

Note: These Minutes have been amended. Please see Minutes of 11 February 2021 for amendments.

EXECUTIVE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

THURSDAY, 14 JANUARY 2021

Councillors Present: Steve Ardagh-Walter, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Hilary Cole, Lynne Doherty, Ross Mackinnon, Richard Somner, Joanne Stewart and Howard Woollaston

Also Present: Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Paul Coe (Service Director, Adult Social Care), Susan Halliwell (Executive Director - Place), Joseph Holmes (Executive Director - Resources), Shiraz Sheikh (Legal Services Manager), Councillor Adrian Abbs, Councillor Phil Barnett, Councillor Jeff Beck, Councillor Jeff Brooks, Stephen Chard (Principal Policy Officer), Councillor Carlyne Culver, Councillor Lee Dillon, Councillor Clive Hooker, Councillor Owen Jeffery, Councillor Alan Law, Councillor Royce Longton, Councillor Alan Macro, Councillor David Marsh, Councillor Steve Masters, Councillor Erik Pattenden, Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer), Councillor Garth Simpson, Councillor Martha Vickers and Councillor Tony Vickers

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Andy Sharp (Executive Director – People)

PART I

69. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2020 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Leader.

70. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Lee Dillon declared an interest as public question (c) of Agenda Item 4 made reference to his employer (Sovereign Housing Association), but reported that, as his interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain for the item.

71. Public Questions

A full transcription of the public and Member question and answer sessions is available from the following link: [Transcription of Q&As](#).

- (a) The question submitted by Mr John Gotelee on the subject of an explanation of the measures taken in order to comply with regulation 64 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 in relation to the London Road Industrial Estate was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (b) The question submitted by Mr Alan Pearce on the subject of the reasons for not undertaking and publishing an environmental impact assessment prior to constructing the new access road from the A339 onto London Road Industrial Estate was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- (c) The question submitted by Mr Graham Storey on the subject of the details around the Joint Venture with Sovereign Housing would be provided with a written answer by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.
- (d) The question submitted by Mr Graham Storey on the subject of the setting up of a housing company to deliver social housing would be provided with a written answer by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.
- (e) The question submitted by Mr Vaughan Miller on the subject of the cuts in funding to Youth Services, youth activities and children's safeguarding services over the last

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- ten years was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education.
- (f) The question submitted by Mr Vaughan Miller on the subject of how many of the football pitches currently managed directly or indirectly by the Council were being ruined due to over playing was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.
 - (g) The question submitted by Mr Alan Pearce on the subject of a Tree Preservation Order which was put on the Swale situated on land west of Tesco and then removed was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.
 - (h) The question submitted by Mr Paul Morgan on the subject of the current members of the LRIE Steering Group and their respective roles was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
 - (i) The question submitted by Mr Paul Morgan on the subject of why the detail requested in relation to payments made to Property Consultants had to be obtained via a FoI request was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
 - (j) The question submitted by Mr Vaughan Miller on the subject of new funding for youth services from the youth investment fund would be provided with a written answer by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education.
 - (k) The question submitted by Mr John Stewart on the subject of funding for the Henwick Worthy Sports Facility project was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.
 - (l) The question submitted by Mr John Stewart on the subject of infrastructure funded by s106 in 2019/20 on a Henwick Worthy Sports facilities project was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.
 - (m) The question submitted by Mr Lee McDougall on the subject of whether Sport England and the Football Association had been given details regarding the possible replacement football ground was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.
 - (n) The question submitted by Mr Jason Braidwood on the subject of grass pitch usage was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
 - (o) The question submitted by Mr Paul Morgan on the subject of the proposed public consultation would be provided with a written answer by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.
 - (p) The question submitted by Mr Jason Braidwood on the subject of whether the objectives of the rugby club, the Council and the football community of Newbury would be aligned was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.
 - (q) The question submitted by Mr Lee McDougall on the subject of how local football teams would be able to generate income was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.
 - (r) The question submitted by Mr Alan Pearce on the subject of the timetable of events and milestones for the new facility was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.
 - (s) The question submitted by Mr Vaughan Miller on the subject of whether the replacement facility would be of equivalent or better quality would be provided with a written answer by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.
 - (t) The question submitted by Mr Gary Norman on the subject of whether the Diamond at Pigeon's Farm would be a satisfactory Plan B was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.

