

October 2021

Response to Cllr John Milne's Notice of Motion on Land Use

1. The Chairman of the County Council referred the motion on land use submitted by Cllr John Milne to the County Council on 16 July 2021, to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Property for consideration.
2. The motion as set out read: 'This Council calls upon the Cabinet Member for Finance and Property to put in place a clear process, such that any currently-owned Council land will always be first considered for possible social, community or environmental use, particularly where this complements the Council's ambitions relating to climate change, prior to deeming it surplus to requirements, which could see it allocated for development within West Sussex County Council's Joint Venture development company.'
3. A [briefing note on factual background information](#) (PDF, 350KB) was supplied to all members in the 16 July Council papers.
4. The Cabinet Member met Cllr Milne on 5 October 2021 to discuss the motion; the Director of Property and Assets and the Head of Assets also attended the meeting.
5. Cllr Milne explained that he wished to see a proper process by which parish councils and others could be notified of assets (land and buildings) declared surplus to County Council purposes and given a length of time, perhaps six months, to input on future use before the County Council determined the assets for sale/development or submission into the Joint Venture Partnership.
6. In the discussion that followed it was also noted that:
 - There is already a process in place whereby communities can put forward a bid to have an asset nominated as an Asset of Community Value. If successful in the application to the local district or borough council, the property is listed and, if a landowner wants to sell the asset, there is a six-month moratorium in which time the community has the opportunity to raise the funds to purchase the asset.
 - It is the County Council's duty to achieve a commercial return on any assets declared surplus and achieve best value (Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972).
 - There are some instances where the creation of employment is a key driver in development of assets declared surplus, such as the development of Horsham Enterprise Park.
 - There are some instances where carbon offset can also determine future use.
 - The Council is aware of community aspirations through engagement on neighbourhood and parish plans.
7. The Cabinet Member explained that, in line with the briefing note supplied, the Council already does what the motion calls for. He felt that

the present surplus declaration process does ensure that the local member is advised of the proposed decision ahead of it being taken and gives the local member ample opportunity of engaging with parish councils or the wider community, if they wish to do so, which is part of their function as a county councillor.

8. The Cabinet Member proposed that the planned review of the Asset Management Policy should detail the local member engagement part of the process to ensure that all were aware of its breadth and scope.
9. Cllr Milne noted the further information given and the Cabinet Member's proposal concerning the review of the Asset Management Policy but felt the point at which the local member is engaged does not give enough time for any meaningful engagement with the wider community.
10. For the reasons set out above, the Cabinet Member is unable to support the motion and proposes to recommend that members do not support it should it be submitted for debate at the County Council meeting on 22 October 2021.

Jeremy Hunt

Cabinet Member for Finance and Property

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Background papers

None