

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Virtual Meeting held on Thursday, 4th February, 2021 at 7.00 pm.

## **Voting Members**

Cllr M.D. Smith (Chairman)  
Cllr Mrs. D.B. Bedford (Vice-Chairman)  
Cllr Veronica Graham-Green (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Gaynor Austin  
Cllr T.D. Bridgeman  
Cllr Sue Carter  
Cllr R.M. Cooper  
Cllr Christine Guinness  
Cllr L. Jeffers  
Cllr Mara Makunura  
Cllr S.J. Masterson

## **25. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd October, 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

## **26. ALDERSHOT TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB**

Mr. Shahid Azeem, Chairman, Aldershot Town Football Club, attended the meeting to give the Club's response to the representations made by the Aldershot Town Football Club Supporters' Trust at the Committee's meeting on 3rd September 2020 and to update on the current position in relation to the Club's operations.

Mr. Andrew Colver, Head of Democracy and Community, reminded Members of the background to the item. It was noted that at the Committee's meeting in September, 2020, three members of the Supporters' Trust had raised some issues, in particular relating to the conclusion of a new lease on the site of the Club in line with a number of principles that had previously been agreed by the Cabinet, the approach to engagement between the Club and the Supporters' Trust and future development options for the site. Following the meeting a report had been made to the Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder.

It was agreed that the item would be considered in two parts, firstly Mr Azeem would respond to the issues raised by the Supporters' Trust, this would then be followed by an update on the current position of the Club.

Mr. Azeem thanked the Council for the support given to the Club over the years since he took over as Chairman in 2013. It was noted that, through working with the Council, planning applications were soon to be submitted for the regeneration of the Football Club site and, should these be granted, the long term lease on the site

should also be granted. It was noted that the lease, once agreed, would be in the name of the Aldershot Town Football Club. In response to the Supporters' Trust comments regarding the redevelopment of the site, Mr. Azeem explained that a redevelopment company had been established to oversee the development plans for the site, this allowed for any financial issues, which might occur, not to impact on the operation of the Club. It was also acknowledged that the EBB Stadium was no longer fit for purpose, due to the presence of asbestos, and through the redevelopment of the site, a seven day a week operation could be established, which would provide a basis to secure a sustainable future for the Club.

At the September, 2020 meeting, it had been reported that the Supporters' Trust had been temporarily suspended from the Football Supporters Association (FSA). As a result, measures had been put in place by the FSA, most of which had been addressed, with the exception of diversity awareness training for the trustees, due to COVID-19 restrictions. Mr. Azeem advised that since that time, a letter of apology acknowledging the Trust's errors which resulted in its suspension, had been written by the Supporters' Trust to the FSA and Mr. Azeem asked that this letter be made public.

One of the purposes of the Trust had been to raise funds to contribute to players' wages ('Cash for Shots'). In the past twelve months no contributions had been made by the Trust, and Mr. Azeem urged the Trust to write to its Members advising that their contributions were not being used for the intended purpose and what the monies were being used for.

It was noted that a new supporters club, 'In with a Shot!', had been established as a result of the issues with the Supporters' Trust. In with a Shot, had achieved a membership of in excess of 160 fans in the previous twelve months and had gained approval from the FSA, which the Supporters' Trust no longer had. In with a Shot had also donated £8,000 to the Club as a contribution to the players' wages.

Mr. Azeem then advised of the Club's attempts since 2013 to involve the Supporters' Trust in the running of the Club, all of which had been rejected, resulting in financial losses for the Club and some negative publicity. These offers included a seat on the Board with an equal share in the Club, the opportunity to take over the sole running of the Club and a seat on the Board for the Trusts' Chairman. These rejections has ultimately resulted in the Club no longer engaging with the Trust on the everyday running and decision making of the Club.

In response to the representations made regarding the financial status of the Club, Mr. Azeem advised most clubs in similar leagues were making significant losses and the majority were in a worse financial position than Aldershot. It was noted that match day income wasn't sufficient to sustain a club, commercial sponsorship, goodwill of the local authority and the financial input from directors were what allowed clubs to survive. It was noted that the Clubs' Directors had invested over £1million to support the Club over the past seven years, through the purchasing of shares, settlements of loans from the previous administration and to resolve cash flow issues to pay wages, HMRC and creditors. It was noted that the Club was not aware of any personal financial difficulties of any of its Directors.

In response to the comments raised regarding free tickets for children accompanied by a full paying adult, this promotion had been stopped due to COVID-19 restrictions on crowds and in turn restricted gate numbers. It was noted that this offer would be reinstated when it was safe to do so.

Mr. Azeem then responded to the issue of working with local businesses and supporting the community. It was noted that all the Club's major sponsors had been active since 2013 when he had become Chairman of the Club. Links with the community were also well established. Activities included fundraising for local charities, engagement with the Armed Forces Covenant, work with the military and Nepali communities and assistance with the local response to the coronavirus pandemic. The Club had also secured the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award. In addition, the Club had previously been awarded Community Business of the Year by Hampshire County Council and the previous year the Inspired Business Award for Work in the Community.

