

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Wednesday, 3 March 2010

PRESENT: Councillor B Hoare (Chair); Councillor PD Varnsvery (Deputy Chair);
Councillors Beardsworth, Church, Crake, B Markham and Perkins

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. MINUTES

The supplementary minutes from the meeting of 10 February 2010, having been agreed previously, were signed by the Chair.

The minutes of the meeting of 24 February 2010 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

RESOLVED

- (1) That Ms Beverley Mennell and Councillors Mildren and Clarke be granted leave to address Cabinet on Item 6, "Rent Payment Incentives".
- (2) That Alan Brown, Peter Sharpe, Mavis Wilmshurst, Eileen Daley, Chris Gutowski, Brian Oldham, Christine Dalley, Colin Ingle, Janet Clarke and Sophie Jelley and Councillors P D Varnsvery Hawkins, Mildren and Clarke be granted leave to address Cabinet on Item 7, "Hunsbury Hill Disused Public Conveniences: Report on Objections Received to the Proposed Disposal of Public Space".
- (3) That Councillors Mildren and Clarke be granted leave to address Cabinet on Item 8, "Countywide Scrutiny Arrangements".
- (4) That Adrian Thacker and Michael Ford and Councillors Palethorpe, PM Varnsvery, Glynane, Hawkins, Mildren and Clarke be granted leave to address Cabinet on Item 9, "Delapre Abbey Stable Block".
- (5) That Councillors Glynane, Hawkins, Mildren and Clarke be granted leave to address Cabinet on Item 10, "Neighbourhood Model".
- (6) That Dr Ronald Mennell and Councillors Mason Hawkins, Mildren and Clarke be granted leave to address Cabinet on Item 11, "Leisure and Sport Strategic Business Review – Management Options Appraisal".

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- (1) Councillor B Hoare declared a personal non- prejudicial interest in Item 7, Hunsbury Hill Disused Public Conveniences: Report on Objections Received to the Proposed Disposal of Public Space, as he was a resident of Hunsbury. He further declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Item 9, Delapre Abbey Stable Block, as he was a member of Friends of Abington Park (a similar organisation to Friends of Delapre Abbey - FoDA).
- (2) Councillor Crake declared a personal non- prejudicial interest in Item 9, Delapre Abbey Stable Block, as her husband was a member of FoDA.
- (3) Councillor PM Varnsvery declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Item 9, Delapre Abbey Stable Block, as she was a former member of FoDA.
- (4) Councillor Glynane declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Item 9, Delapre Abbey Stable Block, as he was a member of FoDA.
- (5) Councillor Hawkins declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Item 9, Delapre Abbey Stable Block, as she was a member of the Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust.

- (6) Councillor Clarke declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Item 9, Delapre Abbey Stable Block, as he was a former member of FoDA.
- (7) Councillor PD Varnserry declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 7, Hunsbury Hill Disused Public Conveniences: Report on Objections Received to the Proposed Disposal of Public Space on the grounds of predetermination and bias, as he had previously made remarks in support of residents' objections. He further declared personal and prejudicial interest in Item 9, Delapre Abbey Stable Block on the grounds of predetermination and bias, as he had previously lobbied on behalf of FoDA in relation to the grant of a lease.

5. ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were none.

6. RENT PAYMENT INCENTIVES

Beverley Mennell addressed Cabinet. As a council tenant, she offered her compliments to the Council and Administration for their hard work in resolving the issue of homelessness and generally improving the housing service. She further thanked the team for their efforts in rent collection and supported the proposed scheme.

Councillor Mildren addressed Cabinet commenting that the proposed incentive was better than the previous one, with the odds for winning at 725 to 1 for people paying rent by direct debit. His concern was at people's fear of direct debits coming out of bank accounts if there were insufficient funds.

Councillor Clarke addressed Cabinet. He agreed the need for an incentive for rent payments. He also had concerns over direct debits. He commented that the Administration could be more inventive over how the £5,000 prize money was distributed and suggested that an offer be made to access the Council's Credit Union with an introductory £10 donation. This would benefit more people. He asked the Portfolio Holder to investigate alternative incentives.

Councillor Beardsworth presented the report to Cabinet. She pointed out that the scheme was a pilot that would be reviewed after 12 months and that, in this time, alternative incentives would be considered. She pointed out the advantages of a direct debit payment system that would save officers' time and help with the regular collection of rents.

