

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY WELLBEING
- 11 NOVEMBER 2020

(To be read in conjunction with the Agenda for the Meeting)

Present

Cllr Kevin Deanus (Chairman)
Cllr Kika Mirylees (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Sally Dickson

Cllr Jenny Else
Cllr Mary Forszyszewski
Cllr John Robini

Apologies

Cllr Val Henry and Cllr George Wilson

Also Present

Councillor Chris Howard, Councillor Jerry Hyman, Councillor Paul Follows and Councillor Liz Townsend

30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTES (Agenda item 1.)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs George Wilson and Val Henry.

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Agenda item 2.)

There were no declarations of interests in connection with items on the agenda.

32. LEISURE CENTRE INVESTMENT, FARNHAM - CALL-IN (Agenda item 3.)

The Chairman, Cllr Kevin Deanus, outlined the reasons for the call in. The date of the Community Wellbeing O&S had been such that the decision around the Leisure Centre Investment had been unable to be scrutinised before going to Executive. It had therefore been the only option to call-in the decision.

The members who had called the item in were not calling it in due to the decision made but felt that the process carried out had not been sufficient and that the documents presented had been insufficient for the executive to allow the decision to be made effectively.

He emphasised that although it had been some time since the call-in had been made there was no criticism of officers as the current pandemic and resources available had slowed the procedure down.

Cllr Liz Townsend, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Leisure and Dunsfold Park gave a brief introduction explaining that she had not been in post when the initial decision had been made but was fully informed of the process followed. She emphasised that the relationship between Places for People (PfP) and Waverley was a successful and profitable one and that Waverley relied upon PfP's vast knowledge of the industry when looking at leisure within the borough.

Kelvin Mills, Head of Commercial Service, gave a short presentation of the key points presented to the Executive prior to their decision and also updated the committee on the current position regarding the investment.

The committee were advised that in July 2018 the Council approved £3.22m to improve Farnham and Godalming Leisure centres. The improvements proposed were based upon indoor leisure facilities.

Initially a climbing wall was proposed for Farnham, but following consultation with the preferred company 'Click & Climb' it had been suggested this would not be feasible as the number of climbing walls in neighbouring areas would mean the offer was diluted and would not be as profitable as hoped. This meant PfP would not be in a position to offer the increased management fees hoped for. Kelvin Mills emphasised that despite this the revised facility mix would still deliver the enhanced facilities needed.

In March 2020 the Executive approved the proposals put forward which included closure of the crèche and a revised facilities mix including a soft play area. Increased energy efficiency and carbon reduction were included in the proposal.

On 8 September 2020 the Executive were informed that due to the current financial climate the planned investment would no longer be going ahead at this time but we remained committed to leisure investment post Covid.

The committee were surprised that the climbing wall had been removed and were concerned that the contractor had dictated whether we install a wall. Kelvin explained that as they were PfP's preferred provider and did not want to go ahead we would not get the increased management fee so it would not be financially viable for us.

The committee felt other providers should have been approached. Kelvin explained that the Clip & Climb offer was more than just a wall. They offered to create a fun unique offer which would provide lessons to progress users to proficient climbers.

Concern was also raised regarding the closure of the crèche. Kelvin explained that usage was low and the equality impact assessment had shown it would not affect many people. The committee disagreed and felt a consultation should have been carried out with users.

The Chairman pointed out that the Executive report had not included any kind of business case outlining risks, financial appraisal, alternative options or a business plan. Kelvin advised the business plan was an exempt annex outlining that with a £1.1m investment what management fee we should get back and that was all our business case needed as we would not be running the centre. Our business was the financial side the practical side was down to PfP.

The Committee **RESOLVED:**

Not to refer the decision back to the executive (as the decision is no longer applicable), but to request that Cllr Liz Townsend, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Leisure and Dunsfold Park and Cllr Paul Follows, Deputy Leader, who were both present in the meeting, to verbally report back to the Executive the comments and concerns made by the

committee and to recommend that good governance and processes in future are followed, and all relevant consultations are conducted.

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The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and concluded at 10.57 am

Chairman