

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING - THURSDAY, 23 JULY 2020**

Present:

Councillor Mitchell (in the Chair)

Councillors

Burdess

Galley

Hunter

Walsh

G Coleman

Hugo

Hutton

Wilshaw

In Attendance:

Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration

Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager

John Greenbank, Democratic Governance Senior Adviser (Scrutiny)

Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Job Creation

Councillor Tony Williams

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2 CALL IN REQUEST

The Committee considered the Call-in of Executive Decision EX29/2020 'Proposed appropriation and disposal of open space land at Stanley Park Golf Course, Blackpool'.

The Call-In request had been made by Councillor Tony Williams, whom the Chair invited to outline his reasons for doing so. Councillor Williams informed the Committee that in his view the decision to appropriate the land at Stanley Park Golf Course had caused significant local concern amongst residents, golf course users and local businesses. He stated that in his view the consultation process prior to the decision being taken had been poor and noted that the Executive had previously stated it was not bound by any responses that were received. The Committee was also informed that the results of the consultation had not been made readily available and were not easily accessible on the Council's website. Councillor Williams also stated that there did not appear to have been any consultation with Blackpool Victoria Hospital regarding the appropriation, despite the land being near to their Cardiac Unit. He also expressed the view that the Council had not considered alternative uses for the land. Councillor Williams therefore requested that the Committee refer the decision to a meeting of full Council for further consideration.

The original decision maker was the Executive and the relevant Cabinet Member, Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Job Creation, was invited to respond to Councillor Williams on behalf of the Executive and outline the reasons for the decision being made. He was supported by Mr Alan Cavill, the relevant Director who had advised the Executive.

Councillor Smith informed the Committee that the decision had been made to

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appropriate the land so that the site could be utilised for any alternative purpose and that the Executive could not and had not considered the merits of any proposed development in making the decision. He added that the determination of details of any development of the site was the responsibility of the Planning Committee who would have the opportunity to consider it once a planning application was submitted. Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Communication and Regeneration, added that the appropriation would change the use of the land from leisure to development land and allow anyone who wished to, to submit a planning application for its development. He added that it would be inappropriate for the Executive to pre-judge an application before a planning application was made, as this role would be undertaken as part of the planning process.

As per the Call in protocol the Chairman invited questions from Members. The Committee queried why no dialogue had been undertaken with the hospital as part of the consultation process. Mr Cavill responded that the Hospital and Blackpool Zoo had both submitted bids as part of an earlier tender process for the land and therefore were aware that there would be a development of some nature on the land. Upon purchase of the land, the Council had subsequently held a tender process to lease the land. It was noted that the bidding process had been won by Homes Investment Properties (HIP), who held the short-term lease to operate the golf course.

Members of the Committee also asked if the end of the consultation process at a time in March 2020 when the COVID-19 crisis was developing meant that consultees could not have been focussed on responding to the consultation. Councillor Smith replied that the consultation had ended on 19 March 2020, which was before the country went in lockdown and that over two-hundred responses had been received by that time, which indicated that many people had been able to engage with the process.

The Committee also queried if the loss of the open space at the golf course undermined the Council Plan Priority Two; Our Communities: Creating Stronger Communities and Increasing Resilience, and asked if policies such as the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, the Open Spaces Audit and the declaration of a Climate Emergency had been taken into consideration when making the decision. Councillor Smith responded that all relevant policies had been considered as part of the decision making process. He added that there were already significant amounts of publically accessible green space around the land affected by the decision including Stanley Park.

Members asked if the process undertaken in this instance, namely determining that there was demand for development of the site before a decision to appropriate the land was taken instead of vice versa whereby the land would be appropriated first was unusual. Mr Cavill responded that either approach was acceptable.

The Committee asked for clarification on what was expected to occur in the event the decision was implemented. Mr Cavill replied that it was expected that HIP would submit a planning application for development of the site, which if successful would lead to them taking out a long-term lease of the land. He also added that once the appropriation had taken place that anyone would be free to apply for planning permission on the land.

During the debate, the following proposal was made, seconded, voted upon and lost:

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That no further action be taken.

After further discussion, the Committee agreed that the decision be referred to full Council for consideration for the following reasons:

- To allow alternative options for the use of the land to be debated by all Members;
- To ensure that Blackpool's community receives best value from the usage of the land; and
- The Committee did not believe that the Executive had considered all the relevant factors in making its decision.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.25 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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