RESOLVED

1. That the following incentive payments be approved for 2010/11:
 - a. a quarterly £250 prize draw for those paying by direct debit with two prizes per quarter;
 - b. an end of year prize draw of £250 for those with a clear rent account at the end of March 2010 and 2011 with two prizes awarded;
 - c. a quarterly prize draw of £250 for tenants in arrears who have paid the agreed amount regularly over the previous 13 weeks. There would be two prizes per quarter.
2. That authority be delegated to the Director of Housing and Portfolio Holder for Housing to investigate alternative schemes and refine incentives as appropriate.

7. HUNSBURY HILL DISUSED PUBLIC CONVENIENCES: REPORT ON OBJECTIONS RECEIVED TO THE PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF PUBLIC SPACE

Mr Alan Brown addressed Cabinet in his capacity as Chair of Friends of Hunsbury Hill Country Park. He called for the Cabinet to decline the proposal and asked them to support the charitable trust to safeguard the heritage of the park. He claimed that the Cabinet report

did not tell the whole story and quoted the Police Area Commander as saying that a café may contribute to crime and disorder and attract criminal enterprise. He then referred to the high cost of crime prevention in the event that the scheme went ahead as against the relatively small cost of demolishing the existing toilet block.

In response to a question, Mr Brown gave details of the role of the Friends of Hunsbury Hill Country Park.

Mr Peter Sharpe addressed Cabinet on behalf of local residents and as a member of Friends of Hunsbury Hill Country Park. He described current problems of anti-social behaviour in the area and suggested that alcoholics and drug abusers would be likely to frequent the proposed café. He did not think the proposed crime prevention measures would be sufficient. He pointed out the duty of local authorities to protect communities and called for a rejection of the proposal.

In response to a query as to how the presence of a café would be likely to exacerbate crime problems, Mr Sharpe quoted comments from the Sector Commander for the Safer Communities Team as set out in the report that suggested a potential for increased crime and disorder.

Mavis Wilmhurst addressed Cabinet on behalf of the Northampton Ironstone Railway Trust (NIRT). She described the work of the Trust and the activities offered at the site. She felt that the proposed commercial enterprise in the car park would compromise funding applications from the Trust for any improvements to their own café, which was integral to their overall income. She referred Cabinet to the NIRT website for further information about their role.

Ms Wilmhurst confirmed that the NIRT café was only open when the trains were running but that they would like to attract more visitors and if they wanted to upgrade the facilities, they would be unlikely to achieve external funding if there was already a commercial café in the park.

Eileen Daily addressed Cabinet on behalf of local residents and in support of the work of the NIRT. She suggested that improved facilities at NIRT would encourage more people to the park and that an increased volume of use would make it a safer place for all. She asked for groups to work together on this and called for local residents to act as wardens so that the area could be opened up with a potential to cater for a wider range of people.

Chris Gutowski addressed Cabinet and spoke about the need for trust. He commented on the existing traffic problems and then described his experiences as a victim of crime that he associated with anti social behaviour in the car park. He asserted that the Cabinet report did not put enough emphasis on the recommendations of the Police.

Brian Oldham then addressed Cabinet reminding them that there had been 400 objections to the proposal for the conversion of the toilet block to a café. In addition, the Police, Friends of Hunsbury Hill Country Park, NIRT and local ward councillors were also against the scheme. He then questioned why the applicant should be allowed a rent-free period followed by a concessionary rental period. He estimated that the removal of trees and reduction of bunding would cost the council £15,000 – £20,000 and questioned why the scheme was even being considered.

Christine Dalley addressed Cabinet as a resident of the area and user of the park for 25 years. She welcomed the opportunity to attract more people to the park and felt that a café would improve the security of the car park. She did not see traffic as a problem as there was

already a zebra crossing in place. She did not want the law-abiding majority to miss out on a facility because of the suggested possibility of criminal activity.

Proposer of the café, Colin Ingle addressed Cabinet. He pointed out that the toilet block had been a magnet for crime for a number of years. He maintained that he had no intention of removing bunding or trees. It was his intention to operate a safe and family friendly café that could also double as a visitor centre and attract young people to train in the catering trade. He had received support for the café from the local PCSO and assured Cabinet that it would be well managed and an enhancement to the park.

Janet Clarke addressed Cabinet, expressing surprise at the catalogue of crime that had been described in her area. She would welcome a café and suggested that this would bring the park in line with Abington Park, Delapre Abbey and Becketts Park in terms of catering facilities. She felt that a working café would be better than the current toilet block, which was an eyesore.

