces and wildlife protected;
- there was a need for affordable and social housing in the area;
- that local residents should be kept updated on any proposals;
- the building of St Sidwell's Point which would be a great family facility was supported;
- that the Council was under financial pressure due to the decreasing Central Government funding;
- the offer from officers to work with the local community to find alternative venues to hold groups and classes be welcomed.

In response to a Local Ward Member's question, the Leader clarified that the City Surveyor would not be able to make decisions to sell all or part of the site without further Member involvement through the appropriate democratic process. Should the Council agree the recommendation, the City Surveyor would undertake a feasibility assessment and report his findings and recommendations to Members. The whole site, excluding the allotments, would be included in the initial feasibility assessment.

Some Members spoke against the recommendation raising concerns that:-

- Clifton Hill Sports Centre maintenance had, in their opinion, been neglected over the past few years and questioned when such a decision had been taken?;
- the position regarding the Council's and contractors insurance;
- officers should look at refurbishing the centre;
- the proposal should be paused to look at alternative options;
- part of the site was on a landfill site;
- there had been no formal consultation;
- the centre was a community hub and the closure would have a negative impact on an area with high deprivation;

- if funds could be found for the new Community building why not invest in the centre?;
- the report stated that the buildings could be repaired for £750,000, in their opinion, they felt the decision was being pushed through with undue haste.

Members who supported the recommendations stated that:-

- the Council would be investing in its other sporting facilities;
- repairs had previously been undertaken on the centre's roof;
- by 2020 the Council would not receive any Government funding so difficult decisions need to be taken;
- if the centre did not close it could put the contract with the leisure provider at risk;
- any consultation needs to be meaningful;
- there would be consultation on any development of the site; the centre had already lasted 10 years longer than it was designed to;
- St Sidwell's Point would be built within two years providing an excellent sports facility for the city;
- the recommendations included providing funding towards a new Community building in Newtown as well as the enhancement of the facilities in Belmont Park;
- work was being undertaken with partners to access other sport facilities in the city.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Communities and Sport in seconding the recommendation stated that the Council had difficult decisions to take in light of cuts in Government Grants. Despite this, the Council was investing in the sports facilities in the city, with St Sidwell's Point providing additional gym stations, a soft play area and a 25 metre swimming pool for use by all. The Council and Contractor had worked with the majority of groups using the centre to help them find alternative facilities. The long term plan was to improve all other Council sports facilities in the city. The Council had been chosen as a Sport England Pilot area and was committed to improving physical activity of residents and it was important to encourage community based physical activity and would work with partners to do so.

The Leader, in summing up stated that the Council would continue to work with the local community. The Council had to make more savings in the next few years and once St Sidwell's Point was open, it together with the other proposed works to existing leisure facilities, would offer better facilities for all.

Councillor Leadbetter proposed an amendment:-

'to call upon the Council to pause to reconsider its decision to close Clifton Hill Sports Centre and ascertain the costs for the repair of Clifton Hill Sports Centre, or to build a replacement new facility'

Councillor Mrs Henson, in seconding the amendment stated that she had concerns regarding the maintenance of Council Buildings and, when St Sidwell's Point would be completed.

The amendment was put to the vote and lost.

In accordance with Standing Order 27(1) a named vote on the amendment was called for, with the voting recorded as follows:

Voting for:

Councillors Mrs Henson, Holland, Leadbetter, Mitchell, Pierce, Prowse and Thompson.

(7 Members)

Voting against:

Councillors Begley, Bialyk, Branston, Denham, Edwards, Foale, Hannan, Harvey, Lamb, the Deputy Lord Mayor, Owen, Packham, Pattison, Robson, Sheldon, Sills, Sutton, Vizard M, Vizard N, Wardle, Warwick, Wood and Wright.

(23 Members)

Abstain:

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor.

(1 Member)

Absent:

Councillors Foggin, Gottschalk, D Henson, Keen, Morse, Musgrave, Newby and Pearson

(8 Members)

The recommendations of the Executive were voted on in two parts and carried.

RESOLVED that Minute 56 of the Executive held on 12 June (as below) be received and adopted:-

- (1) Clifton Hill Sports Centre be permanently closed on cost /best value grounds;
- (2) Clifton Hill Sport Centre be sold to generate a capital receipt to offset compensation costs and provide investment for other Council priorities including the development and improvement of other leisure sites;
- (3) Delegated authority be given to the City Surveyor to include the sale of the adjacent driving range, ski slope and Exeter Small Bore Rifle Club areas of the Clifton Hill site as a single development site if this offers the best value to the Council.
- (4) Delegated authority be given to the City Surveyor to take necessary steps to ensure the land is used for residential accommodation and not used for purpose built student accommodation.
- (5) an estimated budgeted loss of revenue income and VAT £100,000 be noted;
- (6) the operator be supported with its proposal to repackage and reframe the city wide leisure offer reducing the price for a cross city offer which provides access to all facilities built at a proposed monthly membership fee of £25.00. (Currently at £35.65 per month); and
- (7) the development of Physical Activity and Built Facilities strategies be agreed setting out the longer term sustainability and development plans for Riverside

Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre, Wonford Sports Centre; Exeter Arena and ISCA Centre; Northbrook Swimming Pool and Northbrook Golf Course.

