

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting held on Tuesday, 4th March, 2025 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr Halleh Koohestani (Chairman)
Cllr Nadia Martin (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr S. Trussler (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Leola Card
Cllr P.J. Cullum
Cllr C.P. Grattan
Cllr G.B. Lyon
Cllr Bill O'Donovan
Cllr M.J. Tennant

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Thomas Day and Cllr Becky Williams

Cllrs Sarah Spall and Ivan Whitmee attended the meeting as Standing Deputies.

29. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meetings held on 30th January, 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

30. APPOINTMENTS

NOTED: The appointment of Cllr Becky Williams as a Member of the Committee for the remainder of the 2024/25 Municipal Year in place of Cllr A. H. Crawford.

31. CALL-IN - FARNBOROUGH LEISURE CENTRE

The Committee was advised of the submission of a request to call-in the resolution made by the Cabinet on 11th February, 2025 in relation to the Farnborough Leisure Centre – Next Steps. The request for call-in had been submitted by Cllrs Sue Carter, G.B. Lyon, P.G. Taylor, M.J. Tennant and S. Trussler.

The Committee was advised that should the call-in request be rejected, the decision made by the Cabinet on 11th February, 2025 would take effect as of 5th March, 2025. If the call-in request was accepted, a report would be made to Cabinet at its next meeting on 11th March, 2025.

Cllr Martin Tennant presented the call-in request and the reasons behind it. The Committee noted the reasons, which included, that:

- the decision had been made with insufficient information, and
- there were significant concerns regarding the lack of public consultation on the revised proposals which had changed considerably since the previous consultation, and the current leisure mix of facilities did not align with the needs and expectations outlined by residents at the time.

Cllr Tennant recognised and welcomed the development and understood the current financial pressures on the Council. However, the concerns of the opposition were that the specific needs of the community had not been sought since 2019 and those needs may have changed during that time. It was felt essential to provide a facility that was flexible, would be sustainable in the longer term and provided a mix of facilities that were wanted by the community.

Cllr Sophie Porter, Healthy Communities and Active Lives Portfolio Holder, addressed the Committee on behalf of the Cabinet, with support from Cllr Christine Guinness, Pride in Place and Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder. Cllr Porter advised that the consultation work already undertaken had been picked up as part of the revised planning and the two key requirements (swimming and fitness) of residents would be provided. It was noted that Soft Market Testing (SMT) would be carried out to assess the viability of the facilities mix being proposed and adjustments could be made to the mix once completed. The Council were limited by the funds available and needed to be aware of potential risks in delaying the development further in relation to working with delivery associates and operators.

During discussions, it was noted that there were now considerably different financial restraints to be taken account of compared to the previous iteration and the new facility needed to generate an income, as there was no additional money to provide subsidy. The facilities mix proposed would be consulted on with operators, prior to RIBA Stage 3, to establish the best options to maximise income and space available. Commercially, it was advised that a gym and the provision of swimming lessons, would greatly support income generation. The Committee noted that the new plan had the same facilities as the previous iteration, with the exception of, a sports hall and premium health suite. By removing the sports hall, more space would be made available for other facilities within the space. However, it was also important to recognise that the proposed plans were still subject to a full business case.

In discussing the facilities mix, it was advised that the Inerve Suite, a power assisted wellness hub, was for use by all individuals who suffered with chronic conditions and not just the elderly. However, once SMT had been undertaken, the findings could show that a suite of this nature may not be sustainable, and a more viable option may well need to be considered. Some Members also had concerns over the number of gyms in the locality and if those that had been dispersed, when the original facility had been demolished, would then come back to an “inferior” facility. This raised the need for a relevant and viable leisure centre facility for the community.

In response to a query regarding funding, it was advised that the Levelling Up funding had been secured for the new proposed facility followings considerable engagement with the Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government (MHCLG). The funding however, needed to be spent in a set time frame, and should

the funds not be spent they would have to be returned. A request was made for the information shared with the MHCLG to be shared with the Committee, for information.

A discussion was held around the previous considerations around creating a Passivhaus facility, it was suggested that the option of passing the cost of Passivhaus to the operator should be considered at the tender stage.

Cllr Tennant stressed the importance of “bringing the residents along for the journey” so as not to be doing the community a disservice. Reference was also made to Report No. REG2501, paragraph 2.2, which set out the proposed facilities mix. Alliance Leisure had been engaged to establish a facilities mix that was fit for purpose and geared towards commercial viability. In reading the report, the opposition had felt that the mix was already set in stone and showed little room for flexibility. Reassurance was provided stating that following SMT, the mix could be amended, if necessary, before RIBA Stage 3, to ensure commerciality and viability into the future.

During a discussion on the different RIBA stages, it was advised that no public consultation was undertaken at RIBA Stage 2, however, discussions had been carried out with sports clubs and key stakeholders at this stage. A request was made for a list of those that had engaged in discussions.

Cllr Porter personally committed to keeping Members updated and would ensure that, following SMT the findings would be reported on. It was also noted that the concerns had been heard relating to wider consultation, but no commitment could be made at this time to undertake any further public consultation. However, it was noted that work was underway to get local people signed up to an email address to be kept informed on the development of the proposed leisure facility.

In summing up, clarification was being sought on whether further public consultation would be undertaken prior to RIBA Stage 3 on the facilities mix and if there had been any room for movement on the facility mix, as set out in Report No. REG2501.

The Chairman then asked the Committee to vote for or against the decision being referred back to the Cabinet for reconsideration.

There voted FOR: 4; AGAINST: 5; ABSTAIN: 1; and the call-in request to refer the decision back to the Cabinet was declared lost. Therefore, it was advised that the decision made by the Cabinet at its meeting on 11th February, 2025 would become effective from 5th March, 2025.

ACTION:

What	By Whom	Date
Provide the information shared with the MHCLG when discussing keeping the Levelling Up Funding for the new proposed facility.	Nick Irvine, Head of Regeneration and Development	March 2025

Provide a list of sports clubs and key stakeholders who had been engaged with on the proposed facilities mix.	Nick Irvine, Head of Regeneration and Development	March 2025
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32. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee noted the current Work Plan.

An update was provided on the current position with the disposals of units at Union Yard, Aldershot. It was noted that a final offer on the site was still outstanding and papers wouldn't be ready for the proposed additional meeting of the Committee on 13th March. It was therefore proposed that the meeting on 27th March would be used for the discussion on the Union Yard Disposals and the 13th would be used for an all Member Briefing on the background to the disposals. The details for both meetings would be finalised at the Progress Group on 6th March.

The meeting closed at 9.39 pm.

CLLR HALLEH KOOHESTANI (CHAIRMAN)