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- (u) The question submitted by Mr John Stewart on the subject of the Constitution of the new Culture and Leisure Programme Board would be provided with a written answer by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.

72. **Petitions**

There were no petitions presented to the Executive.

73. **Cultural Heritage Strategy 2020-30 (EX3807)**

The Executive considered the Cultural Heritage Strategy 2020-2030 (Agenda Item 6). Councillor Howard Woollaston presented the Strategy. He explained that the Strategy reflected the views of the many people who responded to the public consultation. The level of response made clear the importance of culture and heritage to the residents of West Berkshire.

Councillor Woollaston commended officers for all their hard work in bringing the Strategy together.

Together with approval of the Strategy, the report recommended that a Delivery Group be formed. The group would be chaired by Councillor Woollaston and would focus on achieving the objectives of the Strategy. Councillor Woollaston proposed approval of the Strategy.

This was seconded by Councillor Dominic Boeck. Councillor Boeck stated that adoption of the Strategy would lead to actions being taken that would support and promote opportunities for education, training and employment. It would improve access for children and young people to a range of cultural and heritage activities, and enhance the health and wellbeing of residents.

Councillor Graham Bridgman added his support of the Strategy. From an Adult Social Care perspective, it would be positive to be able to encourage West Berkshire's senior citizens, at the appropriate time, to engage in the culture and heritage of the district. This would benefit their health and wellbeing.

Councillor Bridgman asked that officers review the table on page 11 of the Strategy for accuracy, prior to its publication.

Councillor Tony Vickers felt that the Strategy was missing a reference to the countryside being a part of the district's heritage. Access to the countryside was free via the public rights of way network and more should be done to promote this. Councillor Woollaston was in full agreement with this point as were the Council's officers. Councillor Woollaston would discuss this further with Councillor Vickers outside of this meeting to ensure that appropriate wording was captured within the Delivery Plan.

Councillor David Marsh drew attention to the feedback received in the consultation. This showed that many people wanted a greater number of events to attract visitors to West Berkshire and a greater level of awareness of what was on offer. However, feedback indicated that it was not easy to find out what was taking place. Councillor Marsh felt that a visitor information centre needed to be reinstated to promote what was on offer in the district and asked if this could be considered by the Delivery Group.

Councillor Woollaston agreed that this would be looked at. He felt that greater publicity could be achieved when considering that Newbury Bus Station was adjacent to Newbury Library and the West Berkshire Museum.

Councillor Erik Pattenden welcomed the Strategy, there was an abundance of culture and heritage activities on offer in West Berkshire and there was much to be positive

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about. This was on the understanding that the necessary resource would be available to implement the Strategy.

He did however feel that the many activities available in areas including Thatcham, Hungerford and Theale should have been explicitly mentioned. Councillor Pattenden also made the point that many residents who lived in the east of the district would travel to Reading to access cultural activities and he queried if a collaborative approach would be possible to highlight what was available between neighbouring authorities.

Councillor Woollaston explained that he was willing to enter into dialogue on this point, i.e. with Reading Borough Council.

Councillor Jeff Brooks was concerned that the Strategy lacked targets by which to measure whether its objectives would be met by 2030. Councillor Woollaston did not accept that was the case. He explained that the Delivery Group would routinely monitor progress against the Strategy via the Delivery Plan which would be presented to the Executive in future.

RESOLVED that:

- The Cultural Heritage Strategy 2020-2030 be approved, subject to the minor amendment highlighted to the document.
- The Cultural Heritage Strategy Delivery Group would be formed with key stakeholders which would:
 - Develop the Delivery/Action Plan with specific actions, outcomes, measures and resources to deliver the vision and strategic themes - Executive approval of the Plan would be sought within 6 months of the Group's inception.
 - Report on progress to the Health & Wellbeing Board and the Culture & Leisure Programme Board as required.
 - Review / refresh the strategy every 2 years to reflect progress and any changes required to deliver on the vision and objectives.

