

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 4 APRIL 2016

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE RESOURCES
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY
4 APRIL 2016 AT 1300 HOURS, IN COMMITTEE ROOM 6,
COUNCIL HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM**

PRESENT:-

Councillor Zaffar in the Chair;

Councillors Brew, Finnegan, Hunt, C Khan, Kooner, Lal, Sambrook and Wood.

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor T Ali – Cabinet Member for Development, Transport and the
Economy

Councillor Kennedy

Councillor I Ward – Deputy Leader

Mr B Kundi – Head of Programme Management, Joint Economic Unit

Mr A Mir – Head of Service, Joint Economic Unit

Ms J Power – Scrutiny Officer

Miss V Williams – Committee Manager

Ms E Williamson – Head of Scrutiny Services

NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

83

The Chairman advised, and the Committee noted, that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.birminghamnewsroom.com) and members of the press/public could record and take photographs. The whole of the meeting would be filmed except where there were confidential or exempt items.

APOLOGIES

84

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bridle and Chatfield.

REQUEST FOR CALL-IN: DISPOSAL OF SURPLUS PROPERTIES

The Committee considered the 'request for call-in' made in respect of a decision by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Development, Transportation and the Economy jointly with the Strategic Director – Major Programmes and Projects on 16 March 2016 regarding the disposal of surplus properties.

The following documents were submitted:-

- (A) The public Executive decision record.
- (B) The relevant form for the 'request for call-in' lodged by Councillors Randal Brew and Gary Sambrook.
- (C) The public report considered by the Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member and Chief Officer in reaching their decision.
- (D) The criteria for 'call-in' against which the Council expects an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to judge any 'request for call-in'.

(See document No 1)

Councillor I Ward, Deputy Leader of the Council, and Councillor T Ali, Cabinet Member for Development, Transportation and the Economy, attended the meeting accompanied by the following officers:-

Mr B Kundi – Head of Programme Management, Joint Economic Unit
Mr A Mir – Head of Service, Joint Economic Unit

The Chairman made introductory comments and invited Councillors Brew and Sambrook to outline the reasons for the 'request for call-in'.

Upon being invited to comment, Councillors Brew and Sambrook outlined the grounds for the request for call-in referring to the criteria submitted:-

- 6 the decision has already generated particular controversy amongst those likely to be affected by it or, in the opinion of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it is likely so to do;
- 11 the decision appears to give rise to significant issues in relation to a particular District.

Councillors Brew and Sambrook explained the reasons for the request for call in and the following were amongst the points made:-

- 1. The Committee was advised that the request for call-in referred solely to the former Square Club Youth Centre, Weoley Castle Square, Weoley Castle.
- 2. The youth club had been in existence for nearly 80 years and was the first purpose built centre in South Birmingham.

Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee -
4 April 2016

3. Maintenance funding had been cut back.
4. A modern youth centre, known as The Factory, had been built in Longbridge but was considered to be too far away from Weoley Castle as youngsters tended to be 'territorial' and were reluctant to travel to the new facilities.
5. Youngsters had found it difficult to transfer to the new youth centre because many parents in Weoley Castle did not own a car.
6. It was considered unfair and discriminatory to withdraw youth services from Weoley Castle.
7. Councillor Brew read out a statement on behalf of Councillor Freeman who had lived in the area for many years and was very disappointed that the Square Club Youth Centre had closed. The centre had been used by many people for various activities including bingo, public meetings and the youth club.
8. It was understood that a local church was interested in purchasing the building with a view to retaining the youth and other activities at the centre. It was suggested that discussions take place between the church, Deputy Leader and appropriate officers to try to find a way forward.
9. In any event, it was suggested that a covenant should be placed on the sale of the property to ensure that it was retained for youth activities.
10. There were youth workers available who would be able to run the centre if it re-opened.
11. It was suggested that monies originally identified to fund the rebuilding of West Heath Library could be reallocated towards the renovation of the Square Club Youth Centre.
12. There was concern that, prior to the decision being taken to declare the property surplus, it appeared no meaningful consultation had taken place.
13. There were no other purpose built youth facilities available within the Weoley Ward.

Upon being invited to respond to the issues raised and comments made, Councillor I Ward, Deputy Leader, made the following points:-

1. A brief explanation of the procedure for disposing of surplus properties and the various options available was given. Paragraph 3 of the report now submitted detailed the consultation that had taken place.
2. The decision to dispose of surplus properties was consistent with the Council's policies, plans and strategies referred to in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

3. The City Council had not imposed any restriction on the possible future use of the site as a condition of its disposal.
4. Councillor I Ward confirmed that he was willing to meet with representatives of the church, who had expressed an interest in the former Square Club Youth Centre, Weoley Castle Square, Weoley Castle, together with local Councillors and appropriate officers, to discuss whether or not, rather than proceeding with the disposal of the property via public auction, there was an alternative solution.

He agreed to withdraw the property from sale whilst discussions took place and, on that basis, Councillors Brew and Sambrook agreed to withdraw the request for call in.

