

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

29 September 2015

EXTRACT OF MINUTES OF CABINET HELD 9 SEPTEMBER 2015

REPORT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

Contact Officer: David Blakemore Tel No: 01962 848217,
dblakemore@winchester.gov.uk

RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Appendix to this report sets out an extract from the minutes of Cabinet held 9 September 2015 for the consideration of the Personnel Committee. Report CAB2707 submitted to Cabinet on 9 September 2015, to which the Minute Extract relates, is circulated separately with the Agenda.

RECOMMENDATION:

That additional resources be allocated to the Historic Environment team to provide additional capacity for the supervision and management of archaeological investigations and public engagement, initially by the creation of a temporary fixed term post for two years (estimated grade of Scale 5), and the situation thereafter be subject to further review.

APPENDIX**Minute Extract from Cabinet held 9 September 2015****1. SILVER HILL – NOTICE OF MOTION REGARDING ARCHAEOLOGY AND OTHER IMPLEMENTATION STAFFING ISSUES**

(Report CAB2707 refers)

The Chairman stated that because of the complexity of the Silver Hill site and other sites in the town, such as Station Approach, he considered the proposal to allocate additional resources to the Historic Environment team should be supported. In addition, he supported the proposal for an Implementation Officer, as set out in Paragraph 3.5 of the Report.

The Corporate Director emphasised that the Council had its own in-house expert archaeological advice and would also liaise with Historic England (formerly English Heritage). He advised that at the time of consultation on the 2014 scheme, English Heritage had indicated that they were satisfied with the proposed approach.

Cabinet welcomed to the meeting Tracy Matthews, Historic Environment Officer (Archaeology) who responded to a number of detailed questions from Members. She confirmed the Winchester Excavations Committee would also be kept informed.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillors Warwick, Laming, Gottlieb, Burns and Thompson addressed Cabinet and their comments are summarised below.

As proposer for the Notice of Motion, Councillor Warwick stated that she wished to avoid a repeat of the Brooks development where much of the site was not investigated for archaeology. She welcomed the proposed enhancements to the Historic Environment Team. However, she queried whether the agreed archaeological costs to be met by the developer in 2005 would be sufficient at the current time. She also believed that there was a potential conflict of interest in the Council's involvement in development of the site and providing independent archaeological advice. She sought assurance of the following points: that the schedule would allow adequate time for investigations; there would be good public access to the site; a proper and full assessment would be carried out into any major finds; and Members and the public would be kept fully informed.

The Chairman stated that the costs had been fully investigated by the Council.

Ms Matthews confirmed that some level of public viewing opportunities was envisaged, but for health and safety reasons, there would not be access to the site itself.

Councillor Laming emphasised the importance of the site both locally and nationally in terms of potential archaeological finds and expressed concern about possible damage due to the deep foundations required because of the geology of the area.

Councillor Gottlieb believed that archaeological investigations should have begun already, as anticipated under the 2003 brief. He considered that the scale of the buildings proposed would require extensive foundations and because the layout and position of new buildings was fixed, this risked significant damage to any archaeological remains within the site. He did not believe it was appropriate for the developer to have the responsibility for archaeological investigations and the Council should not just rely on Historic England.

Ms Matthews outlined the archaeological investigations that had been undertaken on the site over the last few years, which included geotechnical investigations and drilling bore holes. The resulting report had given a more detailed picture of the situation beneath ground level and further detail would be available following evaluation trenching and ongoing monitoring of water levels. The developer was also undertaking further work to better understand the hydrology of the area.

Councillor Burns welcomed the update from Ms Matthews. However, she also expressed concern that the site should have adequate protection to ensure any archaeological remains were not destroyed. She considered that an independent archaeologist was necessary to achieve this and that Professor Martin Biddle had indicated his willingness to take on this role on a pro bono basis, with suitable contribution to the Winchester Excavation Committee. She was concerned that the foundations required would result in destruction of archaeology in excess of the 2% permitted.

The Chairman reiterated that Historic England would be involved and the Winchester Excavations Committee kept informed.

Councillor Thompson shared concerns about the lack of capacity in the Historic Environment Team, particularly with the amount of development proposed, and supported the proposal for additional resources.

With regard to the third Report Recommendation, Cabinet agreed that the detail could be agreed by the Leader through the Portfolio Holder Decision Making procedure, rather than a further report to Cabinet.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RECOMMENDED:

THAT THE NOTICE OF MOTION NOT BE SUPPORTED BECAUSE IT IS BASED UPON AN INCORRECT PRESUMPTION THAT THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR MANAGING ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS THROUGH THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR SILVER HILL ARE IN SOME WAY DEFICIENT WHEN THIS IS NOT THE CASE.

RESOLVED:

1. That recognising the significant and unusual volume of development activity that may be taking place in Winchester over the next three years -:
 - (a) additional resources be allocated to the Historic Environment team to provide additional capacity for the supervision and management of archaeological investigations and public engagement, initially by the creation of a temporary fixed term post for two years (estimated grade of Scale 5), and the situation thereafter be subject to further review.
 - (b) the cost of approximately £82,000, over two years, be funded by way of a revenue budget Virement from the Flexible Resource Management savings in the year to date.
2. That the additional resources required for the implementation of the Silver Hill project be supported in principle, and the decision on how this is taken forward be taken by the Leader, via the Portfolio Holder decision making process.
