

At a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in Council Chamber, Allerdale House on Tuesday 14 June 2022 at 3.00 pm

Members

Councillor Michael Heaslip (Co-Chair)

Councillor Carni McCarron-Holmes (Co-Chair)

Councillor Allan Daniels

Councillor Malcolm Grainger

Councillor Paul Scott

Councillor Andrew Semple (sub)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barbara Cannon, Councillor Iain Greaney and Councillor Daniel Horsley

Staff Present

B Carlin, A Gilbert, N Hardy, C Nicholson, G Roach and R Stamper

Also Present

Councillor M Campbell-Savours, Councillor M Fitzgerald (Deputy Leader and Executive Member: Policy, Governance and People Resources), Councillor M Johnson (Leader of the Council; Executive Member: Economic Growth, Community Development and Placemaking), Councillor S Lansbury and Councillor A Smith

42. Declaration of Interests

None declared.

43. Call-in of Minute Number 464. - Council Strategy Delivery Plan 2022/23

At a meeting of the Executive on 20 April 2022, a decision was taken to approve the draft Delivery Plan for 2022-23 – minute number 464. - which set out specific activity to be undertaken over the next year in working towards achieving the objectives set out in the Council Strategy. As part of that plan a key project under the Resilient Communities section was to 'Develop a full options appraisal for leisure centre provision in Keswick by April 2023'.

On the 3 May 2022 a completed call-in form was submitted to the Council's Monitoring Officer signed by Councillor Markus Campbell-Savours, Councillor Sally Lansbury and Councillor Alan Smith. The call-in indicated that the signatories felt this commitment conflicted with a motion passed by Council on 22 September 2021.

On the 24 May the Monitoring Officer, after consultation with the Co-Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny, accepted the call-in request. This meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was to consider that call-in.

Councillor Mike Johnson Leader of the Council and PH for Economic Growth, Community Development and Placemaking and Councillor Marion Fitzgerald PH for Policy, Governance and People Resources were present at the meeting on behalf of the Executive.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy, Performance and Economic Strategy), The Assistant Chief Executive (Innovation and Commercial) and Deputy Monitoring Officer, the Chief Officer Assets and Senior Specialist – Sport, Art and Leisure were also present to support members.

The call-in was presented to the Committee by each of the three signatories in turn.

In her opening speech Councillor S Lansbury said that the community and the authority really needed to get moving on the project with a better timeline than April 2023. She said the Strategic Leisure Limited needs analysis report was completed in January therefore we could have been further down the line than we are, we would like to see a faster move on the options appraisal and be a step further on in the process by April.

She continued, there was a need for a swimming pool, laned not leisure, ideally with a main and a learning pool, as there was nowhere for adults and children to learn to swim. Councillor Lansbury said there was a real opportunity to create something special, a community hub if we think about which other facilities could be merged.

Councillor M Campbell-Savours referred to the Motion he had submitted and subsequently passed by Council in September 2021 asking for a 'shovel ready' project to be produced and said that the Council Strategy Delivery Plan did not meet the criteria to match that commitment. He referred to the RIBA plan of works which set out the different stages in the development of a construction project and referenced this in relation to gaining funding from Sports England. Councillor Campbell-Savours had been advised that a project would need to be at least stage 2 of its development in order to approach for funding and said in his opinion the agreed delivery plan options appraisal would not qualify. Councillor Campbell-Savours said 'now with the limited time we have left before vesting day if we target stage 2 we will put ourselves in a position where we are far more capable of taking funding opportunities as and when they arrive'.

Councillor A Smith said that at the Council meeting in September 2021 there had been a political commitment to ensuring provision of leisure facilities in Keswick would be a priority for the Council and there had been a failure to deliver what was promised over the past 9 months.

Councillor M Fitzgerald responded to the points raised and provided an update with project documentation which presented a timeline demonstrating progress that had already been made and what was planned for immediate future. She said 'the delivery plan clearly states there would be a full options appraisal and there cannot be a 'shovel ready' plan until that has taken place. We should not force the process too quickly and present the new authority with pressure on a particular plan with no alternatives to consider.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3.31pm to allow members to read through the project documentation tabled at the meeting.

At 3.35pm the Chair reconvened the meeting.

Questions were put to members of the Executive. Councillor M Campbell-Savours asked 'why can't we ask for more to happen in the next twelve months, why can't we be more ambitious'.

At the discretion of the Chair and in line with protocol Councillor Steve Harwood, the Mayor of Keswick provided a statement to all those present as Chair, and on behalf of, the Friends of Keswick Leisure Group.

In the statement Councillor Harwood expressed disappointment at what appeared to be lack of drive and ambition to deliver what was approved at the Council meeting in September and said it felt that the aim to provide a 'shovel ready plan' (which he as registered architect understood as RIBA Stage 4) for the new authority to deliver was being watered down to an options appraisal.

In response Councillor M Fitzgerald reiterated her point again which was, without an options appraisal you can't have a shovel ready plan, it was an important part of the process and commented 'we won't be letting up on the work and it is intended to proceed as planned as you can see from the project documentation'.

The Chair then adjourned the meeting at 4.15pm to allow the call-in signatories to reflect on the discussion and consider their proposal.

At 4.23pm the Chair reconvened the meeting.

The Call-in signatories proposed that the Executive decision made on 20 April 2022 'to develop a full options appraisal for leisure centre provision in Keswick by April 2023' be referred back to the Executive and requested they approve the following recommendation;

'We are concerned that the current approach lacks sufficient urgency and lets the people of Keswick down. We request that the Executive set a new target to have the project plan developed to RIBA Stage 2 before Allerdale Borough Council hand over to the new Cumberland Council.

We also request the officers approach the new Council to ensure the works complete are a priority as we complete the LGR process'.

Councillor A Semple moved the motion as proposed by the call-in signatories; this was seconded by Councillor A Daniels.

Councillor M Grainger did not agree with the wording in the recommendation and said that 'nobody was letting anyone down in Keswick, we all work very hard for everyone'.

Councillor Grainger moved an amendment to the motion to remove the wording 'and lets the people of Keswick down'. The motion did not receive a seconder and therefore the motion fell.

A vote was taken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the call-in signatories proposal, 5 in favour, 1 against and 0 abstentions. The motion was carried.

Resolved

That the decision of the Executive Minute No. 464 be referred back to Executive for reconsideration of a proposed new recommendation as follows;

'We are concerned that the current approach lacks sufficient urgency and lets the people of Keswick down. We request that the Executive set a new target to have the project plan developed to RIBA Stage 2 before Allerdale Borough Council hand over to the new Cumberland Council.

We also request the officers approach the new Council to ensure the works complete are a priority as we complete the LGR process'.

The meeting closed at 4.32 pm