

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

NORTHFIELD DISTRICT COMMITTEE – 25 MARCH 2015
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MINUTES OF THE NORTHFIELD DISTRICT COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 MARCH 2015 AT 1400 HOURS IN COMMITTEE ROOM 6, COUNCIL HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM

PRESENT: Councillor Brett O'Reilly in the Chair

Councillors Randal Brew, Ian Cruise, Peter Douglas Osborn, Peter Griffiths, Simon Jevon, Valerie Seabright

Councillor Samuel Goodwin, Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Richard Davies, Head of Northfield District
Tardip Sidhu, Legal Services
Parmjeet Jassal, Head of City Finance
Paul Walls, Senior Service Manager, Sport & Leisure
Kay Thomas, Committee Services

NOTICE OF RECORDINGS

- 186 The Chairman advised that the meeting would be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast via the Councils Internet site (www.birminghamnewsroom.com) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs. The whole of the meeting would be filmed except where there were confidential or exempt items.
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APOLOGIES

- 187 Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Phillips, Cartwright, Corns, Freeman and Richard Burden M.P.
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MINUTES

- 188 The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2015 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

The notes of the informal meeting held on 20 February 2015 were also circulated to Members.

The following matters arising were raised;

1. With reference to page no 171 and Kings Norton Library, Councillor Seabright said that she had seen no visible progress on the Library repairs and requested

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sight of the estimates/costings received from Acivico. Richard Davies said that the roof repair costs had been received and the capital investment opportunities were being reviewed and undertook to speak to Members after the meeting. Councillor Seabright expressed her dissatisfaction with the situation stating that for the past 18 months the works had been promised and the estimates should have been submitted some 24 months ago. The conditions inside the library were deteriorating but should have been put right by now and the Ward Councillors were understandably very disappointed and angry. Councillor Brew undertook as a Director of Acivico to correspond with the Kings Norton Councillors and obtain a timeline of events. The Chair agreed with the comments made and undertook to pursue the situation.

2. With reference to the fourth paragraph on page 179 Councillor Peter Douglas Osborne said that he had 'required' the Planning Department to inform councillors on the level of S106 rather than 'requested' as indicated.
3. Councillor Seabright referred to page 182 and said that a Ward breakdown of where the job starts would be had been requested but not received. The Chair undertook to chase the information and obtain the breakdown.

NORTHFIELD REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2014-2015 – MONTH 10
(APRIL TO JANUARY 2015)

169 The report of the Service Directors (District Services & Housing Transformation) and the Director of Finance was submitted:-

(See document No. 1)

Parmjeet Jassal outlined the details of the report and with reference to appendix 2 said that any committed Community Chest funds could be carried forward to the next financial year. It had been agreed centrally that any over drawn balances would be written off.

The Chair advised that the libraries and NAIS were overspent and that District proposals had been put forward to balance the budget but the review of those two services had been taken over by the centre and any savings would be superseded.

Councillor Brew said he was pleased to see that the overdrawn balances had reduced. With regard to appendix 2, the phasing of the community chest spend was confusing as, for example for Northfield the Northfield Carnival expenditure for 2008 was still showing. The Kings Norton Christmas Sparkle was overspent but Councillor Brew said it was his understanding that there should not be any overspend on Community Chest expenditure. Councillor Brew also queried the details in appendix 4 and said that he believed that the Northfield wide capital environmental budget had been spent. Councillor Griffiths, in respect of the Christmas Sparkle said that given the information he had received he was sure that there had been no overspend and asked for an overview to the next meeting.

The Chair referred to the informal meeting held in February when Councillors had been asked to send suggestions in relation to environmental capital spend. Few suggestions had been received and therefore the proposals put forward by officers had been progressed and he understood that most of the money had been committed and there should not therefore be a significant underspend.

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Parmjeet Jassal undertook to investigate the specific queries regarding the Community Chest spend and provide members with the information.

Councillor Seabright referred to appendix 4 and expressed considerable concern regarding the delays to a number of projects which could result in increased costs leading to incomplete projects. The management of projects needed to be carefully considered. Councillor Seabright sought clarification of the Kings Norton projects.

Councillor Cruise while welcoming the information provided said that it would be useful to have a breakdown of capital projects detail. He also queried whether any underspend could be carried forward.

Councillor Cruise expressed concern regarding the District overspend in view of the work that had commenced on mapping advice services to ascertain how the district could provide a service. There was a constant discussion regarding devolution and the input districts had into shaping services and had the District been allowed to continue it could have devised some innovative working.