Sophie Jelly addressed Cabinet as a park user and dog walker and suggested that a café would be a good thing as a meeting place for family and friends.

Councillor PD Varnserry addressed Cabinet and gave a history of the troubles in the car park. He commented that the café was in a secluded position that created a magnet for anti social behaviour. Referring to the report, he highlighted the 15 planning conditions for the café, including 6 relating to crime prevention. He asked for the concerns of local community to be listened to and outlined his serious concerns in the event that the café application be allowed to go ahead.

Councillor Hawkins addressed Cabinet commenting that more emphasis should have been put in the report on the heritage value of the park and the ironstone railway site. She hoped that Cabinet would see the importance of the leisure use of the park.

Councillor Mildren addressed Cabinet and asked if the replacement of the existing building with a café would increase crime in the area. He pointed out that any rent-free period would normally be allocated so that works could be undertaken to develop the premises as a café. He wondered if new toilet facilities might be included in the previously proposed Richmond Scheme. He advised Cabinet to be mindful of their legal responsibility to maximise income from their assets whilst looking at the issue for the benefit of the community.

Councillor Clarke addressed Cabinet stating that this was a lose, lose situation. The Council had to take responsibility, along with the police, to address concerns over the anti social behaviour whether or not the application was granted. He had sympathy with the applicant who had been forced to go through a tortuous route and suggested that the process had been badly managed.

As the relevant portfolio holder, Councillor Perkins presented the report to Cabinet. Before bringing the report back to Cabinet, he had listened to the views of residents and the police and pointed out that the police had no further concerns and were not convinced that a café would add to crime and disorder issues in the area. He commented that an area did not cause crime; rather it was an individual's behaviour that was of concern. He felt that parents should take some responsibility for their children's actions and he refused to be influenced by a minority of 'yobs'. He wished to encourage small businesses and confirmed that a discounted rent would be conditional on capital investment in the café. He urged cabinet to accept the recommendations of the report.

It was confirmed that there would be provision for either party to break the lease agreement after one and three years.

Councillor Beardsworth pointed out that many other parks had cafes and that if risks were not taken, then nothing would be achieved. In any case, there was no evidence that the operation of a café would increase crime in the area.

Councillor B Markham stressed the importance of the future development of the park and felt that a café and toilets were needed to encourage additional use of the area. He commented play areas encouraged vandalism and that some people thought everything caused anti-social behaviour. The café already had planning consent and it was the Cabinet's remit to just authorise the lease and terms.

Councillor Crake thanked the Friends of Hunsbury Hill Country Park for their good work on plans for the park. She asked for all interested parties to work together to give visitors to the park the facilities they needed.

Councillor B Hoare commented that he was unaware of any proposal to remove the bund and it was confirmed that there were no additional costs to those outlined in the report

RESOLVED

To support the original recommendation made in the report to Cabinet on 23 September 2009 to agree to the disposal of the land designated as public open space (edged red upon the plan shown at Appendix 1 of the Cabinet report) by way of a lease, on terms referred to in that report.

8. COUNTYWIDE SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor Mildren addressed Cabinet expressing his opinion that it was the responsibility of each separate council to undertake scrutiny relating to its corporate plan. He did not see the need for a countywide scrutiny board unless it was a statutory requirement.

Councillor Clarke addressed Cabinet and hoped that other councils would not be fearful in taking unscrupulous councils to task. He was disappointed at the Administration's apparent lack of interest in not putting forward a representative to attend the initial meeting where this was discussed. He also considered that it was inappropriate to interfere with other organisations' processes. He did not take the proposal seriously when there was a requirement for only two members to attend four meetings a year.

Councillor B Hoare, as relevant Portfolio Holder, presented the report to Cabinet. He gave examples of excellent recent joint scrutiny work that had been carried out in the investigation of water contamination and in addressing of homelessness. He pointed out that there were wider issues that required co-operation from the scrutiny members from a number of organisations in order to deliver services to the public. There were currently two representatives on the Board – Councillors Yates and Lane – who had been active across the county.

Councillor B Markham pointed out that the bulk of the work would be undertaken by task and finish groups.

Councillor Church commented on a countywide partnership responsibility to undertake scrutiny on other public bodies and he felt that the proposal would help the accountability of cross-working arrangements. It was sensible for all district councils to work together to hold bodies and partnerships to some account and could see no reason not to support the proposal.