Other options considered: To not develop a Cultural Heritage Strategy for the district. This would mean that the many benefits of developing and delivering a strategy in partnership with key stakeholders would not be realised, leading to possible negative outcomes (for example, lack of inward investment) and missed opportunities to improve the cultural heritage offer for all in the district.

74. Newbury Sports Ground Update (Urgent Item)

The Executive considered a report (Agenda Item 7) concerning an update on progress with the development of a sports ground in Newbury. It also sought approval from the Executive for the Head of Public Protection and Culture, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture, to enter into the detailed negotiations on the heads of terms with the Newbury Rugby Club in relation to the Newbury Sports Ground project. Provision for the financial implications of the proposed development within the 2021/22 Capital budget and the 2021/2022-24 Medium Term Financial Strategy would also be required.

Councillor Howard Woollaston in introducing the report stated that it could already be seen from the sheer quantity of public questions that there was considerable interest in this proposal.

The report purely sought approval for Officers to agree terms within parameters and was not a final sign off. This would hopefully happen in April 2021. He was sure that most of the issues had been addressed in the public questions that had already been answered earlier in the evening.

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Councillor Woollaston added that the proposal addressed the requirements the Council agreed to as part of the London Road Industrial Estate Regeneration in that it was in an ideal position, it cemented community sporting in Newbury, it would provide a facility which the community could be proud of as a town and allow Newbury's men's and ladies teams to scale the ladders of their respective leagues. The scheme was future-proofed to a Step 5 facility with relatively minimal additional expenditure required. The Council would be commencing a public consultation exercise which he hoped would endorse the proposal and he was delighted to recommend the report.

Councillor Lynne Doherty seconded the report. She was very excited about this new option as she had grown up living in Newbury. The Playing Pitch Strategy set out that the Council needed to seek a replacement for the Faraday Road site. Putting together a site analysis and identifying the preferred options at the same time as the pandemic had not been an easy task. However, public consultation had been undertaken to seek the views of members of the public and key stakeholders and the results of that consultation had been taken into consideration. The proposed site at Newbury Rugby Club was not in the Council's ownership but it was a promising option which the Council would continue to pursue whilst at the same time continuing to develop a Plan B. She was therefore happy to second the report which would be a positive step for Newbury provided that all parties were willing to collaborate.

Councillor Richard Somner was also supportive of the proposal. Reading Football Club and London Irish Rugby Team had shared a ground for a number of years and this was becoming a popular and successful option for a lot of clubs.

Councillor Lee Dillon responded that the Playing Pitch Strategy showed that there was a lack of 3G sports provision in the area and therefore this proposal should be welcomed. However, he was struggling to equate the provision of one 3G pitch with the loss of two pitches at the Faraday Road site as it was not comparable. He welcomed the consultation that had taken place but he felt that Plan B for The Diamond at Pigeon's Farm was not a suitable site and he had been surprised to see it included in the report as a failsafe. Councillor Dillon suggested that indicative costings around the proposed provision could be made available in time for the consultation. However, Councillor Lynne Doherty stated that that information was commercially sensitive at this time.

Councillor Howard Woollaston responded to the point made about one 3G pitch replacing two pitches and he said that the 3G pitch would be able to be used more extensively. The Council were looking to provide further 3G pitches over the next few years. Sports England recommended only using grass pitches four times a week.

Councillor Jeff Brooks asked for clarity around what impact would moving Newbury Football Club up to Pinchington Lane have on the Town Centre – had any assessment been done. Councillor Howard Woollaston confirmed that no assessment of that had been carried out at this stage as it was premature. The site was within a 20 minute walk of the Town Centre.

