

CALL-IN SUB COMMITTEE

26 JANUARY 2006

Chair: * Councillor Mitzi Green

Councillors: * Gate * Jean Lammiman
* Ann Groves (2) * Osborn

* Denotes Member present
(2) Denotes category of Reserve Member

[Note: Councillors D Ashton, Marilyn Ashton and Mrs Joyce Nickolay also attended this meeting to speak on the item indicated at Minute 67 below].

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**PART II - MINUTES**63. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:-

Ordinary MemberReserve Member

Councillor Thammaiah

Councillor Ann Groves

64. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business to be transacted at this meeting.

65. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That (1) in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, this meeting be called with less than 5 clear working days' notice by virtue of the special circumstances and grounds for urgency detailed below:-

Special Circumstances/Grounds for Urgency: Under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 22.6, a meeting of the Call-in Sub-Committee must be held within 7 clear working days of the receipt of a request for call-in. This meeting therefore had to be arranged at short notice and it was not possible for the agenda to be published 5 clear working days prior to the meeting.

(2) all items be considered with the press and public present.

66. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2005, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

67. **Call-In of Cabinet Decision: Role of the Wealdstone Regeneration Advisory Panel:**

The Sub-Committee considered a decision of Cabinet made at the meeting held on 12 January 2006, which determined that the Wealdstone Regeneration Advisory Panel (WRAP) be dissolved following its meeting on 19 January 2006.

The decision had been called-in on the grounds of inadequate consultation with stakeholders prior to the decision.

As part of the agenda, Members received the notice invoking the call-in procedure, the tabled report presented to Cabinet on 12 January 2006, the subsequent minute, the report presented to WRAP on 19 January 2006 and a statement from a Member who backbenched at WRAP. In addition, a Member who was a signatory to the call-in of the Cabinet decision tabled a diagram defining the outlined transitional plan and the proposal to subsume WRAP and its work.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Housing and the Portfolio Holder for Communications, Partnership and Human Resources had indicated that they were unable to attend the Sub-Committee. However, the Portfolio Holder for Communications, Partnership and Human Resources had provided a statement with

minutes of the relevant Cabinet and WRAP meetings appended to it, which was tabled at the meeting. Members agreed to adjourn the meeting for 10 minutes in order to read all the tabled documents.

The Chair invited a Member representing the signatories to the call-in to speak. The Member expressed her concern at Cabinet's decision to dissolve WRAP as she felt that it had not been formally debated and agreed at WRAP prior to being referred to Cabinet. She was also critical of the way in which the decision had been made in that the report had been tabled at Cabinet without any explanation of its urgency. In addition, she felt that the traders had not been consulted on the immediate dissolution of WRAP. The Member was of the view that as a report to cease the Best Value Advisory Panel (BVAP) was being presented to Cabinet, it appeared to be "convenient" to insert a brief note on the cessation of WRAP as well. She stated that the abolition of BVAP had however been discussed at its Panel meeting prior to coming to Cabinet. The Member also raised concerns that WRAP and its workload had been subsumed into the Wealdstone Neighbourhood Renewal Forum (WNRF) but the Forum was not yet in existence. The Member felt that the process had been hastily rushed through without the proper consultation of Members and stakeholders and she requested that WRAP continue until the relevant consultation and handover had been completed.

The Director of Strategic Planning advised that a report to Cabinet in July 2005 had implicitly stated that WRAP would be subsumed by the WNRF, as the ongoing initiatives in the area would be more effective if it was coordinated at neighbourhood level, thereby giving a more holistic approach. He also confirmed that a report presented to Cabinet in November 2005 had clearly indicated steps taken in terms of consultation with WRAP. He did confirm, however, that a report had not been submitted to WRAP for discussion.

Following questions from Members of the Sub-Committee on a number of issues, the Director of Strategic Planning confirmed that he was not the author for the report, which had been tabled at Cabinet and that he had only had sight of it prior to the meeting itself. In response to the quality and contents of the report, the Director acknowledged that it was not presented in the standard format and did not contain the relevant consultations and clearances. A Member challenged the urgency of the report and questioned why it could not have been submitted to the following meeting of Cabinet. Responding, the officer indicated that the request may have arisen in light of the Best Value report, which had been presented to the same meeting of Cabinet, calling for the dissolution of that Panel.

The Sub-Committee, having considered all the evidence, discussed the validity of the grounds for call-in. Some Members felt that the process of consultation and reporting to the relevant Panel had been flawed throughout and that the call in should be upheld. Other Members were of the view, however, that adequate consultation had taken place given that Members had indicated that they accepted that WNRF would replace WRAP. Whilst the report should have contained more detail, it had provided sufficient evidence on which to base a decision and that the action had been proportionate to the desired outcome.

RESOLVED: That the grounds for the call-in be rejected and the decision be implemented.

[Note: Councillors Jean Lammiman and Osborn wished to be recorded as not being in agreement with the above resolution].

68. **Timescale for the Arrangement of Call-in Sub-Committee Meeting:**

Further to this having been raised as an item of other business, a Member noted that the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Housing and the Portfolio Holder for Communications, Partnership and Human Resources, were not present at the meeting due to prior commitments. Members stated that it would have assisted the Sub-Committee in reaching a decision if they had been able to question the relevant Portfolio Holders directly. The Chair reminded Members that, in accordance with the Constitution, a meeting of the Call-In Sub Committee had to be arranged within 7 clear working days of receipt of the call-in request, an extremely tight deadline, which may as a result prevent attendance by relevant parties due to their prior commitments.

The Chair suggested that the Constitutional Review Working Group review the requirement with a view to extending the period in which a meeting could be arranged.

RESOLVED: That the Constitutional Review Working Group be requested to review the appropriateness of the timescale for the arrangement of Call-In Sub-Committee

meetings, which was currently required to be within 7 clear working days of the receipt of a call-in request.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.59 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MITZI GREEN
Chair