



**Minutes of the Special Economic
Development and Planning Scrutiny
Committee held at the Civic Centre,
Riverside, Stafford on Thursday
16 August 2018**

Chairman - Councillor R P Cooke

Present (for all or part of the meeting):-

Councillors:

L Bakker-Collier

D B Price

B M Cross

J K Price

M E Jennings

R M Sutherland

W J Kemp

C V Trowbridge

Cabinet Members:-

Councillor P M M Farrington - Leader of the Council

Councillor F Beatty - Economic Development and Planning Portfolio

Councillor F A Finlay - Environment and Health Portfolio

Councillor R M Smith - Leisure Portfolio

Also in Attendance:-

Councillors R J Draper, J W Farnham, A T A Godfrey, M Goodall, J Hood
and G O Rowlands

Officers in attendance:-

Mr T Clegg - Chief Executive

Mr J Holmes - Development Manager

Mr A Bailey - Scrutiny Officer

EDP7 Minutes

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 19 June 2018, having been published in Digest No 244, were submitted and signed.

EDP8 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C A Baron, J A Barron (Substitute D B Price), A P Edgeller, J M Pert (Community Portfolio) and K S Williamson (Resources Portfolio).

EDP9 Land at Tilling Drive, Stone - Called-in Item - Part Confidential

The Chairman reminded the Committee that this was a part confidential matter and if any Member wished to discuss any restricted information then the press and public would be requested to leave the room and the recording stopped. However in the interests of transparency the meeting would be kept as open as possible.

The Chairman also reminded Members that they did not enjoy Parliamentary Privilege and therefore laws protecting against defamation and slander did not apply.

The following matter had been published in the Members' Digest No 245 of 3 August 2018 and had been called in to this Committee by Councillors W J Kemp, R J Draper and G O Rowlands for the following reason:-

"To discuss the implications of the sale of community land".

Councillors W J Kemp, G O Rowlands and R J Draper discussed the following reasons behind their call-in of this matter:-

- Did not believe that all of the representations regarding this matter had been fully considered
- Quoted a letter received from the Minister of State for Housing that explained the requisite planning policies for open space, sports and recreation facilities as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework
- The shortfall of facilities at Westbridge Park should not be provided by Tilling Drive
- Adoption of the Stone Neighbourhood Plan would protect the land at Tilling Drive
- Decision makers should give weight to the public support for retaining the land
- Concern that if sold, access to alternative recreation land on Westbridge Park was via the busy A34
- A covenant affected two thirds of the site which restricted permanent development
- The leisure and recreation offer in Stone was being diminished
- The decision to sell the land should have been delayed until the consultation of the Stone Neighbourhood Plan had closed
- Concern over the reputational damage to the Council through the public disclosure of confidential information related to this issue
- Concern that both phases of the Stone Leisure Strategy could not be fully funded through the Council's finances

Councillor J Hood, Walton Ward Member attended the Committee and at the invitation of the Chairman, addressed the Committee and raised the following issues:-

- Stone Neighbourhood Plan had been developed by Stone Town Councillors over the last two years
- Tilling Drive had been designated as local green space and at no time did the Council object to this
- This land was very important and was within easy reach of many people
- The Council was reneging on its responsibility to provide healthy and inclusive recreational spaces
- The proposed leisure and play facilities were promising, but condemned the sale of the land to pay for them
- Stone Town Council opposed the sale of land at Tilling Drive and observed that no Members of the Cabinet were from Stone
- Quoted paragraph 8.7 of the Plan for Stafford Borough
- There was a 50% over allocation of housing in Stone
- There was a threat to remove the proposed facilities on Westbridge Park should the sale of the land at Tilling Drive not proceed
- Once the land was lost at Tilling Drive, it would never be bought back to community use

The Cabinet Member - Leisure Portfolio and the Chief Executive provided the following response:-

- Confirmation that Phase 1 of the Stone Leisure Strategy was fully funded, but Phase 2 had always required further funding in order to provide a destination park
- Confirmation that a full sized football pitch could remain on the Tilling Drive site
- Confirmation that there were 54 green spaces proposed within the Stone Neighbourhood Plan
- The Stone Leisure Strategy had been delayed due to opposition from Keep Westbridge Green and the costs had increased

The Committee discussed the matter and raised a number of issues, including:-

- The provision of a high quality open space at Westbridge Park should be welcomed
- The Council were providing significant investment in Stone and the sale of the land at Tilling Drive would add to this
- Had visited the site on Tilling Drive on numerous occasions and found it only to be used by dog walkers
- The current facilities at Tilling Drive, including the car park were in a poor state of repair
- Only a third of the area was proposed to be sold
- A footpath and the play area would be retained
- A proportion of the proceeds from the sale of community land in the Holmcroft Ward had been transferred to Stone
- It would be a good concept to replicate the success of Stafford's Victoria Park in Stone

- There was no reason to believe that the sale of land was not in the Council's best interest
- Concern that the decision of the Cabinet was not consistent with the financial implications detailed in the Cabinet report

In response, the Cabinet Member - Leisure Portfolio confirmed that it was the Council's intention to ring-fence the capital receipt from the sale of the land to Phase 2 of the Stone Leisure Strategy to deliver new and improved play and football facilities at Tilling Drive, including both the car park and the play area, as well as Westbridge Park, Stone.

It was subsequently moved by Councillor R M Sutherland and seconded by Councillor J K Price that the decision of the Cabinet in relation to the land at Tilling Drive, Stone, as set out in Minute No CAB17/18, be supported.

On being put to the vote the proposal was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the decision of the Cabinet in relation to the land at Tilling Drive, Stone, as set out in Minute No CAB17/18, be supported.

CHAIRMAN