Councillor Tony Vickers stated that there were a number of red lights around this project and he felt that the Council was unlikely to achieve its objective. Football and Rugby communities did not tend to get on. He noted that there was no planning consent in place for the demolition of the football club in Faraday Road and there was no planning policy in place for the London Road Industrial Estate. He was in favour of redevelopment and felt that there was nothing wrong with retaining the football ground in the Town Centre. He asked whether Sports England or the Football Association could veto all of the proposal if they did not give their approval. Councillor Howard Woollaston responded that all the views received to date had been very positive and there was no reason for them not to support the proposal. Councillor Ross Mackinnon stated that planning permission

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for the facility would be considered on its own merits and the application for consent to demolish the Faraday Road site was on its way to planning.

Councillor Adrian Abbs stated that he, along with Councillor Vickers, was a Ward Member for Wash Common and he was also a member of the Parish Council and had not been consulted on the proposals. He had also not been consulted on the plan to use The Diamond as a fallback position. This would not be a suitable site and would not be popular with people who used this valuable community asset. He asked if the Parish Council and the local community could be involved in any future decisions.

Councillor Alan Macro noted that it was proposed to start construction in mid-late 2021 and that it would open in March 2022. This sounded like a very ambitious timescale and he queried how confident was the Council that this could be achieved. Councillor Woollaston accepted that it was stretching but that it would be achievable.

Councillor David Marsh was concerned that the Council was jumping the gun and entering into detailed negotiations prior to any consultation having taken place. What if there were members of the community or key stakeholders who were against this proposal – how much of that would be taken into account if negotiations had already commenced. Councillor Woollaston confirmed that the Council had already been in contact with local football clubs and had received positive feedback. Councillor Lynne Doherty confirmed that the consultation would be meaningful and that part of the consultation would include a plan of the proposed facility.

Councillor Erik Pattenden confirmed that he was a Ward Member for Greenham and agreed that The Diamond was not suitable as a Plan B site. It was too small, had limited access and parking and would be a loss to the local community. It should therefore not be included as a backup. He asked what additional risk would be placed on the project with no suitable Plan B in place. Councillor Woollaston replied that discussions with the Rugby Club were positive and it was not anticipated that there would be any need to have a backup in place.

Councillor Steve Masters raised a number of points. He acknowledged that the timeframe was tight and was therefore a risk which could bring reputational harm to the Council. He referred to paragraph 4.7 of the report where he noted that it was proposed to bring in external project management and he asked whether that was a reflection of a lack of confidence that this could be delivered internally. The site was located adjacent to the proposed Sandleford development site and he asked whether any traffic modelling had been undertaken to consider the impact of that. He was concerned that the site would be a 25-30 minute walk into the Town Centre whereas the Faraday Road site was within a five minute walk. Councillor Masters asked how many meetings had taken place with Sport England and the Football Association in the last few months and whether the assurances received had been verbal or in writing. He also asked if stakeholders would be part of the working group going forward.

Councillor Howard Woollaston responded that it was necessary to decouple what had happened in the past. It would be necessary to appoint a specialist Project Manager and the appointment to that post should be confirmed soon. He felt that the proposal would not create a huge increase in traffic volume. Councillor Lynne Doherty added that the proposal had yet to go through the planning process when a lot of these queries would be addressed. There would be a risk register in place for the project.

Councillor Phil Barnett had a number of concerns particularly in relation to traffic generation. He gave an example of the sports ground at Henwick Lane which generated quite a bit of additional traffic. The site at Pigeon's Farm would not be able to

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accommodate that level of increase and he would not want to see the current activities which took place on that site lost. All of these points needed to be considered.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) A public consultation be carried out in relation to the proposed provision to develop a new sports ground with facilities at Newbury Rugby Club.
- (2) The allocation of funds (as detailed in the Part 2 Report) in the 2021/22 Capital Programme be approved and recommended to the Council meeting on 2nd March 2021 (as part of the Budgetary framework).
- (3) The findings of the Consult QRD report be acknowledged and the allocation of funds (as detailed in the Part 2 Report) to the 2021/22 Revenue Budget to the Council meeting on 2nd March 2021 (as part of the Budgetary framework) be approved and recommended to operate the site for the term of the lease, once negotiated.
- (4) The draft heads of terms (as detailed in the Part 2 Report) with the Newbury Rugby Club be approved.
- (5) Delegated authority be given to the Head of Public Protection and Culture, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture, to enter into detailed negotiation on the heads of terms with the Newbury Rugby Club with final documents to be considered by the Executive.

