

PERFORMANCE, RESOURCES AND ASSETS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12TH FEBRUARY 2009 at 6.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Saleem (Chair); Councillors Burnett, Franks, Malik, Rutstein and Titmuss.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Simmons and Skepelhorn.

3 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE (REF: 2)

An apology for absence from the meeting was received on behalf of Councillor Farooq.

4 CALLED IN DECISION (EX/10/09) – REFERENCE FROM EAST LUTON AREA COMMITTEE – LUTON AQUATIC CENTRE (REF: 6.1)

The Committee were advised that Councillors Franks and Skepelhorn had 'called in' decision EX/10/09 of the Executive taken on 26th January 2009 in regards to a reference from the East Luton Area Committee on the Luton Aquatic Centre.

The Executive decided:

"That the recommendations of the East Luton Area Committee be noted".

Councillor Franks explained that the decision had been called in by himself and Councillor Skepelhorn as they felt that the Executive had overlooked the views and concerns of residents of the East of Luton, in particular:

- the lack of consultation with the Headteacher of Putteridge School regarding the closure of the Putteridge Pool concussion
- traffic congestion in surrounding roads in particular St Thomas' Road which had severe traffic problems already
- siting the Centre at the edge of Luton would not benefit all residents particularly as the public transport routes were not good
- there were alternative viable sites in the centre of Luton which should be considered
- proposed access routes would cut across Stopsley Common
- Lack of joined up thinking. No strategic planning had been carried out which took into account various other major projects in this area including the proposed Northern By pass, the New M1 junction, lack of public transport to the area and the number of new homes scheduled to be built in the area

He added he was not opposed to the planned schemes, but the number of key developments that would have a direct impact on the area, a

comprehensive strategic development plan was required solely for the East of Luton to ensure that all projects would work coherently with each other.

A Member of the Committee suggested a motion that the Executive be requested to commission a detailed and integrated Strategic Development Plan for the East of the Town. The motion was put to a vote and was carried.

Resolved: That the Executive be requested to commission a detailed and integrated Strategic Development Plan for the East of the Town.

5 REFERENCE FROM EXECUTIVE – LUTON AQUATIC CENTRE FEASIBILITY STUDY (REF: 7.1)

The Head of Local Democracy informed the Committee, that at its meeting held on the 17th November, the Executive considered a report of the Head of Corporate Finance and the Project Manager Pools on the Luton Aquatic Centre Feasibility Study. The Executive recommended that the feasibility study be submitted to the Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

Members of the Committee were in agreement that the feasibility study should be scrutinised.

A Member of the Committee enquired what the term 'Prudential Borrowing' meant.

The Swimming Pools Project Manager replied that the term 'Prudential Borrowing' meant that the Council could borrow funds from the open market, but only if it was able to meet its rules on using money for investment, and that it was able to pay those funds back. He advised the Member that the Head of Finance would be able to give a more detailed explanation.

A Member of the Committee commented that correct financial calculations were fundamental to the success of the project, and enquired where funding borrowed for capital costs would come from. He added that once the centre had been built, operating costs would need to be ascertained, as although the running costs were intended to be cost neutral, he could not find any evidence that this would be the case.

The Swimming Pools Project Manager replied that the costs of borrowing would be met from the Airport Dividend.

A Member of the Committee enquired if a business plan had been developed as mentioned in the report.

The Swimming Pools Project Manager replied that the Council were negotiating with Active Luton to finalise the details of the business plan.

A Member enquired if the Swimming Pools Project Manager was satisfied with the projected running costs of the proposed Aquatic Centre.

The Swimming Pools Project Manager commented that he was satisfied that the running costs of the proposed Aquatic Centre would meet the requirement for no overall growth, and added that a detailed breakdown of costs would be submitted to the Executive.

A Member raised concern that if revenue from the Airport fell, due to the current recession, the Airport Dividend would be reduced. Therefore, less funding would be available for other projects if the Aquatic Centre top sliced from this funding source, and enquired what funding allocations would be lost.

The Swimming Pools Project Manager replied that details of funding would be part of the outline business plan, which would be submitted to the Executive in the first instance. The Leader of the Council added that the Airport Dividend would be constantly monitored.

A Member enquired where the £10m identified in the current capital programme for a swimming pool had come from.

The Leader of the Council informed the Committee that the £10m had been allocated in the capital budget for the new swimming pool several years ago on the basis of anticipated capital receipts that were now unlikely to be realised.

A Member of the Committee commented that several facilities had been identified under scope, and enquired if those services would all be provided.

The Swimming Pools Project Manager commented that the facilities identified under scope would be delivered and run by Active Luton.

A Member commented that the report stated that 'Casual Users' were the largest number of users of the current pool, but had not as yet been consulted on the proposed Luton Aquatic Centre.

The Swimming Pools Project Manager replied the Council were currently trying to identify none users and casual users. Once this had been established, users would then be consulted on.

A Member of the Committee commented that the previous feasibility study for the proposed location at Addington Way had included a programme; preliminary layout and an elementary cost plan for a new swimming pool.

The Swimming Pools Project Manager replied that the principal purpose of the feasibility study was to identify the viability of the St. Thomas's Road site. Once this had been established, the design stage would follow. He added that a broad project plan had already been developed, but did not contain a high level of detail.

A Member commented that the design of the Aquatic Centre would be dependent on the accessibility of the finalised location.

The Swimming Pools Project Manager replied that interviews a design team would be held on Thursday 19th February. He added that there were three options for the location of the Aquatic Centre on the St. Thomas's Road site that would be consulted on with users and local residents. He concluded that access to the site was crucial to the design of the centre.

A Member of the Committee suggested that the outline business plan be submitted to the Committee.

Resolved: (i) That Officers be thanked for their attendance and contribution to the meeting.

(ii) That the Executive be thanked for referring the Luton Aquatic Centre Feasibility Study to the Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee.

(iii) That the Outline Business Plan on the Luton Aquatic Centre be submitted to the Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee.

(Note: The meeting ended at 7.50 p.m.)