With reference to Frankley Library Councillor Cruise said that Acivico had quoted 3/4 days work for some repairs to the building but this was unnecessarily long for the work that needed to be done. He therefore queried why there was no provision for Districts to be able to obtain 3 quotes thereby eliminating delays by Acivico and achieving greater cost effectiveness. The Chair as the EMLS was requested to put this suggestion to the Leader/Deputy Leader. Councillor Brew said that Acivico were making improvements but undertook to make enquiries and liaise with Councillor Cruise.

The Chair said that he shared the frustration felt regarding Acivico and would take the points made to the Executive. With regard to the comments about the mapping exercise, the Kerslake report had recommended the way forward for District Committees which had left little room for innovation.

RESOLVED:-

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- a) That the latest revenue budget position at the end of January (Month 10) and year end projected overspend of £0.459m as detailed in appendix 1 be noted.
 - b) That the latest Community Chest allocations and the current financial position, as detailed in appendix 2 be noted
 - c) That the position with regard to the Savings Programme for 2014/15, as detailed in appendix 2 be noted
 - d) That the position with regard to the capital projects for 2014/15 as detailed in appendix 4 be noted.

UPDATE ON NORTHFIELD POOL AND LEISURE CENTRE

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- Paul Walls, Senior Service Manager, Sport & Leisure provided an update on the current position with regard to the Northfield Pool and Leisure Centre. He advised of the history of the sport and leisure transformation and that a feasibility study had been undertaken on the future of the pool as one of the 4 leisure centres approved for new facilities.

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Three options for the new facility had been considered – to rebuild on the existing site, to relocate to Prices Square or to relocate to a site in Longbridge. It had been agreed to rebuild on the existing site and on 16 March Cabinet had awarded the tender to Serco to rebuild the facilities with an expected opening date of 2017. Employees from the Northfield Centre would be re-located temporarily to alternative sites during the building work and all schools had been offered alternative facilities. Tiverton Road Swimming Pool would remain open until the new Centre was open.

The Chair said he had been pleased that so many people had taken part in the consultation regarding the options. With regard to the use of Tiverton Road swimming baths by schools the Chair expressed concern regarding any associated cost and therefore queried whether there was any opportunity to subsidise school coaches to ensure that children did not miss out on their swimming lessons. It was also queried whether the use of empty office space at Prices Square could be utilised for leisure use.

Councillor Brew said that he was aware that schools were concerned regarding the additional cost of travelling to Tiverton Road and hoped that some arrangement could be explored. He welcomed the use of the existing site for the new facility but stressed the strong local opinion that the façade of the existing building be retained in any new construction. Councillor Brew asked that this message be conveyed to the developers and built in as a condition to the planning approval.

Councillor Brew said that a strong contender had been to rebuild on Prices Square and this had highlighted the possibilities available to regenerate Northfield high street and he hoped that the work already undertaken would not be wasted and could be used to begin work to regenerate the Town Centre.

The Chair said that he had met with Steve Hollingworth and had made him aware of the strength of feeling regarding the retention of the façade of the existing leisure centre building and that possibility was being explored. Councillor Cruise while supporting the local view said that caution should be exercised with regard cost implications.

Councillor Cruise commented on the benefits that a combination of leisure and retail facilities in a new development on Prices Square could have brought to Northfield Town Centre and while supporting the possible use of office space in Prices Square was concerned regarding cost implications given the condition of the building. He queried whether any private gyms had been approached with a view to Be Active users being able to use their facilities.

Paul Walls acknowledged the comments made regarding school swimming and undertook to investigate cost implications. He added that the options for Prices Square were under consideration and the retention of the façade of the existing building would be explored as part of the plans.

Councillor Goodwin asked if the implications of the increased use of Tiverton Road Pool, in terms of parking etc had been considered for local residents.

Councillor Seabright asked for a breakdown of costs for the new leisure centre, in particular the demolition cost and whether the cost of refurbishing the Prices Square offices had been included. Concern was also expressed regarding the impact of the new building on the road junction as it was already considerably

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congested. It was hoped that cost and traffic implications would not influence the size of the new Centre.

Councillor Peter Douglas Osborn pointed out that Northfield Pool and Leisure Centre was a locally listed building and formed part of the character of Northfield Town Centre. In response to concerns raised regarding transport to Tiverton Road Pool he said that Shencare Community Transport could probably be able to assist. Councillor Douglas Osborn declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the Board of Shencare.

