

Runnymede Borough Council

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

11 January 2007 at 7.30pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors N. Thewlis (Chairman), Ms C.M. Simmons (Vice-Chairman), A. Alderson, H.A. Butterfield, Mrs. C.E. Gant, Miss M.N. Heath, Mrs S.E. Jacobs, Mrs. R.M. Denby, P.I. Roberts and Ms G.E. Switalski.

Members of the Committee absent: None

Councillor Mrs L.M. Gillham also attended.

463. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGE TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Conservative Group had notified the Chief Executive Officer of its wish that Councillor M.J. Brown be removed from membership of the Committee and that Councillor Mrs. C.E. Gant be appointed in his place for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting. Thereafter Councillor Brown would be re-appointed.

The Chief Executive Officer had given effect to this request in accordance with Section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

464. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 December 2006 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

465. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Ms. C.M. Simmons and Mrs. C.E. Gant declared personal and prejudicial interests under the Runnymede Code of Conduct for Members in respect of the item concerning the Commercial Property Portfolio Review as they were, respectively, a tenant and a relative of a tenant of properties which formed part of the portfolio. Both Councillors Ms. Simmons and Mrs. Gant therefore withdrew from the room whilst the item was considered.

466. REVENUE ESTIMATES 2007/08

Members received and considered the draft estimates and fees and charges for the Committee's services in 2007/08. It was noted that the anticipated reduction in Pay and Display income as a result of the recent introduction of a 50p charge for up to one hour's parking in the Council's off-street car parks was currently anticipated to amount to £48,000. While it was possible that the new, lower, charge might stimulate turnover and therefore minimise the loss of revenue, this represented a significant additional commitment which had not featured in the Financial Forecast.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the draft Revenue Estimates for 2007/08 be approved as submitted and the Corporate Management Committee be requested to make provision accordingly; and**
- ii) the proposed schedules of charges for 2007/08 be approved to be effective either from the first week of April 2007 or 1 April 2007 as appropriate.**

467. OFF STREET PARKING CHARGES POLICY FOR CHRISTMAS AND MAGNA CARTA DAY

The Committee reviewed its policy of offering free off-street public car parking on Saturdays in December and during Magna Carta Day.

Members recalled that charges were temporarily suspended in all Pay and Display car parks on four Saturdays in December each year in order to encourage residents and visitors to undertake their Christmas shopping in the Borough. Free parking was also allowed in the Egham town centre car parks during the annual Magna Carta Day celebrations. However, the recent increases in car parking charges and the pressures on budgets arising from the revenue reductions exercise meant that it was no longer possible to absorb the loss of income from Pay and Display charges, estimated at £9,500 within existing budgets.

The Committee agreed that the best balance between the promotion of the Borough's retail centres and the loss of income could be achieved by reducing the Christmas parking concession from four Saturdays to two and maintaining the Magna Carta Day exemptions. This would reduce the revenue forgone to approximately £5,500. The cost would be built into the draft budget approved earlier in the meeting and an equivalent amount added to the Council's overall savings target.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the practice of offering free parking in the Egham Town Centre car parks on Magna Carta Day be reaffirmed:**
- ii) free parking be offered in all off street car parks on two Saturdays prior to Christmas; and**
- iii) the 2007/08 draft budget be amended by £5,500 to account for the lost income resulting from the concessions and an equivalent amount be added to the Council's savings target.**

468. PRECINCT CAR PARK, EGHAM – HACKNEY CARRIAGE RANK

The Committee received a request from the local taxi trade for the establishment of a hackney carriage rank in Egham town centre. Members noted that there was currently a relative under provision of ranks in the Borough with 17 bays available at six locations for use by the 105 licensed hackney carriages. The most suitable location for an additional rank, taking into account proximity to the town centre, pedestrian safety and vehicular access, appeared to be in the three longitudinal bays in the Precinct car park, behind the Arndale Way bus shelter. It was recognised, however, that this would entail some loss of Pay and Display income, albeit that this could partly be offset by an increase in the annual charges levied on hackney carriage vehicles. It was therefore agreed that consideration should also be given to other appropriate locations in the vicinity, most notably in Arndale Way which was already used intermittently as a stopping point by taxi drivers, apparently without detriment to passing bus services. A six month trial period would provide an opportunity to evaluate the supply and demand for taxis at the site and, if the car park was utilised, to assess the loss of revenue.

RESOLVED that –

- a hackney carriage stand be established in the Precinct Car Park, Egham or such other adjacent location as may be appropriate for a trial period of six months.**

469. M25 ACTIVE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL

The Committee received details of a proposal to introduce a temporary running lane on the hard shoulder at the southbound carriageway of the M25 between junctions 12 and 11 in order to relieve traffic congestion. Following the success of a pilot scheme on the M42, the Highways Agency now intended to permit motorists to use the hard shoulder under strictly controlled conditions during busy periods. This would necessitate modifications to the central reservation barrier, overhead gantries,

camera systems and lighting together with the introduction of emergency refuge areas every 500 metres to provide sanctuary for vehicles which had broken down. It was noted that the successful operation of the system would depend upon careful remote management by the CCTV equipped Regional Control Centres, particularly in respect of vehicular breakdowns. Nevertheless, Members welcomed the increased capacity at times of severe congestion which, it was hoped, would help prevent the diversion of vehicles onto the local road network. Enhanced traffic management was also likely to reduce air pollution. It was emphasised that adequate advance publicity of the scheme would be essential for motorists.

