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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 24th September, 2013

Present: Councillor Robin Studd – in the Chair

Councillors: Councillor Reginald Bailey, Councillor George Cairns, Councillor Colin Eastwood, Councillor Mrs Gillian Heesom, Councillor David Loades, Councillor Ian Matthews, Councillor Miss Marion Reddish, Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Shenton and Councillor David Stringer

Portfolio Holder(s): Councillor Gareth Snell – Communications, Policy & Partnerships

Officers: Dave Adams – Executive Director, Operational Services
Neale Clifton – Executive Director, Regeneration & Development
Martin Stevens – Scrutiny Officer
Louise Stevenson – Scrutiny Officer

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs Williams.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

3. **MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was noted that the Licensing of Premises (in particular take aways) task and finish group, which had been agreed at the previous meeting of the Committee, would commence in the forthcoming months when capacity was anticipated to be created by current task and finish groups concluding their work.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 June 2013 be agreed as a correct record.

4. **WORK PLANS FOR THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES AND THE HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The work plans for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Health Scrutiny Committee were given consideration.

The Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee had determined at its 10 September 2013 meeting that there would be an interim meeting prior to its 18 December meeting. The Scrutiny Officers were currently consulting on dates, but it was anticipated that the interim meeting would take place in November.

The Chair of Transformation and Resources Scrutiny Committee reminded members of the budget scrutiny café which was taking place again as part of the budget setting

process. The scrutiny café would take place on 14 January 2014 and Members were asked to put the date in their diaries.

RESOLVED: That the work plans be received.

5. **FORWARD PLAN**

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.

6. **WORKING GROUP STATUS UPDATE**

The Committee gave consideration to a report providing a status update on the current scrutiny task and finish groups.

The Allotments Review Task and Finish Group had held a meeting that day and met with stakeholders including a representative from the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, local allotment associations and parish council allotment providers.

The Chair of the Transformation and Resources Scrutiny Committee provided a verbal update on the Community Centre Review Task and Finish Group, of which she was Chair. The task and finish group was set up to shadow the work of the officer task and finish group, and the original review timeline had been October 2012 to July 2013. There had been some slippage in the timeline due to issues that had arisen, and some areas had not yet been looked at as a result. The group had met on fourteen occasions for a variety of meeting types, including an open forum meeting for the Community Centre Management Committees, task and finish group meetings, one to one meetings with Community Centre Management Committees and site visits to the community centres. The next meeting was scheduled for 7 October 2013. Consultation had been undertaken, which included a centre management questionnaire, a user consultation and a self-assessment questionnaire, with the data shared with the task and finish group. Several issues had been identified so far including: governance, communication, maintenance and capacity issues. Asset values had been questioned by the group when they had been considered previously and would be re-visited on 7 October. It was clear that there was a need for a community centre guide and one point of contact at the Borough Council for the management committees to liaise with. An officer report was expected to go to Cabinet in November and it was intended for a task and finish group report to accompany this.

Cllr Stringer, as Chair of the HS2 Working Group, advised that the working group members could expect copies of his draft report to Cabinet by the end of the week. There was still the intention to invite HS2 Ltd to a future meeting of the working group.

RESOLVED: That the working group status update and the verbal updates be noted.

7. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business considered.

8. **KEELE GOLF COURSE**

The Executive Director, Regeneration and Development introduced a report regarding Keele Golf Course. The Committee were being asked to scrutinise the tender process undertaken and the implementation procedure and monitoring process for the preferred bidder.

There would be a special meeting of the Active and Cohesive Communities Scrutiny Committee on 3 October 2013 to consider the golf development and course maintenance aspects of the tender process that had been undertaken, and a special meeting of the Transformation and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 9 October 2013 to consider the procurement and financial aspects of the tender process. It was noted that unlike a normal commercial lease, the lease for Keele Golf Course included extensive operational detail which the Active and Cohesive Communities Scrutiny Committee would consider at its special meeting.

There had been a two stage process to identify a preferred bidder. Stage one was to attract expressions of interest, which involved setting out initial information with broad heads of terms, advertisements being placed in professional journals and known operators of golf courses being approached. This resulted in three initial expressions of interest which were evaluated and basic financial and health checks for the companies undertaken. Stage two saw a documentation pack issued to the companies who had expressed an interest, inviting them to submit an offer.

The draft cabinet report provided information about the multi-disciplinary officer evaluation panel that had been set up to receive the bids from the final two companies to tender. The evaluation panel had identified points of clarification or inconsistency with the bids that had needed to be addressed. When this had been done the bids were then scored against the evaluation criteria. Moderated scores from the panel were evaluated by the Executive Director, Resources and Support Services for a further check of the scores to take place. To encourage the market to respond, companies were given the opportunity to bid on 10, 20 or 25 year leases, and to submit a bid for a fixed annual sum or a percentage of annual turnover as a rental return to the Council. The preferred operator was prepared to offer a fixed rental sum every year and a percentage of fixed turnover each year.

A Member questioned who held the lease for the Golfers Inn, which formed part of the golf course. The company who took over the golf course lease would need to apply to the Council for a licence and although the Licensing Committee decision could not be predetermined, it was not anticipated that there would be difficulty in obtaining a licence.

Members questioned the two houses that sat adjacent to the golf course and whether they would be used by golf course staff. There were two cottages, with one occupied

on a secure tenancy with the former green keeper at the course. It was intended that the other house would be incorporated as part of the new lease. The fact that the semi-detached property was not listed in the report of remedial works was noted by Members, who questioned if it had been ascertained whether any repairs were required to the house. The house was understood to be in a better standard of repair than the operational buildings associated with the golf course and believed to only require modest cosmetic work, although it was understood that the property had not been inspected internally. A Member of the Committee was concerned by this and felt that significant costs could be incurred as a result. The Executive Director, Regeneration and Development advised that any operator would be required to carry out statutory work in the first three months of taking on the lease, particularly to address matters such as boiler servicing. Health and safety aspects were the main concern of the Council, with decoration a matter for the new operator.

Members further noted that sub-leases were not mentioned in the documentation and asked whether sub-leasing of the property would be permitted. The Executive Director, Regeneration and Development advised that sub-leasing was dependent upon the nature of the operator and any reasons that might be given for sub-leasing. It was probable that both of the bidders would wish to operate the overall business activity themselves. Nevertheless it was likely that the Borough Council would be prepared to consider sub-leasing with its approval and subject to appropriate provisions to protect the Council's interests.

The Chair noted that works to improve the course's buildings would need to be monitored as there could be disparity if one building was improved and another was not. It was the remit of the Council's Facilities Manager to review the buildings on the course, and the residential properties had not stood out as requiring substantial work when he had visited the estate.

RESOLVED: (a) That the comments of Committee Members be noted by Officers.

(b) That the Committee are satisfied with the tender process that has been undertaken, the implementation procedure and the monitoring process for the preferred bidder.

9. **DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION**

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the appendix to the draft Cabinet report regarding Keele Golf Course because it is likely that there will be disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

10. **Keele Golf Course**

The Committee considered the confidential appendix to the draft Cabinet report.

COUNCILLOR ROBIN STUDD

Chair

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