

SPECIAL COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 16 JANUARY 2012

PRESENT:- Councillors Roderick Bluh (Chair), Garry Perkins (Vice-Chair), Mark Dempsey, Jim Grant, David Renard, Andy Harrison (Deputy) and Colin Lovell (Deputy).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brian Mattock and Stan Pajak.

Councillors Junab Ali and Doreen Dart attended the meeting in respect of Minute 22.

18. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

19. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 31st October 2011 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

20. Public Question Time

No public questions were asked under Standing Order 28.

21. Exempt Items - Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved – That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the discussion of the matters referred to in Agenda Item No. 7 of the Notice of the Meeting on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information concerned. (Minute 22 refers.)

22. Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee

The Cabinet Member for Council Transformation, Transport and Strategic Planning and the Director of Planning and Transport submitted a joint report concerning a proposal by the local authority signatories to the Cotswold Water Park Partnership Agreement (1994) that the Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee be disbanded with effect from 31st March 2012 with the agreement of all the constituent local authorities. Swindon Council was not a signatory to the agreement but was represented on the Joint Committee. The joint report also addressed the issue of the Council's continued contribution in support of the development of the Cotswold Water Park.

The Chair expressed concern that the joint report did not sufficiently clarify how any Council financial contribution to the Cotswold Water Park would be used and to which body it would be made. It was also not clear what the role would be for

the proposed Member appointed to represent the Council in respect of Cotswold Water Park issues and on which body they would serve. He suggested that the report should be referred to the Cabinet to enable these issues to be clarified and in order that more information could be provided on the benefits to this Council of its continued involvement with the development of the Cotswold Water Park and on what its involvement had achieved to date.

Councillor Junab Ali referred to recent publicity regarding the governance of the Cotswold Water Park and the imprisonment of the former Chief Executive of the Cotswold Water Park Society for fraud.

Councillor Doreen Dart, who represented the Council on the Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee, commented on the background to the report and referred to the benefits to the Council and local residents of involvement in the shaping of the development of the Cotswold Water Park, particularly as minerals extraction and the expansion of the Cotswold Water Park came closer to the Borough boundary and to the parishes of Castle Eaton, Hannington and Highworth.

Resolved – That an updated version of the joint report on the Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee be submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 15th February 2012 for consideration, and this report seek to clarify (a) how any Council contribution to the Cotswold Water Park would be used and to which body it would be made, and (b) the role to be undertaken by the proposed Member appointed to represent the Council in respect of Cotswold Water Park issues and on which body, if any, they would serve, and, in addition, the report provide further information on the benefits to this Council of its continued involvement with the development of the Cotswold Water Park, and on what its involvement had achieved to date.

23. Request for Early Release of Pension Entitlement

The Chief Executive submitted a report concerning a request received from a former Council employee for the early release of pension entitlement.

The Chair, the Director of Law and Democratic Services and the Head of HR commented on the background to the request and the circumstances of the individual concerned. Reference was also made to the provisions within Regulation 30 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefits, Membership and Contributions) Regulations 2007, and, in particular, to the financial implications for the Council of giving consent to the early release of pension entitlement in this case.

Resolved – That the Special Committee, on behalf of the Council, and having given consideration to the circumstances surrounding the request for the early release of pension entitlement as referred to in the report, and the financial implications for the Council and the cost to Council Tax Payers of granting such a request, determines that the request be not approved.