470. STONEYLANDS CLUB – WAIVER OF CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS

The Committee was informed that it had been necessary for Officers to waive Contract Standing Order 1.4 in respect of works preparatory to the demolition of the former Stoneylands Social Club in Egham. Members noted that it had only been possible to obtain one quotation for the disconnection of utilities to the property rather than the two that would normally be required for works valued at between £500 – £1,500. The quote, in the sum of £587 exclusive of VAT, had been accepted in order to secure the early clearance of the site in the interests of health and safety.

471. COMMERCIAL PROPERTY PORTFOLIO REVIEW

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

The Committee received details of significant activity in respect of the Council's commercial property portfolio during 2006.

Members noted that almost the entire portfolio was currently occupied and the new rentals agreed had been at reasonable levels. There were also a number of ongoing rent reviews which were expected to lead to betterments in the near future. The Committee was, however, informed of the potential consequences arising from the voluntary liquidation of a lessee which had managed five residential units in Addlestone on the Council's behalf. It would be necessary to identify a successor to re-establish the rental stream and act as an intermediary landlord.

472. WAPSHOTT ROAD DEVELOPMENT SCHEME - COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

Members gave consideration to a request from the Housing and Community Services Committee to authorise the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) in respect of a property within the Wapshott Road redevelopment scheme.

Following the recent grant of planning consent for the redevelopment of the estate, steps needed to be taken to prepare the site in order to ensure that the work could commence as quickly as possible. Approval had already been given for the making of CPOs in respect of four of the five properties within the redevelopment area that had previously been sold under the Right to Buy scheme. In order to further assist with the preparations it was now necessary to repurchase a property in Wapshott Road which was required for the second phase of the scheme. Members noted details of the present state of negotiations with the owners. Although it appeared likely that satisfactory arrangements for repurchase could be concluded by agreement within the necessary timeframe, provision needed to be made at this stage for the compulsory purchase of the property in case of delays or the breakdown of negotiations.

Having regard to the particular circumstances, and the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998, in particular Article 8 and Article 1 to the First Protocol, the Committee was satisfied that the grounds for the making of the CPO, listed below, were sufficient to justify the interference with the ownership rights;

- a) the need to reduce the length of time that tenants had to remain in these properties, to resolve their current uncertainties;
- b) the need to allow for early demolition of vacant buildings to avoid vandalism or potential anti-social behaviour;
- c) the need to meet the Decent Homes Target by 2010; and
- d) the need to reduce the costs incurred as a result of any significant delay with the redevelopment proposals.

Members emphasised that the initiation of compulsory purchase proceedings was intended as a failsafe in the last resort and would be discontinued if acquisition could be achieved by negotiation. Officers would be as supportive of the particular needs of the owner as circumstances permitted. While it would not be appropriate to directly procure independent professional advice on their behalf, efforts would, if necessary, be made to ensure that they had access through a third party to suitable independent representation. Any fees arising therefrom would be met by the Council. The cost of the repurchase, whether through negotiation or compulsory purchase powers, could be met from the provision in the Housing Capital Programme for the purpose.

RESOLVED that –

the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order in respect of the property identified in the agenda report for the purposes of demolition and redevelopment of the Wapshott Road Estate be approved.

473. 77 WOODHAM LANE, NEW HAW – DISPOSAL

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

Members gave consideration to the disposal of a vacant property at 77 Woodham Lane and the surrounding land for housing purposes.

The property, a large three bedroom house, had previously served as a group home for people with learning disabilities. It was now in a poor state of repair and would require improvements costed at approximately £52,000 to bring it to a satisfactory standard for ordinary residential accommodation. The Surrey Community Development Trust, a registered social landlord had, however, devised outline proposals for the provision of up to six units of affordable housing on the site of the existing building and its garden. This would not only enhance the general housing supply but also help the Council to meet its affordable housing target.

The Housing and Community Services Committee had therefore recommended that the property be sold to facilitate the provision of additional supported affordable housing or affordable housing or, if these were not feasible, on the open market. Members were agreeable to this approach in principle but noted that no final decision could be taken on the nature of the development or the manner of the disposal until detailed plans and costings were available, a view had been taken on the planning position and the availability of housing grant established. The scale of the potential capital receipt would be dependent upon the affordable housing value ascribed to the scheme.

RESOLVED that –

the Director of Administration and Leisure be authorised to dispose of 77 Woodham Lane, taking into account the aspirations of the Housing and Community Services Committee, and to determine the manner of disposal with the agreement of the Chairman of this Committee.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.24pm)