

# EXECUTIVE

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 3 March 2014 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mobbs (Chairman); Councillors Caborn, Mrs Grainger, Hammon, Shilton and Vincett.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Barrott (Chair of Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee), Councillor Mrs Blacklock (Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee), Councillor Brookes, Councillor Mrs Falp and Councillor Mrs Sawdon.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Coker and Cross.

## 157. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## 158. **CALL-IN OF EXECUTIVE ITEM – GYPSY & TRAVELLER PREFERRED OPTIONS FOR SITES CONSULTATION**

The Executive considered a report from Civic and Committee Services following the call-in of the Assets Review report, which had been considered at the Executive meeting on 12 February 2014.

The decision was called into the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration and subsequently referred to Council on 26 February 2014.

The decision had been called in by Councillors Mrs Bromley, Mrs Falp, Heath, Kirton and Mrs Mellor because they did not feel the six weeks consultation period was sufficiently long enough. In addition, they had concerns that only eight sites were being consulted on, that one site was in the Green Belt and Members were unhappy with the proposal to use Compulsory Purchase Orders.

On 16 February 2014, Councillor Mrs Higgins also called-in the report because the proposed sites were all to the south of the four towns rather than being evenly spread around the District.

At the Council meeting on 26 February 2014, Members debated the proposals and referred the decision back to the Executive for consideration without any comments.

The report advised that the Executive now had the option of either confirming or amending the original decision made on 12 February 2014.

There were no alternative options available because the call-in of a decision required that a set procedure be followed.

Councillor Mrs Sawdon addressed Members in her capacity as Ward Councillor for Budbrooke. She advised that she was not predetermined in her views and was prepared to listen objectively to all points of view.

Councillor Mrs Sawdon outlined her resident's concerns, with specific reference to the Oaklands Farm, Birmingham Road site. She gave a brief description of the surrounding area and of the planning history of the application site, which was located in the Green Belt. She reminded Members of the recent refusal of planning applications, using the site's location in the Green Belt as one of the main refusal reasons, and referred to the Inspector's comments regarding a similar site at Kites Nest Lane.

In addition, Councillor Mrs Sawdon explained the concerns raised in relation to the sites located in Barford and she praised the affected communities for coming together and showing true localism. She asked the Executive to give careful consideration to the sites discussed above before including them in the process any further, or to discount them altogether if possible.

Councillor Brookes addressed Members in his capacity as Ward Councillor for Bishops Tachbrook. He made reference to the 'country park' in Bishops Tachbrook, which could result in having gypsy and traveller sites located right in the middle of it. He advised Members that Stratford District had identified a site in the Green Belt and queried if a joint assessment would have suited Warwick District's needs better.

Councillor Brookes also asked if it was necessary to publish all alternative sites because many were large and close to village boundaries, which resulted in some communities feeling targeted. He also felt that the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO's) was extreme and requested a caveat that these would only be used as a last resort. He asked Members to reflect on the advice from the DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) which had advised against using CPO's. In summary, he requested that the Executive consider withdrawing the alternative options, a longer consultation period and only using CPO's as a last resort.

In response, the Executive stated that recommendation 2.3 of the original report had stated that the 'Executive commits in principle to invoke it's use of Compulsory Purchase Orders' and this had been agreed as acceptable wording during the debate at Council.

Councillor Barrott reminded Members that the Council had a duty to comply with the Housing Act and supply gypsy and traveller sites and although there were five preferred sites, thirteen were being consulted on it total.

Members were mindful that although Compulsory Purchase Orders did not seem democratic, some sites may not come forward and the Council had to prove its intent. In addition, they were mindful that this was only the second stage of consultation and no final decisions were being made on sites at this meeting.

Councillor Mrs Grainger encouraged all interested parties, Councillors and members of the public to engage in the consultation process.

The Leader, Councillor Mobbs reminded the meeting that the Council needed to have a sound and robust Local Plan, and this report would make up part of that. He stated that the Local Plan was key to help the District cope with growth, future employment and housing, and a weak plan could lead to developers building wherever they wanted to.

Councillor Mobbs gratefully accepted the Ward Councillors' comments and assured them that their concerns would be included in the consultation process and given due weight and consideration.

The lead Councillor for the Local Plan, Councillor Caborn, addressed Members and reminded them that the Council had struggled to find gypsy and traveller sites for a number of years but the authority also had a responsibility to meet this accommodation need. In addition, he stated that any site would need to go through the full planning process and this report would in no way circumvent this process.

Councillor Caborn supported the original recommendation in the report of 12 February 2014 and reminded the Parish and Town Councils to let officers know if they needed extra time to submit their comments into the consultation.

Having read the report and having heard the representations from the Scrutiny Committees, the Executive decided to agree recommendation 2.1(i) and

**RESOLVED** that the decision made by the Executive on 12 February 2014, be confirmed.

Councillor Hammon, Portfolio Holder for Development Services, abstained from the vote.

(The meeting ended at 17.44 pm)