



RURAL, ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

11 JANUARY 2017

Present:

Councillors J. Orton (Chair),
E. Hutchinson (Vice Chair), G. Boterill, T. Culley,
R. De Burle, M.C.R Graham MBE, L. Higgins, P. Posnett,
M. Sheldon, J. Simpson,

Chief Executive
Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods, Head of Regulatory Services,
Central Services Manager, Town Centre Manager, Corporate Property Office,
Administrative Assistant for Communities and Neighbourhoods.

R38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor T. Beaken and Councillor P. Baguley.

R39. MINUTES

The public minutes from the 2 November 2016 were authorised to be signed by the Chairman. It was decided that the exempt minutes would be discussed at the end of the meeting.

R40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Orson and Councillor Posnett declared a personal interest in any item relating to the Leicestershire County Council by virtue of being County Councillors. Councillor Posnett and Councillor De Burle declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 10 Urgent Business – Pet Friendly Town Update by virtue of them being past employees of MARS. Councillor Posnett also declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8 Persimmon Access to the Country Park by virtue of her being a member of the Friends of Melton Country Park.

R41. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

There were no recommendations from other committees.

Due to external representatives and members of the public the Chairman advised he was slightly moving the agenda items to deal with these items first.

R42. URGENT ITEM – PET FRIENDLY TOWN UPDATE

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report to update members on the progress on developing the Pet Friendly Town following support on the presentation to members prior to their meeting on the 2 November 2016.

The Communications Manager from Mars Petcare gave a brief overview of the report bringing member's attention to 3.0 in particular the social and health benefits of pet ownership as well as the positive affects on business that being pet friendly can have.

Members had a brief discussion regarding their support in making Melton Pet friendly with one member adding that they were pleased that this project encourages responsible pet ownership through access to ownership advice and education. Another member noted that having spoken with the Melton learning hub the response was enthusiastic and they have come up with the idea to get a fund raising group to bring a 'dog wash facility' to the country park, the member also noted that this project will have a real benefit towards young people in Melton.

The Chairman moved that recommendation 2.1 that Members support the 'Pet Friendly Town' initiative with Mars Petcare with a view of submitting a Pet Friendly Town award application to be accepted, this was seconded by Councillor Posnett. All councillors were in favour.

RESOLVED that recommendation 2.1 be approved.

R43. PERSIMMON ACCESS TO THE COUNTRY PARK

The Head of Central Services and The Head of Regulatory Services submitted a report to update members on the request from Persimmon Homes for footpath access from their new housing estate off Scalford road, Melton Mowbray into the country park.

The Head of Regulatory Services presented an over view of the report stating the main objectives:

- 1) Present Appendix B to Persimmon as an alternative however to note that the Council is able to advise but cannot make Persimmon do so.
- 2) To note that we have a survey of the park in hand to identify where it should and should not be built on in future projects to put the Council ahead of any similar situations.

Councillor Posnett presented The Head of Regulatory Services with questions on behalf of a member of the public:

Q1) In Reference to 3.1- Why did the planning department not realise that the boundary the foot path links to is not the boundary to the country park, So that the condition is and was impossible to implement without third party engagement?

A) The link between the site boundary and the country park boundary was always known by Planning and Committee and the connection was never a requirement, it was always presented as an opportunity for Persimmon to pursue it they wanted.

Q2) In Reference to 6.2- If Persimmons need to negotiate wayleave over the route they would be looking for lowest cost option which in the public members opinion would be a slightly different route to 1b. This being along side of hedgerow, not across, to reduce land being taken as may need to be fenced off due to cattle in the field. Can this alternative be considered subject to ecological consideration?

A) If Committee wish to, we can assess in ecological terms further options however we are sufficiently confident with the alternative suggested. An Ecologist has inspected the land and has stated that neither alternative would raise any serious ecological issues as the land has no real ecological value.

Q3) In Reference to 8.1- Who will provide suitable access across the link between country park boundary and internal network of footpaths?

A) The Link within The Country Park boundary is Melton Borough Council Territory and therefore our responsibility to facilitate however this would be at Persimmon expense. There are minimal works necessary i.e. works to the dirt road.

Q4)In reference to 9.0-The member of public wanted to note that It is right to identify it as high risk that Persimmon may decide not to make the connection but so reducing costs is important.

A) We can take this forward in terms of inviting Persimmon and presenting the alternatives however ultimately it requires the agreement and action from Persimmon, we can not make them do it.

Q5) In Reference to 6.2- The Member of the public feels disappointed that once approved Melton Borough Council will wash hands of taking connection forward.

A) Melton Borough Council will not be washing their hand of it if there is an agreement made.

A Member requested information on to whether QE 'Fields in Trust' had been informed and if so what their response was. The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods stated that they had been in contact and had no issue with the alternatives presented, however they would appreciate being kept informed of further details were known.

A Member stated that they disagreed with the member of public in reference to 6.2 as the alternative mentioned would bring the route through soggy damp ground which could lead to public complaints, the Member noted that they would support route 1b.

A discussion was had in regards to requiring an ecologist to go over route 1b however it was decided that it was not needed as previous ecologist stated that this route had very minimal wildlife and no ecological value.

A discussion took place over the personal perception of the footpath as many Members had been told that Persimmon had told members of the public that they had acquired a verbal agreement from the council over the footpath. The Head of Regulatory Services stated that he had contacted Persimmon regarding this, to which they have apologised and stated they should not have been promising things before they knew it could be done. A Member also wanted it stating again that at no point did planning give permission.

