

MINUTES

Council

(Extraordinary Meeting)



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Thursday, 2 September 2021,
1:00pm

Meres Leisure Centre, Trent Road,
Grantham NG31 7ZQ

PRESENT

Councillor Breda-Rae Griffin (Chairman)
Councillor Ian Stokes (Vice Chairman)

Councillor Ashley Baxter	Councillor Virginia Moran
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing	Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Mrs Pam Bosworth	Councillor Robert Reid
Councillor Robert Broughton	Councillor Nick Robins
Councillor George Chivers	Councillor Penny Robins
Councillor Louise Clack	Councillor Susan Sandall
Councillor Kelham Cooke	Councillor Jacky Smith
Councillor Helen Crawford	Councillor Mrs Judy Smith
Councillor John Dawson	Councillor Judy Stevens
Councillor Phil Dilks	Councillor Adam Stokes
Councillor Barry Dobson	Councillor Jill Thomas
Councillor Graham Jeal	Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew
Councillor Gloria Johnson	Councillor Hilary Westropp
Councillor Mrs Rosemary Kaberry-Brown	Councillor Amanda Wheeler
Councillor Anna Kelly	Councillor Mark Whittington
Councillor Philip Knowles	Councillor Jane Wood
Councillor Matthew Lee	Councillor Paul Wood
Councillor Annie Mason	Councillor Linda Wootten
Councillor Penny Milnes	Councillor Ray Wootten
Councillor Virginia Moran	

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Karen Bradford (Chief Executive)
Alan Robinson (Deputy Chief Executive)
Nicola McCoy-Brown (Director for Growth and Culture)
Andrew Cotton (Director for Housing and Property)
Richard Wyles (Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer))
Ken Lyon (Assistant Chief Executive)
Karen Whitfield (Head of Leisure)
Anita Eckersley (Civic and Member Services Officer)
Sam Selby (Cabinet and Member Development Officer)
Vicky Gisby (Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive)
Louise Field (Executive Assistant to the Leader of the Council)
Alice Atkins (Local Government Association Graduate)

At this stage of the meeting a Member queried why the Chairman had not used her discretion to allow public speaking, further to receipt of a number of requests.

The Chairman asked the Deputy Chief Executive to confirm the constitutional position regarding public speaking at extraordinary meetings of the Council. It was confirmed that there was no provision in the Constitution for public speaking at extraordinary meetings of Full Council and that such provision would be at the discretion of the Chairman in facilitating the meeting.

It was noted that public speaking had been permitted at the extraordinary meeting of Cabinet where this issue had been discussed and that Councillors should be able to sufficiently represent their residents' views at this meeting of Council.

The Chairman stood by her decision not to allow members of the public to speak but would allow Councillors to ask direct questions to the Leader of the Council as part of the debate, which he would be permitted to answer.

In view of the only public participation on this matter taking place at the extraordinary meeting of Cabinet, a question was raised as to whether the minutes of that meeting had been made available to the Council. It was noted that the minutes were published on the Council's website on 1 September 2021. The meeting had also been broadcast live and was available for viewing on the Council's YouTube channel.

25. Register of attendance and apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bob Adams, David Bellamy, John Cottier, Paul Fellows, Helen Goral, Jan Hansen, Ms Jane Kingman, Nikki Manterfield, Dr Peter Moseley, Ian Selby, Lee Steptoe, Sarah Trotter, Dean Ward and Sue Woolley.

26. Disclosure of Interests

No interests were disclosed.

Councillor Ashley Baxter requested that it was recorded that he had family members who regularly used the facilities at the Deepings Leisure Centre.

27. Deepings Leisure Centre

Members received a report from the Cabinet Member for Leisure on the proposed cessation of the management and operation of the Deepings Leisure Centre.

On 29 July 2021, in consideration of the health and safety risk to the public and staff, the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Leisure, took the decision to temporarily close the Deepings Leisure Centre, using the emergency powers available under Article 16 of the Constitution.

A report on the future of the Leisure Centre had been considered and discussed at a previous extraordinary meeting of the Cabinet, held on 17 August 2021, but any decision making had been deferred to an extraordinary meeting of full Council.

