

# CABINET MINUTES

## 22 NOVEMBER 2012

**Chairman:** \* Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar

**Councillors:**

* Bob Currie	* Phillip O'Dell
* Margaret Davine	* David Perry
* Keith Ferry	* Sachin Shah
* Mitzi Green	* Bill Stephenson
† Graham Henson	

**In attendance:  
(Councillors)**

Husain Akhtar	Minute 529
Marilyn Ashton	Minute 529
Susan Hall	Minute 529
Barry Macleod-Cullinane	Minute 529
Paul Osborn	Minute 529

\* Denotes Member present  
† Denotes apologies received

### RESOLVED ITEMS

#### 537. Key Decision: Whitchurch Playing Fields

Cabinet received a report of the Corporate Director of Place Shaping, which set out the outcome of negotiations with the Whitchurch Playing Fields Consortium in connection with contractual arrangements for the proposed development of a Sports and Leisure Complex at Whitchurch Playing Fields.

The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts welcomed the report and the proposals which would provide superb facilities for the residents of Harrow. He drew Cabinet's attention to the obligations and termination rights, associated with the proposed Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Council and Whitchurch Playing Fields Consortium and the benefits that such an agreement would provide to schools

and local organisations. He invited the Corporate Director of Place Shaping to set out the history of the project.

The Corporate Director of Place Shaping informed Cabinet that the project had been initiated in November 2008 culminating in a series of reports to Cabinet and the choice of a preferred bidder, Whitchurch Playing Fields Consortium, in November 2011. The Corporate Director added that the Consortium was expected to employ and deploy resources to take forward and engage with the public.

The Corporate Director added that, in June 2012, Cabinet received a detailed report providing an appropriate balance of the concerns raised by, including support received from, the wider community. Cabinet was now being asked to determine key commercial matters relating to negotiations with the Whitchurch Playing Fields Consortium. He added that the Council's regulatory process was separate from its responsibility as a land owner and the same applied to its planning and licensing processes, and each could stop the project coming to fruition.

Cabinet was advised that it had authority to decide on the commercial terms and that the application for the site to be designated as a Village Green would be considered separately. The Corporate Director informed Cabinet that a decision in favour would allow the Whitchurch Playing Fields Consortium to compile a planning application; however, it was likely that it would await the determination on the Village Green application prior to making progress on planning processes. He added that the planning and licensing processes would also involve separate and independent consultation.

The Corporate Director outlined the three elements to the recommendation before Cabinet and explained that the lease for 99 years with effect from satisfactory completion of the development works and the SLA would only be completed once the facility had been built by the Whitchurch Playing Fields Consortium. He added that the site would revert back to the Council should the proposal stop at any stage of the process.

The Portfolio Holders for Planning and Regeneration, Business Transformation and Communications, and Community and Cultural Services commended the report to Cabinet on the basis that the Council had an opportunity to open a great sports facility in Harrow and commended the recommendations. They commented as follows:

- planning and licensing processes would be impartial and judicial. The situation in relation to the Whitchurch Playing Fields might alter once these independent processes had been considered;
- Harrow had an abundance of playing fields. However, many of the fields were not 'fit for purpose', especially during the winter months;
- consideration of an application for the Whitchurch Playing Fields to be designated as a Town Green was expected to be completed within six months;

- the Council would be willing to listen to the local residents should they have a separate commercial venture in mind;
- the proposal would provide much needed facilities for the various communities, including schools and people with disabilities, at nil cost to the Council.

The Portfolio Holder for Business Transformation and Communications cited the example of Wood Farm, where those who had initially objected to the proposal to open the land had subsequently welcomed and embraced it. The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration referred to an article in a local newspaper which stated that the joint Chairmen of Abchurch Residents' Association had stated that they would be delighted to see the fields developed for sport. The question that had arisen was how best the site could be developed.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (1) having considered the proposed terms which have been negotiated, provisionally agreed and recommended by officers, Option 1 ,set out in the report, be agreed;
- (2) the Corporate Director of Place Shaping, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Property and Major Contracts, be authorised to conclude contractual arrangements on the basis of Option 1 and the heads of terms set out in the report.

**Reason for Decision:** To attract inward investment to establish a modern sports and leisure facility, to include substantially improved playing pitches, for the benefit of local schools and residents and at no direct financial cost to the Council.

**Alternative Options considered and rejected:** As set out in the officer's report. Option 2 was rejected.

**Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member / Dispensation granted:** None.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.31 pm, closed at 9.15 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR THAYA IDAIKKADAR  
Chairman