Other options considered:

The Council commissioned feasibility studies at three locations where the Council was the land owner; Northcroft, Henwick, and The Diamond. Each were deliverable to varying degree. Northcroft was considered too risky to proceed given observations about planning issues. Henwick was deliverable but was discounted by Operations Board because it was outside the Newbury settlement and The Diamond site was seen as a satisfactory but not ideal location.

Redevelop Faraday Road – the option to retain a sports ground at this location had been discounted through the London Road Industrial Estate Project Board given the wider regeneration aspirations of the Council which had been in place for nearly 20 years.

Locate a new sports ground at 'The Diamond' at Pigeons Farm, Newbury. This site was not considered as desirable by the Project Board and had more issues to contend with based on the SSL report commissioned. The site was owned by the Council and could accommodate a step 6 facility.

75. Members' Questions

A full transcription of the public and Member question and answer sessions are available from the following link: [Transcription of Q&As](#).

- (a) The question submitted by Councillor Martha Vickers on the subject of the prevention of incidents of domestic abuse during lockdown was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.
- (b) The question submitted by Councillor David Marsh on the subject of speed limits in Newbury Town Centre was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside.
- (c) The question submitted by Councillor Phil Barnett on the subject of emptying of dog waste bins was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing.
- (d) The question submitted by Councillor Alan Macro on the subject of provision of more Continuing Healthcare Funding was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care.

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- (e) The question submitted by Councillor Alan Macro on the subject of the proportion of staff and residents in West Berkshire Care Homes who had received a Covid-19 vaccination was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care.
- (f) The question submitted by Councillor Erik Pattenden on the subject of ensuring West Berkshire nurseries, schools and colleges were safe for all pupils and staff was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education.
- (g) The question submitted by Councillor Erik Pattenden on the subject of what help, financial and otherwise, had been provided to charities and other groups supporting young people was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education.
- (h) The question submitted by Councillor Erik Pattenden on the subject of the capacity of West Berkshire primary and secondary schools to deliver remote learning in future was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education.
- (i) The question submitted by Councillor Adrian Abbs on the subject of the installation of solar panels was answered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment.

76. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the under-mentioned item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as contained in Paragraphs 1, 3, 4 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006. Rule 8.10.4 of the Constitution also refers.

77. Newbury Sports Ground Update (Urgent Item)

(Paragraph 1 – information relating to an individual)

(Paragraph 3 – information relating to financial/business affairs of particular person)

(Paragraph 4 – information relating to terms proposed in negotiations in labour relation matters)

(Paragraph 5 – information relating to legal privilege)

The Executive considered an exempt report (Agenda Item 10) concerning progress with the development of a sports ground in Newbury.

RESOLVED that the recommendations in the exempt report be agreed.

Other options considered:

The Council commissioned feasibility studies at three locations where the Council was the land owner; Northcroft, Henwick, The Diamond. Each were deliverable to varying degree. Northcroft was considered too risky to proceed given observations about planning issues. Henwick was deliverable but was discounted by Operations Board because it was outside the Newbury settlement and The Diamond site was seen as a satisfactory but not ideal location.

Redevelop Faraday Road – the option to retain a sports ground at this location had been discounted through the London Road Industrial Estate Project Board given the wider regeneration aspirations of the Council which had been in place for nearly 20 years.

Locate a new sports ground at ‘The Diamond’ at Pigeons Farm, Newbury. This site was not considered as desirable by the Project Board and had more issues to contend with based on the SSL report commissioned. The site was owned by the Council and could accommodate a step 6 facility.

(The meeting commenced at 5.00pm and closed at 7.50pm)

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CHAIRMAN

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Date of Signature

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