

Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee

March 2020

New Monks Farm – Withy Patch land surplus to service need and development agreement – Focus for Scrutiny

Report by Director of Law and Assurance

Summary

A proposed decision (FIN18 (19/20)) was published for the Cabinet Member for Finance on 2 March in relation to the New Monks Farm development. The Cabinet Member is being asked to agree that the current gypsy and traveller site be declared surplus to service operational requirements on the basis that the County Council enters into a development agreement with The Community Stadium Limited (TCSL) for TCSL to construct a new site, to an agreed specification, within the adjacent development. A request to call-in this decision for scrutiny has been accepted by the monitoring officer. The Committee is therefore asked to scrutinise the proposal set out in the report attached.

The focus for scrutiny

Key lines of enquiry for the Committee include (by reference to the call-in request):

1. What views have been expressed by the residents affected and how such concerns are being addressed;
2. How comments received from the public on the relocation of the site have been taken into account;
3. How the adjacent development will impact on the relocated gypsy and traveller site and what mitigation has been planned in response;
4. Assurance that the Council's equality duty has been fully considered.
5. Such other concerns relevant to the specific proposals in relation to the needs and legitimate expectations of those affected by them.

The Chairman will summarise the output of the debate for consideration by the Committee.

1. Details

- 1.1 A call-in request has been accepted for the decision in relation to New Monks Farm. The request was made by four members of the Council (Mr Michael Jones, Ms Karen Sudan, Mr Brian Quinn, Mr Chris Oxlade). The reasons for the call-in request were:
 - a) The matter has not received public scrutiny.
 - b) The report states that residents' views on the proposal vary but no details of the extent to which they vary has been provided, nor does the report state whether the concerns raised with the developers have been addressed in their entirety.

- c) The report states that the public have had the opportunity to comment on this aspect of the planning process but no information about the comments received in respect of the relocation of the Withy Patch gypsy and traveller site has been provided.
 - d) No information has been provided about the timescale of the proposed move to the new location and how that fits with the timescale of the wider construction of the 600 houses and a new retail store. The impact of the construction of this development on the residents of the gypsy and travellers site has not been made clear.
 - e) There is a lack of transparency about how the agreement with the developer has been reached.
 - f) A fuller explanation of equalities considerations is required.
- 1.2 The call-in request was accepted as there has been no previous scrutiny of the proposals and that the call-in provides legitimate grounds for consideration prior to the proposals being determined. The decision report is appended. Scrutiny should focus on the substance of the proposals contained in the attached report.
- 1.3 Members are asked to note that a Notice of Motion from Mr Jones on this development was moved at the County Council meeting in July 2019, with a [response](#) presented to December County Council meeting by the Cabinet Members for Finance and for Fire & Rescue and Communities. Two meetings between Mr Jones and the Cabinet Members took place to discuss the matter in connection with negotiations with the developer and plans for consultation with the site residents affected. The matter was then debated at the County Council meeting in December.

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Annex Decision FIN18 (19/20) – New Monks Farm – Withy Patch land surplus to service need and development agreement

Appendix A Site plan

Background Papers

None