

# CABINET

Meeting held on Tuesday, 12th December, 2017 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

## **Voting Members**

Cllr D.E. Clifford, Leader of the Council  
Cllr K.H. Muschamp, Deputy Leader and Business, Safety and Regulation Portfolio Holder

Cllr Barbara Hurst, Health and Housing Portfolio Holder  
Cllr G.B. Lyon, Concessions and Community Support Portfolio Holder  
Cllr M.L. Sheehan, Leisure and Youth Portfolio Holder  
Cllr P.G. Taylor, Corporate Services Portfolio Holder  
Cllr M.J. Tennant, Environment and Service Delivery Portfolio Holder

The Cabinet considered the following matters at the above-mentioned meeting. All executive decisions of the Cabinet shall become effective, subject to the call-in procedure, from **27th December, 2017**.

## 56. **MINUTES –**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 14th November, 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

## 57. **REVISIONS TO DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY –**

(Councillor Gareth Lyon, Concessions and Community Support Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN1737, which set out proposed amendments to the Council's existing Discretionary Rate Relief Policy, which was intended to support charities, Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs), not-for profit organisations and other businesses.

Members were informed that these amendments would allow the Council to award Discretionary Rate Relief to other organisations in the Borough that provided benefit to the community and not be limited to charities and not-for-profit organisations.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED** that the adoption of the amended policy, as set out at Appendix 1 to Report No. FIN1737, be approved.

## 58. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS MID-YEAR REPORT 2017/18 –**

(Councillor Paul Taylor, Corporate Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet received Report No. FIN1736, which set out the main activities of the treasury management operations during the first half of 2017/18 and provided an update on the current economic conditions affecting treasury management decisions.

The Cabinet was informed that the Council had continued to receive treasury management advice from Arlingclose Limited, who had provided a detailed commentary on the economic background, which was set out at Appendix A to the Report. In relation to investment activity in 2017/18, Arlingclose had produced a graph that was set out at Appendix B to the Report. This indicated total investment returns generated were down on the same period in the previous year. Their advice was to review the Council's holdings in pooled funds and, as a result of this review, the Council had made some adjustments to its holdings in this area. Appendix C to the Report showed the actual prudential indicators relating to capital and treasury activities for the first half of 2017/18 and compared these to the indicators which had been set in the Annual Treasury Management Strategy for the year, which had been approved by the Council on 27th July, 2017.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that this area of the Council's financial activities had been outside of the scope of the recent peer challenge exercise.

**The Cabinet NOTED** the Council's treasury management operations in the first half of 2017/18, as set out in FIN1736.

59. **FARNBOROUGH AIRPORT COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL FUND –**  
(Councillor Martin Tennant, Environment and Service Delivery Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. COMM1722, which sought approval to award a grant from the Farnborough Airport Community Environmental Fund, which had been set up to assist local projects.

The Environment and Service Delivery Portfolio Holder had considered the application by the Friends of Ancells Farm for an award of £8,496 towards the cost of developing a play area at Ancells Farm Park in Fleet. It was confirmed that this application met all of the agreed criteria.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED** that a grant of £8,496 be awarded from the Farnborough Airport Community Environmental Fund to the Friends of Ancells Farm.

60. **SOUTHWOOD GOLF COURSE - CONSULTATION ON OPTION TO CREATE A MAJOR NEW PARKLAND AND DELIVER SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE NATURAL GREENSPACE –**  
(Councillor Martin Tennant, Environment and Service Delivery Portfolio Holder and Councillor Maurice Sheehan, Leisure and Youth Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Joint Report No. COMM1721 / PLN1739, which set out the results of a consultation exercise on an option to create a major new parkland and deliver Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) at Southwood Golf Course, Farnborough. Also included was a summary of the process to date, to assist the Cabinet in determining what action was to be taken in relation to the future of the Southwood Golf Course.

Members were reminded that a joint meeting of the Environment Policy and Review Panel and the Leisure and Youth Policy and Review Panel had been held on 7th November, 2017 to consider this matter. It was reported that the Chairman of that

meeting had requested to address the meeting, as had five members of the public and a representative from England Golf.

Cr. Mrs. D.B. Bedford, Chairman of the Joint Panel meeting, explained that, at the meeting, a thorough examination of the options for the golf course following the completion of the consultation exercise had been carried out. The Minutes of the meeting were set out at Appendix 1 of the Joint Report No. COMM1721 / PLN1739. Following a comprehensive debate, the Joint Panel had agreed that the following should be recommended to the Cabinet:

“That the decision regarding the future of the Southwood Golf Course be deferred for twelve months while all other options be pursued to include:

- Lobbying Government
- Seeking special dispensation for the area of Rushmoor in the way it is treated for SANG land, and;
- Examination of alternative SANG provision to provide the necessary mitigation for housing development in Rushmoor.”