Paul Walls said that the increase in the use of Tiverton Road Pool was part of a larger project including the University development and all aspects would be considered and ways of mitigating the impact on residents explored. The use of Shencare could be investigated. The use of Prices Square was one of a number of options being considered and would be discussed with Serco, together with costings. The junction issue would be taken account as part of the planning process. With regard to demolition and other costs Paul Walls undertook to provide Members with the information.

Councillor Seabright was very concerned that the costs were not available to the Committee especially as the demolition would form a large part of the total and expressed concerns about the process.

DRAFT DISTRICT POLICY STATEMENT

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The draft District Policy Statement was circulated and Richard Davies highlighted the main points. The future role of District Committees was changing and moving toward a greater scrutiny role with no direct service management therefore the Policy Statement needed to reflect the District's priorities. Thanks were extended to Councillors Cruise and Douglas Osborn for their comments and any further comments would be welcomed.

Councillor Cruise said that the District Committee still would have an element of control and influence on the development of the District in the future but felt that the District Strategic Partnership which used to bring an element of partnership working should be re-established. The Council also made use of the People's Panel for consultation and therefore the District should establish a District People's Panel for residents other than those who already were part of a residents group, community group or political party to give an impartial view on decisions made by the Council.

Councillor Cruise had to leave the meeting at 4.05pm

Councillor Seabright expressed caution regarding the wider elements of a District Plan and stressed the need for some realism about what could be influenced and achieved. She added that any reference to education had been omitted. While there was reference to training there was not sufficient emphasis on education, including children and the need to monitor, for example, primary schools as there was still a collective responsibility in terms of safeguarding. Reference also needed to be made to looked after children and the role of corporate parent strengthened.

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Councillor Griffiths welcomed the opportunity to develop a framework and the re-establishment of the CSP would be a useful partnership to bring groups together. He queried however the link between scrutinising and empowering groups and whether there was scope to look at parish councils/urban villages etc as there might be groups within the community that might want such a role.

Councillor Douglas Osborn said that the Districts heritage should be included within the Policy Statement. He also referred to the reference to 'increasing smoking cessation' and felt this would be better as 'stop smoking'.

Councillor Brew referred to comments made regarding a Peoples Panel and said that an informal panel could be constituted from the list held centrally. The CSP had suffered from a lack of attendance but Councillor Brew queried whether some of the work undertaken by the CPS could be picked up by the District Committee and more co-opted members appointed to the Committee. There needed to be more involvement by young people and this needed to be reflected in the statement.

Richard Davies undertook to incorporate the comments made into the Policy Statement. He added that previously there had been a Northfield Youth Council which could be re-established as a way of involving more young people.

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

- 192 The details of the City Councils review of its community governance arrangements for local democracy and the ways in which views and comments could be submitted were noted.

Councillor Brew said that there had been some discussion on this matter at the Northfield Ward Committee and residents had been confused regarding the venues for the area briefings and the information provided about the review and had requested clearer and more informative information when consulting and requesting comments.

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

a) Pocklington Place

- 193 Councillor Douglas Osborn advised that the future of Pocklington Place had been secured.

b) Votes of Thanks

- 194 Councillor Seabright said that this was Councillor Corns last District Committee as he was not standing for re-election at the forthcoming local elections. She thanked Councillor Corns for all of his hard work with particular reference to his dedication to education and vulnerable children. She wished him well for the future.

The Chair concurred with the comments made adding that his work for children and looked after children should be especially acknowledged and he thanked him for

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his assistance personally as a new Councillor and for his service on this Committee.

Councillor Brew paid tribute to Councillor Corns as a colleague and for all of the work he had done in Northfield. His passion for children and children's services would be a sad loss.

The Chair thanked Members of the Committee for their service, contribution and conduct on the Committee and Councillor Brew thanked the Chair for the way he had chaired the meetings over the past year enabling all councillors the opportunity to be heard.

AUTHORITY TO ACT BETWEEN MEETINGS

RESOLVED:-

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That the Chairman is hereby authorised to act until the next meeting of the Committee except that, in respect of the exercise of the Council's non-Executive functions, the appropriate Chief Officers are hereby authorised to act in consultation with the Chairman and that the Director of Legal and Democratic Services is authorised to affix the Corporate Seal to any document necessary to give effect to a decision of the said officers acting in pursuance of the power hereby delegated to them; further that a report of all action taken under this authority be submitted to the next meeting and that such report shall explain why this authority was used.

The meeting ended at 1625 hours.

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Chairman