85

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the decision taken by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Development, Transport and the Economy jointly with the Strategic Director – Major Programmes and Projects on 16 March 2016 in respect of the disposal of surplus properties specifically in relation to the Former Square Club Youth Centre, Weoley Castle Square, Weoley Castle be deferred pending further discussions taking place between relevant parties;
- (ii) that the Former Square Club Youth Centre, Weoley Castle Square, Weoley Castle, be withdrawn from sale whilst discussions take place and, on that basis, it be noted that Councillors Brew and Sambrook have agreed to withdraw the request for call in;
- (iii) that it be noted that the disposal of all other surplus properties referred to in appendix 1 of the report now submitted are not affected by this resolution.

**REQUEST FOR CALL-IN: SALE OF SITE AT JUNCTION OF
STRATFORD ROAD AND HIGHGATE ROAD, SPARKBROOK,
BIRMINGHAM, B12 8JU**

86

The Committee noted that a 'request for call-in,' made in respect of a decision by the Deputy Leader and the Cabinet Member for Development, Transportation and the Economy jointly with the Director of Property on 11 March 2016 regarding the site at the junction of Stratford Road and Highgate Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, B12 8JU, had been lodged.

The following documents were submitted:-

- (A) The public Executive decision record.
- (B) The relevant form for the 'request for call-in' lodged by Councillors Tony Kennedy and Claire Spencer.

Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee -
4 April 2016

- (C) The public report considered by the Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member and Chief Officer in reaching their decision.
- (D) The criteria for 'call-in' against which the Council expects an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to judge any 'request for call-in'.

(See document No 2)

Councillor I Ward, Deputy Leader of the Council, and Councillor T Ali, Cabinet Member for Development, Transportation and the Economy, attended the meeting accompanied by the following officers:-

Mr B Kundi – Head of Programme Management, Joint Economic Unit
Mr A Mir – Head of Service, Joint Economic Unit

The Chairman made introductory comments and invited Councillor Kennedy to outline the reasons for the 'request for call-in'.

Upon being invited to comment, Councillor Kennedy outlined the grounds for the request for call-in referring to the criteria submitted:-

- 4 the Executive appears to have failed to consult relevant stakeholders or other interested persons before arriving at its decision;
- 5 the Executive appears to have overlooked some relevant consideration in arriving at its decision;
- 7 the decision appears to be particularly 'novel' and therefore likely to set an important precedent;
- 11 the decision appears to give rise to significant issues in relation to a particular District.

Councillor Kennedy explained the reasons for the request for call-in and the following were amongst the points made:-

- 1. The land should be retained in case it needed to be incorporated into junction and highway improvements in the future.
- 2. He had been re-assured by highway engineers that there would be a need to look at the junction in the future with a view to carrying out highway improvements.
- 3. He was concerned that some highway improvement lines might have been lifted thus preventing any works being carried out to relieve traffic congestion as might be necessary in the future.
- 4. The junction was a gateway to Sparkbrook.
- 5. There had been a lack of consultation and communication with local Councillors regarding the proposed sale of the site. He was not aware of having been consulted on the proposal.

Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee -
4 April 2016

Upon being invited to respond to the issues raised and comments made, Councillor T Ali, Cabinet Member for Development, Transport and the Economy, and Councillor I Ward, Deputy Leader, made the following points:-

1. The original decision to dispose of the site was taken on 2 April 2014 and all relevant Ward Members at that time were consulted.
2. In order to move forward with the disposal it was not possible to re-consult, for example, if there was a change to the elected Members. However, there had been no changes to elected Members in Sparkbrook, the Ward in which the junction was located, since the decision was taken on 2 April 2014.
3. Highway improvement works had been carried out recently at the junction.
4. There were no immediate proposals to carry out further improvements.
5. The sale of the site would not have an adverse impact on any future strategic highway improvement works to the junction.
6. Councillor T Ali suggested that he speak with Councillor Kennedy after the meeting on future highway improvements/issues, particularly within Sparkbrook Ward. Councillor Kennedy agreed to that suggestion.
7. On the basis that discussions take place with the Cabinet Member for Development, Transport and the Economy regarding future highway and traffic aspects within South Birmingham, particularly Sparkbrook Ward, Councillor Kennedy agreed to withdraw the request for call in.

87

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That, in view of Councillor Kennedy's agreement to withdraw the request for call in on the basis that discussions take place as more particularly referred to in the pre-amble, the decision taken by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Development, Transport and the Economy jointly with the Director of Property on 11 March 2016 in respect of the sale of the site at the junction of Stratford Road and Highgate Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, B12 8JU, be not called in;
 - (ii) that discussions take place between the Cabinet Member for Development, Transport and the Economy and Councillor Kennedy regarding future highway and traffic aspects within South Birmingham, particularly in Sparkbrook Ward.
-

Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee -
4 April 2016

**REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS
RECEIVED (IF ANY)**

- 88 The Chairman advised that there had been no other requests for call in/
councillor call for action/petitions received.
-

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

- 89 No other urgent business was raised.
-

AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

- 90 **RESOLVED:-**

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant
Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

- 91 **RESOLVED:-**

That, in view of the fact that the reason for the request for call in had no bearing
on the contents of the private report, it was not necessary to go into private or
exclude the public from the meeting. All discussions took place in public.

However, for clarity and future reference, the following report is interleaved as a
private document.

Agenda Item etc

**Paragraph of Exempt
Information Under Revised
Schedule 12A of the Local
Government Act 1972**

Request for Call In: Sale of Site at
Junction of Stratford Road and
Highgate Road, Sparkbrook, B12 8JU

3

The meeting ended at 1413 hours.

.....
CHAIRMAN