

Agenda item 182

SOUTHWELL LEISURE CENTRE; PAPER FOR FULL COUNCIL: 20/03/24

AN OUTLINE REPORT BY STC CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR OF CONSULTATIONS WITH NSDC AND THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES ON BEHALF OF STC.

1. TO DATE, ALL CONSULTATIONS HAVE BEEN INFORMAL. STC HAS NOT RECEIVED ANY FORMAL DOCUMENTATION, RECEIVED ANY FORMAL REQUESTS NOR MADE ANY FORMAL RESPONSES. CLEARLY, THE CHAIR HAS NOT HAD ANY DISPENSATION FOR SUCH.

2. On 15/12/23, IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE DECEMBER 2023 NSDC CABINET MEETING, THE CEO OF NSDC (CEO) AND THE LEADER OF COUNCIL (LC) INVITED THE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR OF STC TO A SHORT INFORMAL MEETING AT THE LEISURE CENTRE. THERE WAS NO FORMAL AGENDA; THE STATUS OF THE MEETING WAS DESCRIBED BY NSDC AS 'COURTESY'. DURING THIS MEETING CEO AND LC OUTLINED THEIR PROPOSALS FOR THE NEW SWIMMING POOL (DETAILS NOW WIDELY AVAILABLE) AND THE ANTICIPATED WAY FORWARD.

THERE ARE NO MINUTES BUT KEY ISSUES 'TOUCHED UPON' INCLUDED: FUNDING; TIMESCALE; QUALITY OF NEW POOL; LAND ON WHICH THE NEW FACILITY WOULD BE BUILT; POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION FOR STC OFFICES; LIAISON WITH TRUSTEES; CONSULTATION WITH STC AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY.

AT THE MEETING CEO AND LC MADE CLEAR THEIR WILLINGNESS TO ATTEND MEETING/S WITH STC AND/OR AN OPEN PUBLIC MEETING. ALL PARTIES WERE AGREED THAT IT WOULD BE PRUDENT TO HOLD SUCH MEETING/S WHEN THERE WAS CLARITY OF THE WAY FORWARD. CEO AND LC STRESSED THEIR WISH TO GET STARTED ON THE BUILD AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.

3. THE CHAIR INVITED CEO AND LC TO AN ON SITE MEETING ON 13/02/24. THEY WERE JOINED BY NSDC BUSINESS MANAGER, AN ENGINEER AND THE VICE CHAIR.

THE CHAIR WISHED TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBLE SITING OF THE NEW POOL WITH THE ADVANTAGE OF HIS PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE. IN PARTICULAR, THE CHAIR URGED THE RETENTION OF THE 5 A SIDE PLAYING AREA AND PROPOSED AN ALTERNATIVE SITE FOR THE NEW POOL ADJACENT TO THE MAIN ENTRANCE.

ALL PARTIES VIEWED AN OUTLINE BLOCK PLAN. THIS PLAN WAS TO BE REVIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF OBSERVATIONS MADE AND FURTHER INPUTS FROM THE NSDC PROFESSIONAL TEAM.

4. AT THE STC FULL COUNCIL MEETING ON 21.02.24 SOME 20 MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDED, MOST OF WHOM WISHED TO EXPRESS VIEWS ABOUT THE PROPOSED NEW FACILITY. INEVITABLY, IT WAS AN EMOTIONALLY CHARGED MEETING; MINUTES ARE AVAILABLE. HOWEVER, TWO ESSENTIAL THEMES EMERGED FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT (i) A VIEW THAT MATTERS WERE PROCEEDING TOO SLOWLY (ii) A VIEW THAT TO DATE STC HAD NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY PROACTIVE OVER THE MATTER. THE CHAIR MADE IT CLEAR THAT STC HAD NOT RECEIVED A FORMAL APPROACH FROM NSDC AND UNTIL THAT WAS FORTHCOMING THERE WERE LIMITS AS TO WHAT COULD BE ACHIEVED. HOWEVER, THE COMMITMENT TO HOLD A PUBLIC MEETING WAS CONFIRMED

5.SUBSEQUENT TO THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING THE CHAIR PREPARED LETTERS TO BE SENT TO BOTH NSDC AND THE TRUSTEES SEEKING FORMAL CONSULTATIONS WITH BOTH BODIES. ONCE SUCH IS ESTABLISHED, THE CHAIR CONSIDERS IT WOULD SEEM REASONABLE FOR STC TO REQUEST COPIES OF ALL RELATED DOCUMENTATION, INCLUDING QUOTATIONS RECEIVED.

REPLIES WERE RECEIVED.

(i) THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES REPORTED AS FOLLOWS:

AT PRESENT THE TRUST IS INQUORATE AND WILL NEED ADDITIONAL INDEPENDENT TRUSTEES TO BECOME QUORATE.

THE TRUSTEES HAVE WORKED HARD TO REACH OUT TO NSDC BUT HAVE NOT REACHED AN ACCORD. THE CHAIR ADDS THAT A QUOTE OF £247,000 FOR POOL REPAIR WAS SUBMITTED TO NSDC ON 07/03/24. THE CHAIR TAKES A VIEW THAT THIS REMEDIAL WORK SHOULD 'LAST A GENERATION'. THE CHAIR OPINES THAT CURRENTLY IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW PROGRESS CAN BE MADE.

NB: THE THREE TRUSTEES APOINTED BY STC ARE: JOHN LIGHTWOOD; PHIL BARRON AND JERREMY BERRIDGE

(ii)THE CEO RESPONDED AS FOLLOWS:

'.....UNTIL WE RECEIVE A SATISFACTORY RESPONSE FROM THE TRUST, WE CANNOT MOVE FORWARD'

6.ALL STC COUNCILLORS NOW WILL HAVE RECEIVED COPY OF THE LETTER SENT BY LC TO THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES DATED 06/03/24 AND FURTHER COPIED TO OTHER TRUSTEES, FRIENDS OF SOUTHWELL SWIMMING POOL, ROBERT JENRICK MP AND THE CHARITY COMMISSION.

THE PENULTIMATE PARAGRAPH READS 'COUNCIL OFFICERS HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO PAUSE ANY FURTHER WORK ON THE NEW POOL UNTIL THE TRUST SORTS ITSELF OUT AND MAKES A CLEAR AND UNAMBIGUOUS DECISION AS TO THE WAY FORWARD. I WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU TO URGENTLY CALL ANOTHER MEETING OF THE TRUST AND TO AGREE TO MAKE A JOINT SUBMISSION WITH THE DISTRICT COUNCIL TO THE CHARITY COMMISSION'

MS/MB 11.03.2024