



Minutes of a special meeting of Council held remotely on 21 October 2020

Councillors present:

Nigel Robbins - Chair

Dilys Neill - Vice-Chair

Stephen Andrews
Mark Annett
Julian Beale
Tony Berry
Gina Blomefield
Claire Bloomer
Patrick Coleman
Rachel Coxcoon
Tony Dale
Andrew Doherty

Mike Evemy
Jenny Forde
Joe Harris
Mark Harris
Stephen Hirst
Robin Hughes
Roly Hughes
Nikki Ind
Sue Jepson (from 6.12pm)
Julia Judd

Richard Keeling
Juliet Layton
Andrew Maclean
Nick Maunder
Richard Morgan
Richard Norris
Gary Selwyn
Lisa Spivey
Ray Theodoulou
Steve Trotter
Clive Webster

Officers present:

Chief Finance Officer
Interim Chief Executive

Democratic Services
Interim Head of Legal Services and
Monitoring Officer

CL.47 Apologies were received from Councillor Ray Brassington and from Councillor Sue Jepson for lateness (Councillor Jepson did not take part in the vote having arrived late).

CL.48 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Berry declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item (3), as he was the Interim Chair of the Friends of the Corinium Museum.

CL.49 SLM Financial Support November 2020 - March 2021

Council was requested to make a decision on a further financial support package to enable SLM Everyone Active (SLM) to continue the provision of leisure services across the District and operation of the Corinium Museum during a period of expected continuing Covid-19 restrictions.

The Deputy Leader introduced the report and commented upon various aspects. He explained he wished to record his thanks to Amanda Hart, Director of the Corinium Museum, and Councillor Forde whose efforts had

resulted in £111,000 being saved from the financial request of the Council and also to Councillors Andrews, Norris and Theodoulou for their correspondence with Councillor Forde and himself enabling information to be shared across parties. The Deputy Leader stated that the current situation was unprecedented and required unprecedented actions and he urged Members to support the recommendations as outlined in the report.

In seconding the recommendations, Councillor Forde explained that health and wellbeing had been raised as key objectives during the pandemic nationally and that these objectives were also a key ambition of the administration. She added that whilst recognising the Council needed to be careful when spending public funds, the Council needed to ensure leisure facilities remained open for the benefit of the District's residents and also urged Members to support the recommendations.

The Deputy Leader then advised that he wished to move an Amendment in addition to recommendations (a) to (e), so as to include a further recommendation (f). He advised that this had been added in recognition of comments received from the Opposition Group prior to the meeting. The Amendment was as follows:-

'(f) That in preparation for the current contract coming to an end, a Cross Party Member Working Group will be set up early in 2021 to draw up a detailed specification which will include Key Performance Indicators against which any future management arrangements will be measured; and to consider an appraisal of the options for such arrangements in Quarter 3 of 2021 when the nature of the leisure market post-Covid-19 is clearer.'

This Amendment was seconded by Councillor Forde.

Councillor Andrews was then invited to address the meeting. He extended his thanks to Councillors Evemy and Forde for their Amendment and explained that the main element of the Amendment, regarding the establishment of a Cross Party Working Group, and the focus on the commercial elements and cost saving measures of the centres, were also the main focus of his Group's intended Amendment. He added that there was a requirement to recognise that the District's leisure services needed to be provided effectively in a business-like way and that it was imperative for the Group to be established as soon as was practical. Councillor Andrews then proposed that the Amendment be altered to change:

'reference to 'Quarter 3 of 2021' to Quarter 1'.

In speaking to the proposed amendment and the comment made by Councillor Andrews, Councillor Theodoulou added that the stability of the contractor was difficult to determine and that they had 'threatened' the Council with risk of legal challenge. He explained that it made sense to therefore start work now, given the unknown future situation.

