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THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 14 October 2024

Attendance:

Councillors
Brook (Chairperson)

Wallace
Achwal V
Batho

Clear
Laming
Pett

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors Reach and Bolton

Deputy Members:

Councillor Power (as deputy for Councillor Reach) and Councillor Godfrey (as deputy for Councillor Bolton)

Other members in attendance:

Councillors Cutler and Tod

[Video recording of this meeting](#)

1. **APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS**

Apologies for the meeting were noted as above.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Wallace declared a non-pecuniary interest concerning items upon the agenda that may be related to his role as a County Councillor.

3. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairperson requested an update regarding the committee's previous discussion concerning fly-tipping. Councillor Cutler responded that he had received a detailed analysis from officers which was planned to be included as an appendix to the next quarterly performance report. Councillor Cutler offered to forward this information to the committee ahead of the report's publication. The Chairperson agreed and noted that the committee could then decide if further action was needed at its next meeting.

4. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE 4 SEPTEMBER 2024**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 September 2024 be approved and adopted.

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Janet Berry and Emma Back addressed the committee regarding the agenda item: Bar End Depot, Bar End Road, Winchester - Disposal and a summary of their contributions were captured within the agenda item below.

6. **BAR END DEPOT, BAR END ROAD, WINCHESTER - DISPOSAL**

Councillor Martin Tod, Leader and Cabinet Member for Asset Management introduced the report, ref CAB3447 which set out proposals for the Bar End Depot, Bar End Road, Winchester - Disposal, ([available here](#)). The introduction included the following points.

1. The site had been listed for disposal for some time to enable its redevelopment and after a thorough and rigorous process, the Council now had a preferred bidder.
2. The report outlined the planning, policy, public engagement, marketing, and bidder selection process undertaken.
3. Moving the project to the next stage would deliver real benefits for the immediate area and the wider district. The redevelopment would end the blight of the depot site. It would bring new housing, including new affordable housing, a much-wanted convenience store, better pedestrian routes, and a new state-of-the-art care home.
4. The Highcliffe Community Plan had indicated that having a shopping facility was the highest priority out of a list of 22 factors that would most improve the area.
5. Councillor Tod was joined by Simon Hendy, Strategic Director, and Geoff Coe, Corporate Head of Asset Management, to take questions and answer any queries about the proposals.

Janet Berry on behalf of Highcliffe Community Forum for Action addressed the committee. She emphasised that she felt that the depot proposal did not fully respond to the Highcliffe Community Plan, which prioritised a community-run hub, shop, and activities for residents. She requested the publication of the full results from the depot consultations and inquired about the planned review of the Design Framework in 2023.

Emma Back addressed the committee, and provided the historic context to the depot redevelopment. She highlighted that initial plans included community facilities complementing the sport and leisure park, but these had been lost in the current development which focused on residential healthcare and a shop. She urged the committee to consider how the development would serve the wider neighbourhood and manage access and parking, particularly for the convenience store and leisure centre users.

The committee was asked to scrutinise and comment on the proposals within the attached cabinet report, ref [CAB3447](#), which was to be considered by cabinet at its meeting on the 15th October 2024.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report and after agreeing to move into private session (in accordance with the procedure set out on the agenda under item 6a) also considered the content of the exempt appendices contained under agenda item 6a. A number of questions were asked including the following:

1. A question was asked whether the proposed development aligned with the Regulation 19 allocation for the site.
2. Further clarification was sought on whether the proposal was considered mixed-use, given that it included senior living units, a care home, affordable housing apartments, and a convenience store, but lacked other facilities.
3. Clarification was requested on the safeguards in place to prevent developers from altering the agreed terms due to viability concerns, particularly in relation to room sizes and building heights.
4. A question was raised about the size of the proposed convenience store and the minimum acceptable size to major retailers and whether there was potential to make it larger to better serve the area.
5. Questions were asked about why the site had remained unused for seven years, and whether this was normal for such a development opportunity.
6. Clarification was sought on the assumption that the development would liberate family homes as older people moved into the new units, and whether there were any contractual obligations to ensure residents would be from the local district area.
7. A question was raised about the enforceability and likelihood of the long-stop date in the contract being effective in ensuring the development proceeded as planned.
8. Further clarification was sought on why the Council chose to take a capital receipt rather than renting out the land for recurring income, and whether this decision provided greater value to the Council.
9. A question was raised about why residents felt the King George V Pavilion was not meeting community needs for events.
10. Clarification was requested on whether the results of the 2022 consultations could be published, and whether they had been communicated back to residents.
11. A question was asked about how the climate emergency commitments would be implemented in the development, given that the Council could not enforce building standards beyond planning requirements, and whether the wording in the report should be adjusted to reflect this limitation.
12. Further clarification was sought regarding further consideration of community hub facilities for the Highcliffe area.
13. A question was raised about the access and parking for the convenience store, particularly how deliveries would be managed without impacting residential areas, given that access from Milland Road was limited.
14. Clarification was sought on whether GP practices had been consulted regarding the capacity to support a new care home.

15. A question was raised about whether a care home qualified as a healthcare facility, and how the proposal included essential healthcare provision as stated in the report.
16. Queries were raised about the potential impact on the hydrotherapy pool's capacity at the leisure centre, and whether the development would affect its usage or require expansion.
17. A question was asked about the unfinanced capital expenditure for the Winchester Sports and Leisure Park, and whether the capital receipt from the land disposal would benefit the wider district or be used solely for the leisure centre.
18. A question was raised about biodiversity considerations in the development, specifically whether a corridor for biodiversity linking with the South Downs Way, and if this was something that should be included.

During the exempt session a number of questions were asked regarding: access to the development, affordable housing, land contamination, biodiversity corridor, phosphate credits, and the treatment of VAT on purchase.

