

CABINET

Meeting held remotely on Tuesday, 23rd February, 2021 at 6.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr D.E. Clifford, Leader of the Council
Cllr K.H. Muschamp, Deputy Leader and Customer Experience and Improvement
Portfolio Holder

Cllr Marina Munro, Planning and Economy Portfolio Holder
Cllr A.R. Newell, Democracy, Strategy and Partnerships Portfolio Holder
Cllr M.L. Sheehan, Operational Services Portfolio Holder
Cllr P.G. Taylor, Corporate Services Portfolio Holder
Cllr M.J. Tennant, Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder

The Leader of the Council (Cllr D.E. Clifford) invited the Leader of the Labour Group (Cllr K. Dibble) to attend and contribute to the meeting.

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 **8th March, 2021**.

55. **LEISURE CONTRACT - ARRANGEMENTS FROM APRIL, 2021 –** (Cllr Maurice Sheehan, Operational Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. OS2101, which set out a range of options for the Council's Farnborough Leisure Centre and Aldershot Indoor Pools Complex, following the expiry of the contract with Places for People Leisure on 31st March, 2021. The Chairman welcomed Mrs Katherine Everard, Committee Member of Rushmoor Indoor Bowling Club and Cllr C.P. Grattan, on behalf of the Council's Labour Group, both of whom had requested to address the Cabinet on this issue.

The Cabinet heard from Mrs Everard, who was speaking on behalf of the Rushmoor Indoor Bowling Club. Mrs Everard brought the Cabinet's attention to the written representations that had been submitted. Mrs Everard raised further points including:

- that the absence of a leisure centre in Farnborough town centre would adversely affect footfall in the town centre generally;
- that the indoor bowling facility and leisure centre contributed positively towards the Council's priorities relating to health and wellbeing;
- that the Club considered there was a lack of evidence in relation to the case for the leisure centre not reopening; and
- that the Club felt that little progress had been made towards the identification of an alternative site for an indoor bowling facility, following the closure of the existing facility.

The Cabinet then heard from Cllr Grattan, who was speaking on behalf of the Council's Labour Group. Cllr Grattan requested that, should the decision be made not to reopen the leisure centre, that all clubs currently connected to the leisure centre would be given every practical assistance to find alternative facilities. The Group also considered that, in that circumstance, any staff employed by the Farnborough Leisure Centre would be treated sensitively and the redeployment would be considered wherever possible.

The Report was presented by Cllr M.L. Sheehan, Operational Services Portfolio Holder. Members were informed that the leisure sector had been severely affected by Coronavirus restrictions and that Government guidance in relation to transition from lockdown indicated that leisure centres would not be allowed to reopen for a further six to nine months. Negotiations had taken place with People for Places Leisure in relation to a further extension to the contract to open and operate the Farnborough Leisure Centre once this was allowed but it was considered that this option carried unacceptable financial risks to the Council. Negotiations had also taken place with Places for People Leisure over the reopening and operation of the Aldershot Indoor Pools Complex, once this was allowed. Details of the negotiation processes were contained within the Report. Members were reminded that the Council was in the process of carrying out a feasibility study for a new combined Leisure Centre and Civic Hub within the Farnborough Civic Quarter development site. The Portfolio Holder stated that the Council would work towards the Aldershot Lido opening for the 2021 season, subject to the Government's restrictions in place at that time.

The Council's Chief Executive informed Members that a petition of 2,741 signatures against the leisure centre not reopening had been received. Whilst this did not meet the requirements contained within the Council's Constitution to be considered under the Petitions Scheme, the Cabinet would have regard to this and the queries raised by the petitioner would be answered in full.

Cllr K. Dibble, Leader of the Council's Labour Group, was invited to address the meeting and endorsed the comments made previously by Cllr Grattan in terms of clubs connected to the Farnborough Leisure Centre and the staff employed there.

The Cabinet then considered the matters in the Exempt Appendices A and B of the Report. During this discussion, the public were excluded from the meeting to avoid the disclosure of exempt information within Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 (information relating to financial or business affairs).

In discussing the options, Members raised queries in many areas, including the management costs of running the facilities, the financial implications of bringing forward the demolition and reprovision of the Farnborough Leisure Centre and the income sharing arrangements with Places for People Leisure for the Aldershot Indoor Pools Complex. In deciding to not reopen the Farnborough Leisure Centre and to award a three-year contract to Places for People Leisure to run the Aldershot Indoor Pools complex, Members expressed regret at the temporary loss of this important facility in Farnborough. It was felt, however, that these decisions were in the best interests of Rushmoor's Council Taxpayers.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) in light of the current position with the leisure market and the increased costs and other risks associated with the operation of the Farnborough Leisure Centre, the ongoing closure of the facility at the end of the existing contract, as set out in Report No, OS2101, be approved, with Council taking action to bring forward the demolition and reprovision of a new leisure facility on the Farnborough Civic Quarter site;
- (ii) the allocation of £100,000 from the Service Expenditure (Contingency) provision and inclusion as an additional item in the 2021/22 revenue budget, subject to approval of the Council's budget at the Council meeting on 25th February, 2021, be approved, to meet the costs associated with the end of the contract, including decommissioning, security and preparation for demolition; and
- (iii) the option to enter into a contract with Places for People Leisure to operate the Aldershot Indoor Pools Complex, on the terms set out in the Restricted Minute appended, be approved.

The Meeting closed at 6.59 pm.

CLLR D.E. CLIFFORD, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
