

Runnymede Borough CouncilECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE14 September 2006 at 7.30pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors N. Thewlis (Chairman), Ms C.M. Simmons (Vice-Chairman), A. Alderson, M.J. Brown, H.A. Butterfield, Miss M.N. Heath, Mrs Y.P.Lay, Miss R.M. Nixey, P.I. Roberts, and P.J. Waddell.

Members of the Committee absent: None

Councillors Mrs P.I. Broadhead, Mrs L.M. Gillham, H.W.V. Meares and D.W. Parr also attended for all or part of the meeting.

230. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Conservative Group had notified the Chief Executive Officer of its wish that the changes listed below be made to the membership of the Committee. The changes were for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting and thereafter the Councillors removed would be re-appointed.

Remove from Membership	Appoint instead
Councillor Mrs. G.E. Switalski	Councillor Mrs Y.P. Lay
Councillor Mrs S.E. Jacobs	Councillor P.J. Waddell

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

231. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 June 2006 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

232. ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Committee received details of proposed revisions to the Asset Management Plan. Members noted that the Plan, which provided the framework for the management of the Council's property portfolio, had been updated to include references to the latest strategies and contemporary capital schemes. The most recent performance indicator data would also be incorporated. The format was otherwise largely unchanged from previous editions and the amended document would continue to inform future consideration of the capital programme.

**RECOMMEND that –**

**the Asset Management Plan, attached at Appendix 'A' to the Minutes of the Corporate Management Committee of 7 September 2006, be approved.**

233. OFF STREET CAR PARKING CHARGES - REVIEW OF

(Ref: Minutes of Economic Development Committee, 5 October 2005, page 441, para. 263)

The Committee gave consideration to the annual review of off street car parking charges.

Members recalled that increased tariffs had been introduced in January 2006 in an attempt to offset the deficit on the car parking budget and maintain charges in line with car parks in comparable neighbouring areas. One of the principal changes had been an increase in the minimum charge for up to 2 hours parking from 50p to 80p. It had been suggested at the time that consideration could be

given at this review to the introduction of a lower rate of charge for the first hour if it could be justified by detailed data on parking patterns.

The Committee now noted that the increased charges appeared not to have led to a perceptible reduction in overall usage despite claims to the contrary and some local variation. This meant that substantially more income had been generated than originally anticipated, with an additional £78,000 being received in the first 6 months of operation compared to the corresponding period in the previous year. As a consequence, a surplus on the car parking budget of £126,600 was now forecast for 2006/07, although lower than anticipated income in August highlighted the variable nature of this projection.

Despite the overall success of the new tariffs there was, however, some evidence of resistance to the 80p minimum charge in those car parks with predominantly short term parking patterns. The occupancy rate at the Victoria Street car park in Englefield Green had fallen from 30% to 10% upon the introduction of the 80p charge. An average of 35% of all pay and display tickets sold were for stays of 2 hours and under and there appeared to be a strong public preference for the introduction of a lower one hour charge. Interview surveys with nearly 1,000 car park users indicated that 77% of drivers parking short term would have bought a one hour ticket had it been available. Consultation with the local Chambers of Commerce had also found significant support for a one hour minimum charge, while a 95 signature petition had been submitted calling for the introduction of the same in Egham town centre car parks on the grounds that the 80p charge deterred visitors to the town.

The Committee sought to balance the demand for the introduction of a one hour charge, and the need to maintain the vitality of the borough's towns and neighbourhood centres, with the potential reduction in income that a lower minimum rate would bring. Members recognised that the projected surplus on the car parks service would make a valuable contribution to the Council's revenue savings target and minimise the need for reductions in other budgets. Any loss of potential revenue would make it difficult for the Council to achieve a sustainable balance between income and expenditure over the period of its 5 year forecast. Nonetheless, the scale of the projected surplus provided some scope to accommodate the desire of the residents and traders for a lower minimum charge. There was the possibility that such a charge would increase turnover - and therefore capacity - in the car parks, enhance the attractiveness of the borough's retail provision and reduce congestion caused by on street parking. Surrey County Council, which would have to be consulted on any proposed change under the terms of the Decriminalised Parking Enforcement Agreement, had already indicated that it would support measures liable to reduce on street parking.