In accordance with Standing Order 27(1) a named vote on the recommendation was called for with the voting recorded as follows:

Voting for:

Councillors Begley, Bialyk, Denham, Edwards, Foale, Hannan, Harvey, Lamb, the Deputy Lord Mayor, Owen, Packham, Pattison, Robson, Sheldon, Sills, Sutton, Wardle, Warwick, Wood and Wright.

(20 Members)

Voting against:

Councillors Mrs Henson, Holland, Leadbetter, Mitchell, Pierce, Prowse and Thompson.

(7 Members)

Abstain:

Branston, the Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor, Vizard M and Vizard N.

(4 Members)

Absent:

Councillors Foggin, Gottschalk, D Henson, Keen, Morse, Musgrave, Newby and Pearson

(8 Members)

RESOLVED that;

- (8) A budget of up to £2,000,000 for essential enhancements to the fabric of the buildings and replacement of essential plant and mechanical systems at Exeter Arena, Wonford Sports Centre and Riverside Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre be approved;
- (9) A budget of £880,000 for additional enhancements to the interiors and facilities at Exeter Arena, Wonford Sports Centre and Riverside Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre to improve the customer experience and mitigate against the loss of facilities at Clifton Hill Sports Centre be approved;
- (10) A budget of up to £150,000 to demolish Clifton Hill Sports Centre to secure the site and avoid incurring Business Rates and other unbudgeted revenue costs be approved;
- (11) Delegated authority be given to the relevant Director to negotiate and agree the contractual compensation payment to be paid to the Leisure Operator as a result of the closure of Clifton Hill Sports Centre, to be funded from a Leisure earmarked reserve; and

(12) a budget of up to £150,000 be allocated to Newtown Community Association for the new Community Building being planned in Belmont Park with a further £50,000 being provided to enhance facilities in Belmont Park.

In accordance with Standing Order 27(1) a named vote on the recommendation was called for with the voting recorded as follows:

Voting for:

Councillors Begley, Bialyk, Branston, Denham, Edwards, Foale, Hannan, Harvey, Lamb, the Deputy Lord Mayor, Mitchell, Owen, Packham, Pattison, Robson, Sheldon, Sills, Sutton, Vizard M, Vizard N, Wardle, Warwick, Wood and Wright.

(24 Members)

Abstain:

Councillors Mrs Henson, the Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor, Holland, Leadbetter, Pierce, Prowse and Thompson.

(7 Members)

Absent:

Councillors Foggin, Gottschalk, D Henson, Keen, Morse, Musgrave, Newby and Pearson

(8 Members)

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TRANSFORMATIONAL BUDGET - FIRST TRANCHE OF PROPOSED PROJECTS

Minute 59 (Transformational Budget - First tranche of Proposed Projects) of the meeting of Executive held on 12 June 2018 were taken as read.

The Leader stated that the proposal was the way forward to help address the impact of the Central Government Grants cuts that the Council would need to address in the coming years.

The Leader moved, and the Portfolio Holder for Portfolio Holder for City Transformation, Energy and Transport seconded the recommendation from Executive 12 June 2018 in respect of the Transformational Budget - First tranche of Proposed Projects.

In response to a question, the Leader clarified that a notification mechanism to advice Members of potential decisions to be taken would be put in place.

In seconding the recommendation the Portfolio Holder for City Transformation, Energy and Transport stated that it was important that the Council was in a position to act quickly should investment opportunities arise.

RESOLVED that Minute 59 of the Executive held on 12 June (as below) be received and adopted:-

- (1) that the allocation of funding from the Transformation Reserve be approved;
- (2) that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive & Growth Director, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Leader of the Council, to allocate resources up to £1.5 million funded by an Earmarked Reserve, to support transformation and other projects that will support the Council in delivering £2.75 million in savings over the next two years;
- (3) that a Capital Budget of up to £10 million be approved to enable commercial opportunities to be progressed; and
- (4) that delegated authority to given to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the appropriate Director, the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Place and Commercialisation to award funds against the Commercialisation Capital budget of £10 million.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 8.10 pm)

Chair