The Committee discussed Mr. Azeem's presentation and was fully supportive of the response given and the work of the Club. A request was made for the letter, written by the Supporters' Trust to the FSA stating the errors of the Trust, should be published on the Council website. In response to a query, it was noted that the Trust was still in existence, but the Club would no-longer be engaging with them, and no claim would be made on any remaining funds in the Trust's accounts by the Club.

Mr. Azeem then gave an update on current operations at the Club. The 2020 season had been extended and the Club had been supported by the Government through the furlough scheme. Over the summer period, due to the uncertainty of the new season and when it would commence, the Club had worked on new protocols with the aim to start playing again in October, 2020. Players' contracts had been adjusted to start one month before the first official game in October, 2020. A clause had also been included in the players' contracts that should another lockdown be enforced resulting in the closure of the Club, players would not be paid.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) had provided grants up to December, 2020, to support football clubs. However, in January, 2021, DCMS made a decision to cease the grant provision and instead provide loans to be paid back on favourable terms. Mr. Azeem advised that the Club had made the decision not to take out more loans and, without the support of the Government and no ticket sales, it faced a significant financial challenge. It was noted that the Club would continue to lobby Government during this difficult time, but would also rely on its huge resilience to continue to provide a sustainable Club for the community.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Azeem for his presentation and expressed the Council's support for the Club and the work it was doing within the community. It was suggested that the Aldershot Town Football Club would remain on the Committee's Work Plan and further updates could be provided by the Club in the future.

**NOTE:** Cllr T.D Bridgeman and Cllr Sue Carter declared personal but non prejudicial interests in this item. Cllr Bridgeman in respect of his ownership of a share in Aldershot Town Football Club, and Cllr Carter in respect of her status as a Trustee

for the Shots foundation. In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, both remained in the meeting during the discussion.

## 27. **PERFORMANCE MONITORING APPROACH**

Rachel Barker, Assistant Chief Executive, was in attendance to report on the work which had been taking place to revise the current performance management arrangements. It was noted that the new system was being developed and this report would give a brief on the work undertaken and help shape performance reporting in the future.

A review had been undertaken on how the Council collected and reported on progress against the Council's Business Plan projects and wider performance reporting. A three-tier reporting framework had been developed and implemented at the end of Quarter 2 in 2020/21 consisting of:

- Key Performance Indicator Dashboard – production of a graphical Key Performance Indicator dashboard initially every quarter but more frequent going forward. Comparable against previous years data. There would be an option for it to be automated in the future giving real time information
- Summary Project Progress Report – builds on previous information provided but would focus on exception reporting. It would provide a snapshot for the previous quarter detailing projects not on budget or schedule. A RAG status would be used but only red and amber would appear in this report
- Detailed Project Progress Report – Full report on all projects within the Business Plan. To be published on the Council's website at end of each quarter. It would show more detail including risk, timelines, project manager detail etc.

It was advised that currently Quarter 3 was in the process of being finalised and would be presented at the March, 2021 meeting of the Committee. Moving forward to 2021/22, the assumption would be to see Quarterly reporting to the Committee, this could focus on specific areas or the whole report and timings of meetings would be adjusted to fit more effectively with the quarterly reporting.

In response to a query regarding indexing the Detailed Project Progress Report, it was noted that this could be looked into for easier navigation of the document.

It was agreed that the full documents would be considered at the Progress Group Meeting prior to the Committee's meeting in March, 2021, to scope what would be presented to the full Committee.

The Committee **ENDORSED** the new approach.

## 28. **WORK PLAN**

The current Work Plan was **NOTED** and an update was provided as follows.

Cllr D. B. Bedford gave an update on the work of the Register Providers Task and Finish Group. It was noted that a recent meeting had taken place with Southern

Housing who were now responsible for The Crescent, Southwood and Mills House, North Town. Members had been pleased with the outcomes of the meeting and the work carried out since taking on these properties.

The Group's next meeting was scheduled with A2 Dominion. It was noted that there had been a number of issues raised that it was hoped would be resolved following the meeting.

It was requested that a system similar to the pilot scheme set up by VIVID, to allow Members emails to be addressed separately, could be provided by each of the Housing Associations operating in the Borough. Members agreed that the system had worked well with VIVID and rolling it out would be beneficial – this would be raised for discussion with the local Housing Associations.

Mr. Colver advised that a meeting of the Educational Improvement Group would be taking place on 23rd February, 2021, at which County Councillor Roz Chadd would be present. The meeting would consider the impacts of COVID-19 and other related matters.

Arrangements for the next meeting of the Highways Task and Finish Group with Hampshire County Council had proved difficult. However, it was expected that a date would be arranged in the next few weeks.

Mr Colver advised on the proposed items for the next meeting on 25th March, these were:

- Cabinet Champions activities – to receive a report from the three Cabinet Champions, Cllrs Sue Carter, Peter Cullum and Jacqui Vosper on their activities during the 2020/21 Municipal Year
- Air pollution – to receive a report from Environmental Health Officers on Air Pollution

An item on the current work of the Housing Options Service was requested, taking into account the impacts of COVID-19 and unemployment levels. It was suggested that this could be picked up at the next Progress Group meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.18 pm.

CLLR M.D. SMITH (CHAIRMAN)

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