The Leader of the Council stated that the Deepings Leisure Centre was of great importance to the residents of the Deepings and the Council. Any decision regarding the Leisure Centre would be weighted by finances and the Council remained committed to its ambition of developing a new leisure centre in the Deepings. It was noted that Members had been given an opportunity to tour the leisure centre and that the Council had continued to engage with its advisors to assess the situation comprehensively.

The Leader of the Council made an alternative proposal to those recommended in the report, as follows:

- 1) That the Deepings Leisure Centre remain closed due to the known health and safety risks.
- 2) Provides a one-off budget, of up to £100K, to commission a full structural survey and bring forward refurbishment options for Deepings Leisure Centre in order to assess the level of work necessary to remedy the health and safety issues, and further extend the operational life of the current Leisure Centre.
- 3) Provides delegated authority to the Director of Housing and Property and the Head of Leisure to undertake negotiations with Lincolnshire County Council and The Anthem Trust in order to secure a viable operational lease of the Deepings Leisure Centre.
- 4) That the Culture and Visitor Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider a further report on the options for the refurbishment of the Deepings Leisure Centre, together with the associated costs and recommend to Cabinet the optimum way forward.
- 5) That a report be provided to Cabinet which should include the recommendations from the joint meeting of the Culture and Visitor Economy and Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committees, together with an update on the discussions to secure a leasehold interest in Deepings Leisure Centre, before making a recommendation to Council.

The proposal was seconded and Members entered into debate:

- A Member commented on the use of the word 'endorsed' in the second paragraph of the Report. It was noted that Cabinet had considered the report, which recommended that South Kesteven District Council ceased the management and operation of the Deepings Leisure Centre, but they had not endorsed the recommendations.

The Deputy Chief Executive agreed that this was not an accurate representation of what had occurred at the Cabinet Meeting and noted that the word 'endorsed' would be removed from the report.

- A query was raised as to why Members had not been provided with the minutes from the previous Cabinet Meeting.

It was confirmed that the minutes from the previous Cabinet Meeting had been published online and that access to a live stream of the meeting was also available on the Council's YouTube channel.

- Queries were raised regarding a previous election pledge to build a new leisure centre in the Deepings.
- Action should be taken immediately to provide a leisure centre for Deeping's residents.
- Speeches were read out on behalf of a number of members of the public. Comments were expressed about how the community had come together to oppose the permanent closure of the Leisure Centre. Reference was also made to the accountability the Council had to its residents.
- Discussion took place on the current situation and how the Council should be developing a comprehensive plan of support for leisure provision in the Deepings.
- Reference was made to the Council's procurement process. Some Members expressed their concerns that they could not support an amendment which would allocate additional sums to the building of a new leisure centre without the proper procurement process being undertaken.
- Members discussed the immediate repair of the Centre's roof, pool and boilers. Members also discussed the possibility of reopening the centre following these repairs and addressing other remedial works in stages.

The Leader advised that the Leisure Centre would not re-open until the risks to members of the public and staff had been addressed. No specific deadline for the reopening of the Centre could be given at that time. It was noted that at present, the appropriate lease was not in place, which meant that funds could not yet be allocated to any repairs.

The following amendment was proposed:

"That the Council provide a one-off budget of up to £1.2 million to undertake the essential physical works required to remedy the health and safety issues at the Leisure Centre including the roof and the heating system to a standard which would enable the centre to safely re-open at the earliest opportunity but before Easter 2022."

The amendment was seconded.

A request was then made that a recorded vote be taken. As the request was supported by ten or more Members of the Council, in accordance with Article 4.13.4 of the Council's Constitution, a recorded vote was taken.

For: Councillors Ashley Baxter, Harrish Bisnauthsing, Louise Clack, Phil Dilks, Anna Kelly, Philip Knowles, Matthew Lee, Penny Milnes, Virginia Moran, Charmaine Morgan, Amanda Wheeler, Jane Wood and Paul Wood. (13)

Against: Councillors Pam Bosworth, Bob Broughton, George Chivers, Kelham Cooke, Helen Crawford, John Dawson, Barry Dobson, Breda-Rae Griffin, Gloria Johnson, Rosemary Kaberry-Brown, Annie Mason, Robert Reid, Nick Robins, Penny Robins, Susan Sandall, Jacky Smith, Judy Smith, Judy Stevens, Adam Stokes, Ian Stokes, Jill Thomas, Rosemary Trollope-Bellew, Hilary Westropp, Mark Whittington, Linda Wootten and Ray Wootten. (26)

Abstain: None (0)

The amendment was lost.

