

OPERATIONS BOARD

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 4 OCTOBER 2018

Councillors Present: Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, James Cole, Lynne Doherty, James Fredrickson, Graham Jones and Rick Jones

Also Present: Bill Bagnell (Manager - Special Projects), Iain Bell (Revenues and Benefits Manager), Catalin Bogos (Performance Research Consultation Manager), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Mary-Anne Cosgrove (Service Manager), Andy Day (Head of Strategic Support), Tandra Forster (Head of Adult Social Care), Sally Kelsall (Housing Strategy and Operations Manager), Gary Lugg (Head of Development & Planning) and Andy Walker (Head of Finance and Property), Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer)

Apologies: John Ashworth, Councillor Anthony Chadley and Councillor Marcus Franks

14. Future Use of Faraday Road Sports Pitch

Bill Bagnell presented a report which updated on progress made to date on the future management and rationalisation of the Newbury football ground as a community asset. Proposals were an interim measure until the football club land is required as part of the redevelopment of London Road Industrial Estate (LRIE).

Officers were seeking authority to convert the current football pitch and a small margin around the perimeter as a MUGA for sports and community use. Capital funding of £88k was being sought to close up and secure the old clubhouse and adjacent structures which included the removal of existing fencing, the supply and erection of a perimeter fence 4m high in order to allow the facility to operate and the making secure of existing buildings so that these could be safely managed independently of any other activity relating to the rest of the site.

Bill Bagnell advised that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and paragraph 97 in particular, in relation to existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, stated that these sites should not be built on unless it was surplus to requirements or that it would be replaced by equivalent or better provision. It would therefore be necessary to demonstrate that thought had gone into replacing this facility. The report did not include the possibility of using Northcroft as an alternative site but if the development of the London Road Industrial Estate went ahead then other options, such as Northcroft, would need to be considered.

Bill Bagnell advised that the pitch would be a grassed pitch and not artificial turf. Hungerford Town Football Club had expressed an interest in the stand.

Councillor James Cole felt that this was a good plan for the present time and if the Council did nothing then that would create a PR issue. Bill Bagnell confirmed that it would be an informal MUGA and therefore anyone would be able to organise sport on a maintained pitch. A MUGA usually had three sports pitches overlaid in different colours. Councillor James Cole stated that it would be useful if the pitch could be marked up for a full-sized football pitch but Bill Bagnell responded that it was more likely that it would be marked up for five a side football.

Councillor Hilary Cole queried why the Council were boarding up the club house and not demolishing it. There was a worry that it would be tempting for rough sleepers in the area to break in and use it as a squat. Bill Bagnell agreed but stated that there was a due process which had to be followed. The aim would be to eventually demolish the buildings but planning permission would be required. He assured Members that the building would be secure and therefore it would not be possible to break in.

Councillor James Fredrickson referred to the PR angle and stated that the last press release had mentioned that an assessment of the site would be undertaken by September and this was now late. There was a lot of detail around the situation with the football club and it was only if people understood the detail that they would understand the position the Council was taking. He therefore suggested removing the Executive Summary from the report and publishing it along with the Condition Survey. However, Bill Bagnell felt that it would be better to publish the whole thing or just the Condition Survey. Councillor Fredrickson was of the opinion that it was essential to provide detail in this case. Councillor James Cole agreed and felt that there was a need to go back to basics and to explain the issues. However, Councillor Hilary Cole stated that this had been explained when discussions had first taken place with St. Modwen.

Nick Carter asked if this could be agreed by delegated authority or whether it needed to go to the Executive for sign off. Andy Walker advised that it had not been included in the Capital Programme and therefore an Executive decision would be required.

Nick Carter referred to Paul Anstey's wider leisure vision around Northcroft and he queried whether there would be any merit in making links to that. Paul Anstey stated that if the land on which the Faraday Road pitch was located then it made no sense and it would be better to focus on Northcroft and to concentrate sport within that area particularly as the land was owned by the Council. Councillor Fredrickson said that the logic had always been that the Council would not replace like for like. Nick Carter replied that the Council had initially sought to find an alternative site for the Football Club and had even considered a share arrangement. However, the development of the Leisure Strategy provided a further opportunity to look at the provision of a site. Bill Bagnell pointed out that the NPPF had also been beefed up and it was therefore necessary to demonstrate reasonable history and it would not be right if the issue around a site was not revisited. It made sense for the Council to look at Northcroft particularly if it involved an income generation opportunity. Councillor Fredrickson felt that if it was a viable option to include it as part of the Leisure Strategy then that would be a good way forward. However, Bill Bagnell reminded Members that there would also be a number of people who would not be in favour of a football pitch on the Northcroft site.

Councillor Hilary Cole advised that Paul Anstey had made great progress in respect of leisure and she felt that the Faraday Road project should be included in the leisure offer.

Councillor Lynne Doherty felt that £88k seemed to be a large amount for fencing off a MUGA pitch. However, Councillor James Cole stated that the MUGA pitch would provide income for the Council. Bill Bagnell added that it was necessary to erect a good quality fence for security purposes.

Discussion took place on the level of detail which should be made public at this stage. It was noted that there would need to be some publicity around the Leisure Strategy

in any event. Paul Anstey stated that Sport England were about to publish guidance in relation to leisure strategies and funding.

Andy Walker pointed out that Paul Anstey had a leisure centre capital budget and various other capital projects and he would therefore investigate whether it would be possible to cover off the funding for the fencing without going to the Executive.

Actions:

- **It was agreed that a press release would be drafted in respect of the Football Club;**
- **The Leisure Strategy would be introduced at the Newbury Vision Conference on 29th October 2018;**
- **Andy Walker to investigate whether capital funding of £88k could be made available to fund the works required to make the football ground safe and appropriate for public use;**
- **The report would be held for a week until a discussion took place following Budget Board on 11th October 2018 around how to take this forward. The attendees at the meeting would include Councillors James Fredrickson, Rick Jones, Graham Jones, Nick Carter, Paul Anstey, Bill Bagnell and Peta Stoddart-Crompton.**