

‘CALL-IN’ REQUEST FORM

This form should be used by any Councillors wishing to call-in

- 1. any decision taken by the Executive, or an Executive decision taken by an officer with delegated authority, for reconsideration prior to implementation;
- 2. any matter to be considered to be outside the Policy and Budget Framework.

Please return your form to Democratic Services. Continue on separate sheet if necessary.

1. Call-In of a decision made by the Executive

Decision Minute No:

.....

Decision Title:

Consideration of proposals for the development of a new community stadium for Workington

Please indicate the grounds for calling in the decision for review

Documents before the Executive fell far short of the level of evidence required to support such an ambitious, expensive, and potentially unsustainable project. The Draft Business Case was littered with assumptions and aspirations but light on evidence.

Supporting documents were also redacted. In normal circumstances this would provide a prima facie justification for call-in of itself. However, in this case a redacted version of the document has already been obtained which shows that many of the redactions made were not commercially sensitive but seem rather to have been made to cover over flimsy evidences and arguments.

Councillors have agreed to delegate decisions to officers despite appearing to have been provided no detail of the decisions that they’re delegating. Given the wide scope of these decisions, and the serious financial and reputational risks to the council, this would appear reckless.

What written evidence do you believe needs to be considered or reconsidered?

An unredacted version of the Draft Business Case should be made available to all councillors including and especially those who sit on Scrutiny.

A sustainability appraisal should also be considered comparing the proposed Stadium with comparators cited in the Draft Business Case.

Justification should be provided of the requirement for stadia of the size and scale of that proposed, and the likelihood of gate targets being met by the clubs in the proposed timescales.

Assumptions rely heavily on income from the NHS and Sellafield but no information has been offered about the length and security of any lease proposals. Will leases be longer than any proposed loans?

There is an option for the council to sell the income streams, no evidence as to what effect that may have on the operation of the stadium itself or on the future of the clubs.

No evidence has been offered regarding the viability and sustainability of the clubs. The Draft Business Case makes clear that there is a serious revenue impact on both clubs, yet there is no detail about how the clubs will manage this going forwards. This is important as the proposal cites the future of the clubs as justification.

Oral evidence - are there stakeholders or interested parties you feel have not been consulted in reaching the decision, views that have not been given sufficient weight, or other witnesses that you feel should be heard. Why?

The proposal is essentially for a partnership, but there was no direct evidence offered from potential partners.

Are there risks or repercussions to the decision which you feel have not been taken into account?

Virtually all of the jobs that will be generated (excluding construction, which are by their nature temporary) will be substitutions or displacements. There is no evidence of any discussion of the wider impacts of such displacement, i.e. the impact on local private food businesses or potentially on the future of Workington Community Hospital or any of the existing Doctor's surgeries. These impacts are most important given that it is a Local Authority proposal.

The level of real benefits arising from the proposed investment falls far short of the financial risks that the Council would be exposing itself both as partner but potentially even more so as stadium owner.

The report before the Executive also made no reference to opportunity costs i.e. if the Council commits to dedicating £25m minimum of its assessed £38m 'headroom' for raising capital funds, what other potential socially beneficial projects will it be unable to support as a consequence?

The proposal speaks of 'civic pride' but the intended benefits seem limited to Workington alone, indeed the stadium is billed as the 'Workington Community Stadium'. Why should all residents of Allerdale be expected to financially support a project of restricted benefit?

Cllr Bill Finlay

24 January 2019