These points were responded to by Councillor Tod, Leader and Cabinet Member for Asset Management, Simon Hendey, Strategic Director, Geoff Coe, Corporate Head of Asset Management, Laura Taylor, Chief Executive, Councillor Cutler, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance accordingly.

The committee moved back into open session to agree the following.

RESOLVED:

The committee agreed the following comments and recommended to cabinet:

1. That the results of the 2022 consultation be made available.
2. That further consideration be given to the parking access and provision related to the convenience store and potential of impact on nearby residents.
3. To review the climate section to ensure statements made relate to what the council is able to influence.
4. To review the wording of item 6 within the purpose statement, particularly the statement that the proposal will include essential healthcare provision for residents.

7. **COUNCIL PLAN 2025-30 (PRESENTATION)**

The Chairperson advised that the scrutiny committee was given the opportunity to review this topic now and again at its November meeting. However, with only three weeks apart and noting that the item had already been presented to both policy committees, the Chair proposed to have the item tabled at this meeting only.

Councillor Martin Tod, Leader and Cabinet Member for Asset Management, introduced the report which set out proposals for the Council Plan 2025-30. The introduction included the following points:

1. The cabinet was keen to gather input from across the council for the Council Plan 2025-2030.
2. Discussions had been held with parish councils, Winchester Business Improvement District (BID), and policy committees.
3. The views of the Scrutiny Committee were now being sought and Councillor Tod welcomed questions, feedback, and insights to consider while developing the proposed Council Plan further.

Simon Howson, Senior Policy and Programme Manager, provided a further introduction which included the following points:

1. That the current Council Plan, adopted in January 2020, was in its final year, ending on 31 March 2025, providing an opportunity to review outcomes and set new priorities for the council and district.
2. The new priorities should be evidence-based, incorporating results from the recent resident survey, young people's views, parish councils, businesses, and staff engagement.
3. The new Council Plan would cover the period up to 31 March 2030 and support the council in delivering a balanced budget, aligning closely with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and budget considerations.
4. It was essential that the Council Plan was affordable and reflected in the upcoming budget to be presented in February.
5. The current Council Plan priorities and enhanced practices were set out, including tackling the climate emergency, homes for all, living well, vibrant local economy, your services your voice, cost of living, greener faster, pride in place, and listening better.
6. Engagement activities undertaken included liaison with parish councils, resident and young person surveys, presentations to policy committees, engagement with Winchester BID and the voluntary sector, and the Scrutiny Committee meeting.
7. The draft plan would be considered by Cabinet on 11 December, with a recommendation for adoption by Council in January 2025.
8. Key questions were posed to the committee about changes in service demand since 2020 and anticipated changes over the next five years, inviting feedback to inform the development of the next Council Plan.

The Scrutiny Committee was asked to consider the priorities in the current Council Plan and review and comment on the direction of the new Council Plan, including the vision, themes, and priorities.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised.

1. A question was raised about making Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) clear and understandable, using language that residents could easily comprehend.
2. Concerns were expressed about how the council could support communities with the restoration or establishment of community centres.
3. A suggestion was made to support community centres in improving heating facilities to help achieve climate emergency goals by 2030.

4. It was proposed that the council enable community facilities to learn from each other and make better use of grants through facilitating knowledge sharing and support.
5. A question was asked about allocating more space for allotments to promote self-sufficiency and support increased demand for outdoor spaces post-COVID-19.
6. Concerns were raised about the impact of COVID-19 on retail services in rural market towns, with facilities closing, and a request was made for more attention and support for rural areas, including transport issues.
7. A question was asked about providing grants to support community buses in rural areas.
8. Concerns were expressed about the progress in delivering projects and the need to consider this as an area of concern.
9. A suggestion was made to focus on reducing the need to travel rather than relying on rural bus services, by making amenities in rural areas more accessible and supporting initiatives that reduced congestion and pollution.
10. A question was asked about influencing digital connectivity in new housing developments through local planning, to support a reduced need for travel.
11. A question was raised about considering hydrogen as an alternative to electric vehicles in the council plan.
12. A question was asked about exploring additional recycling options, including learning from neighbouring councils, to enhance recycling efforts without transporting waste over long distances.
13. Concerns were raised about the usability of the Winchester City Council website, with some residents finding it challenging to navigate and access information or submit comments.
14. A concern was expressed that while there were many ideas for environmental initiatives, the council needed to progress them faster, focusing on efficient delivery.
15. Questions were raised about the council's cultural strategy, including the potential for history walking tours and the promotion of local heritage.
16. A suggestion was made that projects should focus on housing and energy efficiency, ensuring people had adequate homes and could access services and education.
17. A point was made emphasising the importance of financial planning and improving efficiency by 2030, to ensure the council could deliver its projects.
18. A concern was raised about the importance of updating cyber security to protect council services.
19. It was acknowledged that upgrading council homes to improve energy efficiency was a major project that needed to be addressed over the next few years.
20. It was suggested that the resident survey should be fully taken into account with regard to the council plan.

These points were responded to by Councillor Tod, Leader and Cabinet Member for Asset Management, Simon Howson, Senior Policy and Programme Manager, and Councillor Cutler, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance accordingly.

RESOLVED:

The committee agreed to ask the Cabinet Member to consider the points raised during the discussion on the item.

8. **TO NOTE THE LATEST FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

RESOLVED

That the latest Forward Plan of Key Decisions be noted.

9. **TO NOTE THE LATEST COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME.**

RESOLVED:

That the latest version of the work programme (which can be found here

<https://democracy.winchester.gov.uk/mgPlansHome.aspx?bcr=1>) be noted.

The meeting commenced at 18:30 and concluded at 21:35

Chairperson

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