The Committee therefore agreed to the introduction of a one hour minimum charge of 50p. This was comparable with similar rates in nearby centres and offered a reasonable differential from 80p for 2 hours. It was estimated that the effect would be to reduce the surplus to between £78,900 (if there was no change in car park usage) and £86,800 (if it encouraged a 10% increase in the sale of minimum charge tickets). The hope was expressed that the new charge could be in place by the beginning of December. The cost of new signage, reprogramming the ticket machines and the statutory notices was estimated at £3,800.

There was, in addition, a view amongst some Members that the harmonisation of parking charges across the borough could no longer be sustained given the differing patterns of usage in the various car parks. It was considered that levels of usage, and therefore income, in locations such as Englefield Green, would be more effectively maximised by a variable system of charges which took account of local circumstance and demand. While the Committee recognised that there might be some merit in this approach, it was felt that the consideration of any further changes to the charging regime should await the next annual review, in September 2007, in order to be able to take account of the effect of the new 50p charge.

**RESOLVED that -**

- i) subject to there being no strong objections from Surrey County Council, off street car parking charges not be altered at the present time save for the introduction of a 50p tariff for parking up to one hour; and**
- ii) the report and decision of the Committee be communicated as the Council's formal response to the petitioners.**

234. FINANCIAL MONITORING STATEMENT

The Committee received the latest budgetary projections for economic development and highways services based on figures to 31 July 2006. Members noted details of the anticipated variations in the 2006/07 budget, together with the implications for the period 2007/08 - 2009/10, progress with the relevant savings targets identified in the revenue reductions programme and performance indicators for significant budgets within the Committee's remit. The projections for off street car parks Pay and Display income would require amendment to reflect the adjustment to the tariffs agreed earlier in the meeting.

Some concern was expressed at a £20,000 shortfall in Yellow School Bus fares income although there remained a possibility that this could be offset by additional Section 106 developer contributions.

235. 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 Compulsory Purchase Orders in respect of three properties within the Wapshott Road redevelopment scheme.

The Council was unable to proceed with plans for the redevelopment of Wapshott Road before the outcome of the recent Public Inquiry was known. However, steps needed to be taken to prepare the site in order to ensure either that the work could commence as quickly as possible if planning consent was granted or to progress alternative proposals if permission was not forthcoming. Three properties, in Cornwall Way and Bowes Road, previously sold under the Right to Buy scheme now needed to be repurchased to assist with these preparations. Members noted details of the financial packages offered to the owners and the present state of negotiations. Although it appeared likely that satisfactory arrangements for repurchase could be concluded within the necessary timeframe, provision needed to be made at this stage for the compulsory purchase of the properties in case of delays in the breakdown of negotiations.

Having regard for the circumstances in each case, 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 Compulsory Purchase Order, listed below, were sufficient to justify the interference with the ownership rights of the respective owners;

- 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 to serve merely as a failsafe and would be discontinued where acquisition could be achieved by negotiation. 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 Compulsory Purchase Orders in respect of the premises identified in the agenda report for the purposes of demolition and redevelopment of the Wapshott Road Estate be approved.**

236. THE PRECINCT, EGHAM

(Ref: Minutes of Economic Development Committee, September 2005, para 266, page 444 and January 2006 para 485, page 732).

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 was informed of the current state of discussions regarding a potential development at the Precinct, Egham.

Members recalled that Officers had been engaged in negotiations with the head lessees of the Precinct, initially Hutley Investments Ltd and subsequently their successors Albermarle Egham LLP, with a view to a redevelopment which would enhance retail provision and maximise the financial return to the Council. Although no detailed appraisal had yet been undertaken, outline proposals had now emerged which, preliminary indications suggested, might form the basis of a viable scheme capable of achieving the Council's twin objectives. Officers were therefore instructed to continue talks with Albermarle with a view to presentation of a detailed report to the Committee should it prove to be possible to propose terms. Negotiations in respect of other development opportunities on Council landholdings in the town centre would be delayed until a conclusion had been reached on the Precinct scheme since it would not be practical for the respective projects to be undertaken simultaneously.

**RESOLVED that –**

**the Director of Administration and Leisure be authorised to continue to negotiate with Albermarle Egham LLP and report in detail to Members in due course.**

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.31 pm)