RESOLVED

1. To recommend to Council the adoption of the Terms of Reference and Procedural Rules governing involvement in countywide overview and scrutiny arrangements.

2. To recommend that Council nominates Northampton Borough Council's representatives onto the Board.

9. DELAPRE ABBEY STABLE BLOCK

Adrian Thacker addressed Cabinet on behalf of Friends of Delapre Abbey (FoDA) and as a Trustee. He outlined FoDA's involvement with the lease arrangement and referred to internal governance problems that had led to the intervention of Councillors Perkins and Palethorpe as mediators within the organisation. Now that most of the issues had been resolved, he was keen to finalise FoDA's constitution and resume negotiations for the lease. He thanked Graham Walker and his supporters through this time.

As Chair of Far Cotton Residents' Association and a member of FoDA, Michael Ford addressed Cabinet. Although he was still concerned about the governance and constitution of FoDA, he accepted that mediation had been successful and the charity was now moving in the right direction. He called for the reinstatement of the catering manager for the tearooms and also for separate bank accounts to be set up for events and catering purposes. He was now keen to move forward.

Councillor Hawkins addressed Cabinet and described her involvement with the Delapre Abbey Conservation Trust. She expressed frustration over the delays in moving forward with the options appraisals and asked for dates when these reports would come before Cabinet so that the restoration of the Abbey could progress.

Councillor Mildren addressed Cabinet and referred to the side letter attached to the cabinet report. This set out a number of conditions including the use of profits for the enhancement of Delapre Abbey. He pointed out pitfalls in the proposal and suggested that someone from the council would have to examine, agree and monitor the business plan.

Councillor Clarke addressed Cabinet, expressing hope that things were now moving forward. He commented on the continued unrest between the Trustees and FoDA and thanked Councillors Perkins and Palethorpe for their mediation work. It was unfortunate that the issue had become so protracted and now appealed to councillors to stand back and let officers work with FoDA to enhance and protect the Abbey for the future. He was of the view that the proposed rent was too high for a charitable organisation.

Councillor Palethorpe addressed Cabinet pointing out that in this type of organisation, there were always governance difficulties. There had been a lot of rumour but it was now clear that people wanted some aims and objectives to ensure continuation and preservation of the Abbey. He was confident that the groups could settle their differences at a forthcoming Special General Meeting. He was of the opinion that progress should now be left with the Portfolio Holder and was happy that the objectives and responsibilities were now more clear. He urged Cabinet to accept the recommendations.

Councillor B Hoare welcomed the cross party working to achieve the current position.

Councillor PM Varnsvery addressed Cabinet. She was happy to support the tearooms and the subsidised lease arrangements and felt that the Abbey should not be commercialised by the operation of a tearoom. She called for the support of the Council for community events at the Abbey. Consideration should also be given to the effect of commercial activities on other local businesses and on the wear and tear on the grounds themselves. She warned that no long-term lease should be entered into until the options appraisal had been fully discussed.

Councillor Glynane addressed Cabinet as Ward Councillor for Delapre. He thanked Councillors Palethorpe and Perkins for their involvement in getting agreement between the

parties. He reminded Cabinet that the Abbey was for the pleasure of the whole town and not just FoDA. He looked forward to FoDA being able to work under a new constitution but felt that Ward Councillors should maintain their involvement to ensure the constitution was followed.

As the relevant Portfolio Holder, Councillor Perkins presented the report to Cabinet. He explained that the purpose of the report was not to grant the lease but to agree to a concessionary rent and it was the remit of officers and FoDA representatives to conclude negotiations on the lease. Referring to the governance difficulties within FoDA, he stressed the importance of the council and public having confidence in the organisation's ability to move forward. There would have to be some commercial activities in order to raise sufficient funds for the future restoration of the Abbey. One of the conditions in the side letter was that oversight was retained but it was anticipated that the committee would be able to demonstrate that they could operate effectively with the preservation of the Abbey as their main objective. He also thanked Councillor Palethorpe for the cross-party co-operation in achieving mediation between the parties. It was now vital that FoDA instigated the proper controls and there was still a lot of work to be done. It was time for everyone to put the past personal difficulties aside and move forward to bring the full potential of the Abbey for the people of Northampton.

In response to a request from Councillor Crake regarding the availability of the draft constitution for FoDA members prior to their SGM, Councillor Perkins confirmed that members would be presented with the document in good time for consultation with a view to the incorporation of the organisation at their June meeting. He called for Trustees to ensure that all members were aware of these events.

