

Runnymede Borough CouncilECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE15 November 2001 at 7.30 p.m.

Members of the Committee present: Councillors R.K. Habgood (Chairman), J.R. Furey (Vice-Chairman) E.G. Barrett, B.A. Clarke, T.T. McGrath, H.W.V. Meares, P.J. Poole, Ms C.M. Simmons, K.J.T. Walmsley and G.B. Woodger

Members of the Committee absent: None

Councillor A.P. Tollett also attended

373. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Conservative Group had notified the Chief Executive Officer of its wish that Councillor T. Dicks be removed from the membership of the Committee and that Councillor G. B. Woodger be appointed in his place for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting. Thereafter, Councillor Dicks 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.

374. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 September 2001 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

375. PROPOSED ADDLESTONE MARKET

(Ref: Minutes of Executive Committee 2 May 2001, page 1712, para 853)

The Committee gave further consideration to the proposed trial market at the Garfield Road Car Park, Addlestone in the light of the impending opening of the new Tesco Store in Station Road.

Members were reminded that at the suggestion of local Councillors, the Executive Committee had agreed in May 2001 to postpone implementation of the weekly market until the opening of the Tesco Store. There had been concerns that the town-centre parking provision would otherwise be subject to considerable pressure in view of the temporary loss of the car park at the superstore during the redevelopment period. The Tesco store was, however, now due to open on 26 November, enabling a decision to be taken on the form of the market operation.

While there was some evidence of increased retailer nervousness due to the imminent opening of Tesco, the Committee reaffirmed its support for the principle of a market. Despite suggestions by the market operator, some local Members and others that it would be better placed in Station Road, the Garfield Road car park was still considered to be the most appropriate location. It was recognised that there was a risk of having to stop or relocate the market in the event of a future redevelopment of the Garfield Road car park and this might prove to be unpopular. Nevertheless the minor works required to accommodate a market in Garfield Road could be completed within 4 - 6 weeks whereas the use of Station Road would entail a delay of several months. Much of the pavement in Station Road was not public highway and a market would need the consent of retailers who might feel threatened by it. There were also a number of physical obstacles which limited the available space. If the market were placed on the carriageway it would require either temporary one way working of the street or full closure leading to probable traffic congestion. The Council would also only be able to control the market through a street trading licence rather than being able to exercise the powers of a landowner. Garfield Road was thus the only immediately practicable location.

The Committee was, on balance, of the opinion that the opening of the market should not exactly coincide with that of Tesco. It was understood that Tesco would regard its car park as a public facility and introduce controls only if it was being abused. The views of the Action Addlestone Member Working Group, which had supported a combined opening so that stallholders could benefit from the increase in trade, were also noted. Nevertheless, given the likely level of interest in the new store and the impact on town centre parking Members considered it would be prudent to allow the demand for Tesco to settle. A brief delay until the New Year would also avoid too great a threat to the quality of the market by a hasty assemblage of traders. It was therefore proposed that the market should commence on 19 January 2002, subject to the agreement of the operator.

RESOLVED that -

the Borough Secretary and Leisure Services Officer be authorised to make all necessary arrangements for a one year trial market to take place on Saturday mornings at Garfield Road, Addlestone, commencing, subject to the agreement of the operator, on 19 January 2002

376. POTENTIAL CREMATORIUM DEVELOPMENT

The Committee received a detailed report concerning the feasibility of developing a crematorium within the borough.

Members noted that the estimated capital costs of a crematorium were likely to be in the region of £2.25 - £2.75m, excluding land acquisition, while revenue costs were anticipated to be between £170,000 - £250,000 per annum. On this basis a crematorium would need to attract approximately 1,400 cremations each year in order to be financially viable. The research undertaken by Officers indicated that Runnymede did not have a sufficient population base to provide more than half this figure, nor was it likely that sufficient numbers of cremations could be attracted from neighbouring boroughs. The area was well served with crematoria within a 10 mile radius which had the capacity to deal adequately with present and future demand. The occasional delays which occurred were caused by administrative requirements rather than lack of capacity.

Prospective sites in the borough were also likely to be very limited. The Committee noted that if the facility was constructed on Council owned land almost all sites of a suitable size would be within the Green Belt. This was likely to be unacceptable in planning terms. Strong public opposition could also be expected to any proposals brought forward, regardless of the location.

In view of these financial, demographic and planning difficulties Members considered that a crematorium development was unlikely to attract a commercial partner at the present time. There might, however, be an opportunity to revisit the concept at a later date if market circumstances were to change or a suitable operator emerged.

RESOLVED that -

subject to the views and comments of the Leisure and Environment Committee as to the service need for a local crematorium, no further action be taken.

377. CIVIC OFFICES REPROVISION - SPACE CONSULTANTS' BRIEF

(Ref: Minutes of the Executive Committee, 5 July 2000, page 270, para 139; and 16 May 2001, page 1730, para. 882)

The Committee gave consideration to the form and content of a briefing document for specialist space utilisation consultants in respect of the potential re-provision of the Civic Offices. Members noted the difficulties inherent in attempting to ascertain the Council's long term operational requirements. Nevertheless, scoping the nature and scale of the accommodation that would be required by the Council in any new provision was a necessary pre-requisite to work on sketch schemes and costings. It was therefore agreed to adopt the brief recommended by the recently constituted Civic Offices Member Working Group (attached at Appendix 'A'). Officers would ensure that the consultants were fully informed of the range of development options open to the Council, including joint provision with Surrey County Council.

A capital budget of £35,000 had previously been approved for the consultants and preliminary architectural input. Proposals would be invited from three specialists in the field before awarding the commission and it was expected that a report from the consultants would be presented to the Member Working Group in the first instance early in the New Year.

RESOLVED that -

the brief for Space Planning Consultants attached at Appendix 'A' be approved.

378. CHARTER PLACE, EGHAM

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 report would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraphs 3 and 7 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Act.

The Committee agreed to accept the surrender of a lease on premises at Charter Place, Egham. It was noted that this offered an opportunity to relocate a neighbouring tenant and, in turn, let the newly vacated unit on the open market, thereby optimising rental income. Officers were given authority to deal with the negotiations in the best interests of the Council.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the Borough Secretary and Leisure Services Officer be authorised to accept surrenders and grant new leases of premises at Charter Place subject to terms to be agreed with the Valuer to the Council; and**
- ii) the outcome be reported to Members at the appropriate time.**

379. LAND AT REAR OF EGHAM HILL

(Ref: Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee 24 March 1999, page 1093, para. 789)

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this report under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the report would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 7 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Act.

Members reaffirmed the decision of the former Policy and Resources Committee to dispose of a surplus plot of land to the rear of Egham Hill for development purposes. The sale of the site to the adjoining landowner had originally been approved in March 1999 subject to the grant of planning consent for two properties. As this had now been obtained and the circumstances were otherwise largely unchanged there were no reasons not to proceed with the transaction. The Committee noted that the proposals represented a unique opportunity to dispose of the land on extremely favourable terms. Given the time which had elapsed since the original agreement the Valuer to the Council was, however, asked to renegotiate the settlement in order to maximise the receipt. Officers were to investigate whether it would be possible to accommodate the request of another resident to purchase a 3 metre strip along the southern boundary of the site without detriment to the proposed development.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the decision of the Policy and Resources Committee of 24 March 1999 to dispose of the land in principle be reaffirmed; and**
- ii) subject to contract and all necessary consents, the Borough Secretary and Leisure Services Officer, having considered advice from the Valuer to the Council, be authorised to dispose of the land on the most favourable terms achievable and notify the Chairman of the outcome.**

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.06 pm)