A Member enquired as to whether the route was already being used illegally as a couple members had heard it was, however no evidence has been presented and the council cannot see signs of use at the site. The Member also wanted it noting that although they may build the alternative route the public may still use the other route if they feel it is the 'quickest' option. To which a member responded that they believed the public will most likely use the 'easiest' option.

The chair moved that recommendations 2.1 and 2.11 be accepted to which Councillor Posnett seconded. All council members are in favour.

RESOLVED that recommendation 2.1 and 2.2 be approved.

R44. FEES FOR TAXI LICENSES 2017/18

The Head of Regulatory Services presented a report to determine the fees for the taxi vehicle, driver and operator licenses for 2017/18.

The Head of Regulatory Services noted that this was a 1 year on update on cost and income and that a full report will be made when the financial year finishes.

The Head of Regulatory Services drew Members' attention to;

- Appendix a Forecast Year End Position, In particular paying attention to the deficit at which he noted we are recovering from.
- Appendix b Review of Charges noting that at the moment operators are not making difference to the deficit.

The chairman moved that Recommendation 2.1 be accepted, to which Councillor Higgins Seconded. All Council members were in favour.

RESOLVED that recommendation 2.1 be approved.

R45. FAIRTRADE STATUS FOR MELTON

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report to update members on the towns Fairtrade status and progress over the last two years and to seek to request that Melton Borough Council pass a council resolution to again support the application for the town and Borough Fairtrade's status in 2017.

The Town Centre Manager gave an overview of the report bringing member's attention to Appendix A showing that Fairtrade stockists are growing as well as Fairtrade events and promotion.

The chair moved that Recommendation 2.1 and 2.2 be accepted, which was seconded by Councillor de Burle. All Councillors were in favour.

RESOLVED that recommendations 2.1 and 2.2 be approved.

R46. ANNUAL TOWN BENCHMARKING REPORT

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report for members to note and comment on the People & Places Town Benchmarking Report 2015, comparing the town centres overall annual performance against comparable large market towns and national statistics.

The Town Centre Manager presented the report bringing members attention to:

- 3.2 explaining how the data was recorded with surveys ,counts, car park usage and vacant unit rates as well as the new 24 hour Spring board footfall counter located in the market place.
- 3.3 noting that Melton with 447 businesses is classed as a large town is therefore compared to other large towns such as Loughborough and Hucknell.
- 3.5.1 Focusing on high independent business longevity within the town centre.
- 3.5.5 Showing how tourist and visitor numbers have increased by 1% since 2014 reflecting Melton's promotion as a destination town.
- 3.6.1 Showing that 50% of businesses surveyed are experiencing an increase in turnover, compared to 44% in 2014 and 67% expecting a moderate increase over the next year.
- 3.6.3 Explaining that although businesses still see competition to be a barrier the council has been using the Town centre App to help with marketing and promotion as well as holding business training workshop to help with social media marketing.
- 3.6.4 Explaining that businesses also see increased business costs and rental values as a barrier the Council has been helping with Small Business Rate Relief Schemes and Business Grant Schemes.
- 3.6.5 Showing aspects of the town centre were rated in the business survey as excellent such as accessibility on foot, landscaping, daytime safety and the variety of cafes/eating places/pubs. The towns Physical appearance, landscaping, cleanliness, signage/information and town centre image were also highly rated by businesses as acceptable. As well as 85% of businesses felt that evening safety was excellent or acceptable, a significant increase on 73% in 2014.
- 3.7.5 Noting that although Thursday's footfall has slightly decreased in 2015 to an average of 232, compared to 258 in 2014, it still remains higher than the national large town average of 199.
- 3.9 Explaining that after 5pm evening economy is still significantly low so demonstrating the need to continue to brand the town's evening economy, to support the evening economy businesses and increase evening footfall. This will be delivered in conjunction with the Purple Flag Steering Group.
- 3.11 Stating that car parking provision and costs still remain a barrier for businesses and visitors however pilot car parking initiatives such as Free after Three, Click & Collect and Business Parking schemes will be used to support businesses.

A discussion was had by Members over the impact of the car parking changes and tariff charges agreed previously the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods advised that a further Car Parking report will be brought back to this Committee in June with a more detailed report on the impact.

A Member noted that they were delighted with report and wanted to express appreciation and praise as changing the perception of the town centre is a

hard job and this turn around will help with the town centre plan. The Member also wanted to express praise for becoming the first town in the county to receive the Purple Flag.

Other Members also expressed gratitude and praise for the report and look forward to the market revamp.

The Chair moved to accept Recommendation 2.1; this was seconded by Councillor Sheldon. All Councillors were in favour.

RESOLVED that recommendation 2. 1 be approved.

R47. UPDATE ON DECISIONS

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted an update on decisions report that was noted by the Members of this committee.

The Chairman gave a brief overview of both updates as R12 was discussed during Item 8 of this meeting and The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods noted that R22 Corporate Review of Charges 2017-18 will be brought to members at the June 2017 meeting of this Committee.

RESOLVED that the Update on Decisions document be noted.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED that the Public be excluded during the consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (Access to Information : Exempt Information) under paragraph

R48 EXEMPT MINUTES

An Amendment is to be made to the previous exempt minutes of the 2nd November 2016.

R49 CATTLE MARKET UPDATE

The Strategic Director and Corporate Policy Officer to submitted a report to update members on exempt matters relating to the cattle market Phase1 and proposed re-development including the project risks.

RESOLVED that the Recommendations be approved.

The meeting that started at 6:30pm finished at 7:40pm

Chairman