Councillor Church welcomed the progress that had been reported and hoped that it would build people's confidence to the extent that funding could be secured to deliver the project for Delapre Abbey.

Councillor B Hoare reminded Cabinet that approval was needed to let out an asset at less than its market value and that the benefit had to be more than the rental discount. He was happy that the side letter set out conditions to achieve a common goal.

RESOLVED

1. That Cabinet agree in principle the proposed grant of a lease of the Stable Block at Delapre Abbey, at a concessionary rent, to FoDA provided that certain conditions are met and continue to be complied with by FoDA.
2. That Cabinet delegates to the Borough Solicitor in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance & Support judgement of whether the conditions set out by the Council have been satisfied.

10. NEIGHBOURHOOD MODEL

Councillor Hawkins addressed Cabinet with her view that the proposed model was good in parts. She felt that a lot more work needed to be done and further consultation with ward residents. However, she appreciated that the Council had listened to people's views and were making moves to strengthen the democratic process.

Councillor Mildren addressed Cabinet and enquired as to the frequency of ward-based meetings. He had the impression that the model seemed to be taking local government further away from the people and suggested that changes were being proposed for financial reasons rather than for improvement.

Councillor Clarke addressed Cabinet and accused them of dismantling the council by weakening and diluting engagement from the 12 managed areas to four. He was disappointed that a map had not been provided for clarity. The report did not give any indication as to where Caspar fitted and he did not believe that having four areas would enable members of the public to fully engage. In his own ward, residents' associations were undertaking management and community leadership and he felt that the Administration was proposing changes simply to make further financial savings at the cost of serving the people.

Councillor Clarke was advised that Group leaders had been provided with relevant maps at a briefing prior to the Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Glynnane addressed cabinet and welcomed the report, as it was fundamental to successful community working. He commented on the improved cleanliness of the town centre and felt that neighbourhood management worked well. He was confident that resident representatives would continue to engage in forums and welcomed the new thinking that would bring further success to local areas.

Councillor PD Varnsberry, as the relevant Portfolio Holder, acknowledged the work of Councillor Crake and the Director of Environment and Culture for their contribution to the work in creating this new neighbourhood model. He presented the report to Cabinet and explained how the four areas would work, with the co-operation of the County Council and the Police, to deliver beneficial schemes. He pointed out that there was likely to be increased public engagement with local forums being held in each ward, possibly being hosted by residents' associations or parish councils to coincide with the current meetings scheduling. A flexible approach was needed to deliver the best results and any constitutional changes would involve the input of the Constitutional Working Party before being agreed by Full Council.

Councillor B Markham welcomed the mechanism that would now create a better structure for neighbourhood engagement and was pleased to see the proposal for more effective devolution and management of services down to the four areas outlined in the report. He felt that this would give each local forum more impact and each group would have more say on the provision of services.

Councillor B Hoare referred to the successful model of partnership work being undertaken in the Fish Street offices between the Council and Police that was offering a seamless delivery of services. It was clear that one size did not fit all and there were different needs across the town. However, there would now be better engagement with processes designed for the needs of local communities. This was the start of a long journey of giving empowerment to local communities and he was confident that the principle would evolve into a well-developed working model.

RESOLVED

1. That Cabinet approves in principle the model for neighbourhood working proposed within this report as a means of improving engagement with local communities and making public services more responsive to their needs.
2. That any constitutional changes required to implement the neighbourhood model are referred to the Constitutional Review Working Party, for its consideration and to make recommendations to Full Council.
3. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Environment and Culture, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder, to take any actions necessary to further refine the model.

4. That Cabinet notes the financial implications for the council arising from the implementation of the neighbourhood model, as set out in paragraph 4.2.
5. That Cabinet agrees to receive a further report after a period of experience, review and consultation on the proposed neighbourhood model to monitor its implementation and to agree any amendments to the model that may be required.

11. LEISURE AND SPORT STRATEGIC BUSINESS REVIEW - MANAGEMENT OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Dr Ronald Mendel addressed Cabinet as local President of Trades Union Council. He commended the report but was concerned that it had not been prepared in-house. He referred to the options appraisal within the report. He listed his main concerns and stated that he was of the opinion that the disadvantages outweighed the advantages. He was not happy about the loss of Council control of facilities and was not convinced of the wisdom of creating a Trust. The report did not address access to facilities, nor the long-term viability of the scheme. Although the success of Trust working with the Royal and Derngate Theatres was mentioned, Dr Mendell did not feel this equated, as the appeal was for a different population, with the demand of leisure centres being from a more deprived customer base. He did not feel that the Trust would have any better chances of outside funding.