An amendment was proposed to include an additional paragraph to the motion, as follows:

“6) That reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committees should include costed proposals and business plans for the potential site(s) for a new leisure centre in the Deepings including the sites which have not yet been made public.”

The proposal was seconded.

The Leader of the Council, in proposing the original motion, accepted the amendment.

Members continued to debate the substantive motion, as follows:

- Members debated whether the Centre should be repaired, with some Members raising concerns about its age and condition. Some Members argued that the Centre should be demolished and replaced with a new leisure centre.
- A query was raised as to why the required repairs would not enhance the nature of the building.

The Council's Section 151 Officer stated that the auditors had concluded that any repairs would not enhance the nature of the Centre, so the Council would not be able to make use of Capital funds and any costs would need to come from the Revenue budget. Members were advised that in any situation where the Council borrowed money, pressure would be put on expenditure levels and consideration would need to be given to resulting yearly additional revenue costs.

- Objections were raised in respect of the commissioning of further reports, with some Members citing that this was an attempt to avoid taking immediate action.
- Concerns were raised regarding the identification of Litchfield Road as a possible site for a new leisure centre. It was stated that a more appropriate site should be considered.

An amendment was proposed to commission an independent inquiry into the reasons why:

- a) The original promises of new leisure centres across the district had not been fulfilled.
- b) The lease arrangements at the Deepings School had never been formally agreed with the relevant third parties including, Lincolnshire County Council and the Anthem Trust.
- c) The Council had failed to maintain its leisure centres for the last decade or more.”

The meeting adjourned for a short break at this stage of proceedings.

Upon the re-commencement of the meeting, the proposer of the amendment withdrew this amendment and indicated that he would be minded to submit a Notice of Motion to Council at a later stage.

Voting upon the substantive motion, a request was then made that a recorded vote be taken. As the request was supported by ten or more Members of the Council, in accordance with Article 4.13.4 of the Council’s Constitution, a recorded vote was taken.

For: Councillors Pam Bosworth, Bob Broughton, George Chivers, Kelham Cooke, Helen Crawford, John Dawson, Barry Dobson, Breda-Rae Griffin, Gloria Johnson, Matthew Lee, Annie Mason, Penny Milnes, Robert Reid, Nick Robins, Penny Robins, Susan Sandall, Jacky Smith, Judy Smith, Judy Stevens, Adam Stokes, Ian Stokes, Jill Thomas, Rosemary Trollope-Bellew, Hilary Westropp, Mark Whittington, Linda Wootten and Ray Wootten. (27)

Against: None (0)

Abstain: Councillors Ashley Baxter, Harrish Bisnauthsing, Louise Clack, Phil Dilks, Anna Kelly, Philip Knowles, Virginia Moran, Charmaine Morgan and Amanda Wheeler. (9)

The substantive motion was **AGREED**.

DECISIONS:

That the Council

- 1) That the Deepings Leisure Centre remain closed due to the known health and safety risks.**
- 2) Provides a one-off budget, of up to £100K, to commission a full structural survey and bring forward refurbishment options for Deepings Leisure Centre in order to assess the level of work necessary to remedy the health and safety issues, and further extend the operational life of the current Leisure Centre.**
- 3) Provides delegated authority to the Director of Housing and Property and the Head of Leisure to undertake negotiations with Lincolnshire**

County Council and The Anthem Trust in order to secure a viable operational lease of the Deepings Leisure Centre.

- 4) That the Culture and Visitor Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider a further report on the options for the refurbishment of the Deepings Leisure Centre, together with the associated costs and recommend to Cabinet the optimum way forward.**
- 5) That a report be provided to Cabinet which should include the recommendations from the joint meeting of the Culture and Visitor Economy and Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committees, together with an update on the discussions to secure a leasehold interest in Deepings Leisure Centre, before making a recommendation to Council.**
- 6) That reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committees should include costed outline proposals and business plans for the potential site(s) for a new leisure centre in the Deepings including the sites which have not yet been made public.**

28. Close of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 16:26