The Deputy Leader, as the Mover of the initial Amendment, was then invited to address the meeting. He explained that it was intended for the Working Group to be established early in 2021 and that he did not consider it reasonable for the Group to be established prior to then, given that the

existing contract ran until 2023. He also added that he did not consider it suitable for the Council to be rushing any decisions and that discussion and review by all Council Members should be allowed.

Councillor Forde, in Seconding the original Amendment, advised that she also considered Quarter 3 of 2021 was the most appropriate time for any appraisal.

On being put to the vote, the Proposition to include the Amendment regarding the addition of a recommendation (f) as originally proposed, was CARRIED. The record of voting was as follows:-

Record of Voting - for 32, against 0, abstention 1, absent 1.

Councillor Andrews then Proposed an Amendment, as follows:

‘That the Working Group be set up by the November 2020 meeting of Council and that an initial report be provided by the beginning of Quarter 1 2021/22.’

This Amendment was then Seconded by Councillor Theodoulou.

Councillor Coleman, in response to the Amendment then suggested that membership of the Group could be determined within the political groups and be confirmed prior to the establishment of the Group in 2021. He also added that this would enable Group Members to be appropriately briefed prior to starting serving on the Group and therefore suggested Councillors Andrews and Theodoulou should withdraw the Amendment as it related only to specific details of the Group’s working.

The Deputy Leader and Councillor Forde as the Proposer and Secunder responded to comments and explained that they had no issues with the Group membership being determined early and research being undertaken, but added that they did not consider it realistic that a report could be prepared in January 2021, given the ongoing uncertainty both nationally and locally.

Councillor Andrews then responded to the comment by Councillor Coleman and explained that he agreed with the suggestion that Group Member nominations could be agreed prior to the establishment of the Group and that research start to be undertaken into the relationship between the Council and SLM prior to the Group being formed.

Councillor Theodoulou added that he agreed with the suggestion and that the main requirement of the Group was to determine a suitable outcome for leisure facilities in the long term, which he considered would require various complexities to be investigated.

The Leader explained that he wished to place on record his thanks to the Deputy Leader and Councillor Forde and also to Amanda Hart, Director of the Corinium Museum, who had enabled significant savings to the requested funding from the Council. He added that it was expected the Leisure

Strategy, that was due to be launched in early 2021, would help address known issues regarding the District's leisure service and provision.

The Deputy Leader was invited to address the Council again and explained that the key requirement was to ensure the District's leisure centres remained open. He added that whilst this currently required substantial funding by the Council, Members should vote to support the recommendations for the benefit of the District's residents.

The Chair concluded that Officers would take action upon the appropriate instructions following suggestions and comments made by Members during the meeting.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the financial support package for SLM for November 2020 - March 2021, at a capped cost of £291,146, be approved;**
- b) the requirement for SLM to pay the Council a monthly management fee of £8,773 for the period 1 November 2020 to 31 March 2021 (total lost income to the Council of £43,865) be waived;**
- c) Council approves a profit share mechanism to recover the support offered to SLM as set out at recommendations a) and b). The Council will be entitled to take a 75% share of profits in excess of the tendered financial submission until the funding is recovered;**
- d) authority to finalise and sign an agreement with SLM confirming the terms upon which this financial package is based, be delegated to the Interim Chief Executive in consultation with the Deputy Leader of the Council or in his absence with the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing;**
- e) Cabinet reviews the results of the open book process in January 2021 when outturn financial and visitor data from September and October 2020 and indicative data for November 2020 will be available;**
- f) in preparation for the current contract coming to an end, a Cross Party Member Working Group will be set up early in 2021 to draw up a detailed specification which will include Key Performance Indicators against which any future management arrangements will be measured; and to consider an appraisal of the options for such arrangements in Quarter 3 of 2021 when the nature of the leisure market post-Covid-19 is clearer.**

Record of Voting - for 32, against 0, abstention 1, absent 1.

The Meeting commenced at 6.00pm, adjourned due to technical failing between 6.55pm and 6.59pm, and closed at 7.06pm

(END)