In response to a question, Dr Mendell accepted that the Royal and Derngate undertook projects with deprived young people, but still maintained that overall the Theatres served a different area.

Councillor Mason addressed Cabinet and referred to the Portfolio Holder report presented to the previous Full Council meeting that had reported the success of the Trilogy centres and the uptake of concessionary swimming. She asked how efficiency would be achieved if the Council was still having to subsidise the Trust in addition to the cost of developing the project. She was concerned at the potential job losses and asked why there had not been a fuller consultation about the proposals. She asked if all the centres would remain and if the price of using them would increase.

Councillor Hawkins addressed Cabinet and reiterated the importance of the Lings centre for residents in the east of Northampton. She felt the democratic process of the strategic business review had been flawed and asked who had been consulted on the proposals. She felt that the matter was a political hot potato and should be subject to a major consultation before returning to Cabinet at a later stage.

Councillor Mildren addressed cabinet and commented that a staff transfer scheme would not cover people's pension arrangements. He pointed out what he saw as discrepancies in figures in the report relating to the support charges. He was of the opinion that a reduction in services would mean a reduction in staff and asked if a cap could be put on the council's subsidy.

Councillor Clarke addressed Cabinet and asserted that the report was an abuse of the Administration's powers. He felt that the report was ill advised and poorly written. He questioned why there had been no engagement with the public on this issue to coincide with the recent consultation on the Corporate Plan and Budget. He accused the Cabinet of treating people and fellow councillors with contempt. He referred to complex and challenging legal implications mentioned in the report and did not think that an adequate equality impact assessment had been carried out. He further accused Cabinet of failing to carry out consultation with all the relevant stakeholders. He then warned Cabinet that if they supported the recommendation to commence implementation, then the decision would be

called in and an investigation carried out to ascertain exactly how much consultation had taken place.

Councillor PD Varnsberry, as relevant Portfolio Holder, presented the report to Cabinet. He pointed out the importance of providing facilities to promote healthy lifestyles, particularly to less privileged communities and wanted to ensure that services and benefits were safeguarded and enhanced. He explained that the report set out the options for short-, medium- and long-term to continue to provide leisure services. A Trust could obtain match funding for great schemes and he felt that these approaches should be pursued. He accepted that there were issues and challenges that needed careful consideration and confirmed that the process would take a year to complete with £120,000 from the Investment Fund to set up the Trust. He wanted to support the recommendations but also proposed that the report be subject to an Overview and Scrutiny appraisal.

Councillors Perkins expressed surprise at the negative comments received as a previous report to Cabinet had outlined the need for additional leisure facilities. Current facilities were being subsidised by approximately £1.5 million and it was important to be in partnership with other entities, such as a Trust, to acquire additional funding. This was the council's chance to deliver the leisure strategy and gain some control over the costs of delivering the service.

Councillor B Markham stressed the importance of keeping control of costs whilst continuing to provide sports development and leisure provision. He welcomed the suggestion that the report go to Scrutiny so that their recommendations could be taken into account. He reiterated that there were no intentions to close anything but further investment and development in additional facilities would upgrade the services to the public.

Councillor Beardsworth pointed out the need to look at every opportunity to have additional recreational facilities. She referred to the success of such schemes elsewhere and welcomed the opportunity to engage with the local Primary Care Trust to work on the project.

Councillor PD Varnsberry also referred to the successful running of similar schemes with Trusts in other cities and towns, which provided thriving facilities.

It was made clear that the recommendation was to enter into the implementation stage. Value could be added to this by its referral to Scrutiny. Before a trust could be established, a proposal would need to be brought to a future Cabinet meeting for a formal decision to be made.

Councillor B Hoare reminded Cabinet that the town already had thriving facilities and there was no criticism of the existing provision. However, in order to maintain and improve these, there had to be new ways of resourcing these threatened services.

RESOLVED

1. That Cabinet notes the outcome of an appraisal of potential management options for leisure and sports provision (see annex 1 of the Cabinet report).
2. That, in accordance with the outcome of the management options appraisal, Cabinet agrees to the commencement of the implementation phase for the establishment of a new charitable trust for the provision of leisure and sports development services.

The meeting concluded at 22:04