
**MINUTES OF THE SERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY COMMITTEE HELD ON
THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER 2013 AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WEELEY**

- Present:** Councillors Stock (Chairman for the meeting), Aldis, Bucke, R Callender, Colbourne, Simons and Wood
- Also Present:** Councillors Halliday, Hawkins, P B Honeywood, D R Mayzes and Shearing
- In Attendance:** Corporate Director (Corporate Services) (Martyn Knappett), Asset Manager (Andy White) and Senior Democratic Services Officer (Ian Ford)

17. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

In the absence of the Chairman of the Committee (Councillor Page) and given the fact that the vice-chairmanship of the Committee was currently vacant, it was moved by Councillor Wood, seconded by Councillor R Callender and:

RESOLVED that Councillor Stock be elected Chairman for this meeting.

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of the Chairman of the Committee (Councillor Page), with Councillor Stock substituting, Councillor Cossens with Councillor Bucke substituting and Councillor Talbot.

An apology for absence was also submitted on behalf of Councillor Calver, one of the Members who had called-in the decision being considered, who was not able to attend due to a member of his family being ill.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Ian Ford) informed the Committee that Councillor D R Mayzes had been replaced as a member of the Committee by Councillor Wood.

19. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting of the Committee, held on 7 October 2013, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

21. OFFICE SITES AT CLAY HALL, WADDESDON ROAD, TRIANGLE CENTRE AND WESTLEIGH HOUSE: NEXT STEPS CALL-IN)

The Committee had before it a report to enable it to scrutinise the following Executive Decision - Number 2345 taken on 4 October 2013 by the Cabinet, which had been called-in:

“That:

(a) Cabinet confirmed the initiation of the disposals process for three sites as follows:

- (i) Clay Hall – Disposal, potentially for future residential use;
- (ii) Waddesdon Road – Disposal, potentially for future residential use; and
- (iii) Triangle Centre – Disposal, potentially for shared service use.

All subject to further decision following the progression of the disposals process.

- (b) That Cabinet approved the seeking of planning and other necessary consents and procedures necessary and subsequently for the demolition of Westleigh House and the use of the land to extend the car park.”

Part (b) of that decision had been called-in for scrutiny, in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16, by Councillors Shearing, Calver and Hawkins.

In calling-in that decision, Councillor Shearing, supported by Councillors Calver and Hawkins stated:-

“We wish to "call in" decision (b) of Reference No. 2345 made by the Cabinet on the 4th October 2013. The reasons for the "call in" are:-

1. No, or insufficient evidence has been produced to show that Westleigh House is not capable of beneficial use by either the Council or a third party.
2. No, or insufficient evidence has been produced to justify the cost of the demolition of Westleigh House for its use as a car park.
3. No, or insufficient evidence has been produced to show that Westleigh House cannot be made fit for residential use.
4. No, or insufficient evidence has been produced to show that Westleigh House should not be sold on the open market for an appropriate alternative use.
5. No, or insufficient reason has been given why the decision to demolish Westleigh House should not be reviewed by the Community Leadership and Partnerships Committee as part of the process put in place by the Cabinet pursuant to Decision Reference No. 2346 in order that the views of the Committee could be taken into account by the Cabinet before a final decision is made;
6. The decision appears to be in conflict with Decision (b) of Reference 2346 which refers to the vacation and disposal of Westleigh House and not to its demolition.”

The Chairman outlined aspects of the procedure that would be followed in scrutinising the decision.

Councillors Hawkins and Shearing, the callers-in present at the meeting, each made a statement explaining their reasons for the call-in. Councillor Shearing felt that a feasibility study should be undertaken into possible alternative uses for Westleigh House, which could include, but would not be limited to, residential use before the building was demolished. Councillor Hawkins suggested that the decision taken in respect of Westleigh House under part (b) of executive decision reference 2345 was in conflict with executive decision reference 2346 which appeared to indicate that Westleigh House (together with the Weeley and Clay Hall office sites) would be ‘vacated and disposed of’ and that the Community Leadership and Partnerships Committee would review the detailed final proposals to do so and comment to Cabinet before a final decision was taken. He felt that, in respect of Westleigh House, this was an appropriate course of action that should be followed before any demolition of Westleigh House was allowed to take place.

The Leader of the Council and Finance and Asset Management Portfolio Holder (Councillor Halliday) and Deputy Leader of the Council and Housing, Benefits and Revenues and Sports Facilities Portfolio Holder (Councillor P B Honeywood) each made

a statement explaining the Cabinet's decision. Councillor Halliday explained that there was an 'overlap' between executive decisions 2345 and 2346 in that the Officer reports had approached a similar subject from different angles. Executive decision 2345 had, he said, arisen from a fundamental service review of staffing levels and executive decision 2346 had arisen as part of the on-going future delivery of the local public services project. Councillor Halliday said that he felt that the cost of converting Westleigh House into a suitable residential property would be prohibitive and would also be contrary to planning policies in the emerging Local Plan. He added that demolishing Westleigh House and creating 10 extra parking spaces would benefit local businesses and residents who were pressuring the Council to provide extra parking. This, he said, was also not necessarily a permanent solution in that the demolition of Westleigh House would open up the site for inclusion as part of a possible 'civic quarter' or other use permitted in the Local Plan.

Councillor Honeywood stated that Westleigh House was not part of the Housing Section's future plans or options as it was not considered to be a site that would provide 'value for money' in converting the building to residential use.

The Corporate Director (Corporate Services) (Martyn Knappett) clarified the issue by informing the Committee that Clay Hall, Waddesdon Road and the Triangle Centre would be subject to the Council's established disposals process and would not be included in the feasibility study and detailed final costed proposals for other office sites that would be subject to scrutiny by the Community Leadership and Partnerships Committee. He further clarified that the demolition of Westleigh House would not be subject to either the disposals process or the aforementioned feasibility study. Mr Knappett then answered a question put to him by Councillor Hawkins.

Members of the Committee then put their questions to the decision-maker, the callers-in and the Corporate Director, as appropriate.

It was moved by Councillor R Callender, seconded by Councillor Wood and:-

RESOLVED that

- (a) the Committee did not object to the decision and that the decision came into force immediately; and
- (b) the Committee noted and welcomed the positive and constructive manner in which the callers-in had approached Councillor Halliday (as the relevant Portfolio Holder) before the Cabinet's decision had been taken and though they had been unsuccessful with their call-in on this occasion the Committee hoped that other Councillors would follow this example in the future.

22. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

There were none.

The meeting was declared closed at 8.53 p.m.

Chairman