The Cabinet then received representations in favour of the Southwood Golf Course from Mr. Mike Bartley, Mr. Barry Gilmore, Mr. Keith Ledgerwood and Mr. Andy Short. Mr. William Fry of England Golf also spoke on behalf of England Golf. It was noted that Mr. David Scott had also registered to speak at the meeting but had been unable to attend.

The Cabinet then questioned officers in relation to various matters. These matters had been raised during the consultation exercise and events, the Joint Panel meeting, the Council meeting, at which the petition containing 2,366 signatures had been received, and the spoken representations received earlier in the meeting. The following clarifications were received:

- The Council’s previous Portfolio Holder for Environment and Service Delivery had consistently challenged both Natural England and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in relation to SANG provision in Rushmoor’s individual circumstances, and the whole concept of the approach to mitigation but had been unsuccessful in achieving concessions in this respect;
- Aldershot’s Member of Parliament, Mr. Leo Docherty, had recently written to the Rt. Hon. Sajid Javid MP expressing concerns regarding SANG and the Southwood Golf Course. Mr. Javid’s reply had confirmed that there were no plans for the Government to revise its current position in relation to the provision of SANG to mitigate the harmful effects of new housing development on protected sites;
- It was Natural England’s view that an operating golf course would not qualify as SANG due to the lack of open access;

- In terms of the production of the new Local Plan, a delay of twelve months would represent a significant risk, as a failure to demonstrate available SANG could lead to the Local Plan being found to be unsound at the examination stage, leading to a potential loss of control over planning for new development in the Borough;
- As at the date of this meeting, existing SANG capacity would only provide for the creation of around a further 12 new dwellings in the Aldershot area;
- Of the predicted total of homes required in Aldershot up to 2032, around 700 were currently without mitigation, even if the proposed SANG at Blandford House was to become available and fully utilised, which was uncertain at this time. This would hinder or even halt the Council's efforts to regenerate Aldershot Town Centre;
- The Memorandum of Understanding with Hart District Council in relation to the shared SANGs, including at Bramshot, was not legally binding;
- The Council expected to receive planning applications early in 2018 regarding housing developments in Aldershot town centre totalling around 600 dwellings, at which time SANG would need to be in place for the schemes to progress;
- Even if the Government was to lower the minimum housing requirement following the recent consultation, due to pressing housing need, development of dwellings in Rushmoor would need to progress to meet demand;
- The ratio of dogs to people in the Borough was unknown;
- If the Council did not have a current Local Plan and relevant SANG policy, each planning application would need to undertake an "appropriate assessment" to determine appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures;
- Rushmoor's new Local Plan would make provision for 436 homes to be added to the housing stock each year;
- Officers had been working on developing the new Local Plan for four to five years and the total cost to date would be estimated at around £1.4 million;
- There were fifteen months left on the current contract with Mack Trading for the operation of Southwood Golf Course, meaning that any early termination in the event of closure would be subject to negotiation with the contractor;
- Appendix 3 of the Joint Report No. COMM1721 / PLN1739 set out alternatives to Southwood in terms of local golf courses;
- Southwood Golf Club members could be assisted in transferring membership to alternative local clubs but this was likely to carry financial implications for the Council;
- The £40,000 subsidy of Southwood Golf Course was factual information and was contained in the Council's accounts;

- It was confirmed that the Council applied different levels of occupation for SANG calculation purposes depending of the type of dwelling proposed and did not use the 2.4 level as a standard when determining SANG mitigation requirements for planning applications, in order to make the best use of this scarce resource;
- The Council had carried out an exhaustive search of its land holdings in the Borough to find alternative sites but had been unsuccessful;
- The conversion of Southwood to SANG parkland would carry no cost to local Council Tax payers as this would be paid for by local developers; and
- The golf course site would be protected from future development by an existing covenant, meaning that any future proposal for development on the site would carry a financial burden that would prove prohibitive.

Having considered the issues in detail, the Cabinet took the view that, taking account of the comprehensive information and evidence provided, the Council's requirements to identify SANG meant that the Golf Course would need to be converted to open space. Therefore, subject to a number of safeguards and further steps, the Cabinet agreed that the Golf Course should close and that the Chief Executive should be authorised to determine the date of closure.

In considering the options available, the Cabinet expressed its gratitude for the extensive and high quality engagement that had been demonstrated by all parties during the process.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED that**

- (i) the Southwood Golf Course be closed to provide SANG to mitigate the impact of new housing on the Special Protection Area (SPA);
- (ii) the Council's Chief Executive be authorised to decide on the date of closure of the Golf Course, dependent on the provision of new SANG capacity at Blandford House;
- (iii) the necessary actions be taken forward to make the land suitable as SANG, with the management plan being brought to the Cabinet in due course;
- (iv) the continuation of the dialogue with the Government and Natural England in an attempt to address the SANG issue be approved; and
- (v) arrangements be made to provide support and advice to Southwood Golf Club users living in the Borough as to other options available in the local area.

The Meeting closed at 9.05 pm.

CLLR D.E. CLIFFORD, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

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