

Question re Newbury Sports Hub.

Question from resident via letter - February 2022

Question

Are the total costs associated with the Sports Hub fully known and understood?

Response

Yes. Cost estimates at October 2021 were for £3.351M based on commencing the scheme in January 2022. Borrowing costs for the capital based on the prevailing interest rate was estimated at £122k per annum over 40 years. The total funding spent to date to complete the design of the scheme and planning process is £126,000.

Construction costs will be updated following the conclusion of the claim for a judicial review and an agreed timetable for the development. The rental fee, premium payment and sinking fund costs are unlikely to be impacted upon by the delay. An annual rental payment will be made to Newbury rugby club of the Rugby club of £41k per annum.

A one off premium payment will be paid to the club to enable Newbury rugby club to improve other facilities such as the replacement of floodlights.

WBC has also set aside a sinking fund of £35k per annum to ensure that the 3G playing surface pitch can be replaced every 10 years as recommended by Sport England.

West Berkshire Council commissioned an indicative business plan and has committed £90k per annum to cover annual running costs. However actual costs and best value for money will be secured through a competitive procurement process that will enable WBC to compare the projected operational costs and income projections from several leading leisure operators.

There are variables that will determine the whole life cost. For example the indicative business shows income from pitch bookings based on 40% utilisation at peak times and 10% utilisation at off peak times. If an operator secures 50% usage at peak times the annual income from pitch hire may increase from 63k per annum to £79k per annum. If this income differential is multiplied over 40 years it yields an additional £640,000. Secondary spend income could also increase in this circumstance. Therefore whole life operational costs cannot be ascertained exactly at this stage and in fact costs could be lower than WBC projections which is budgeted to provide £90k per annum.

Question

Are the real objectives for the proposed Monks Lane Sports Hub fully known and understood?

Response

Yes. **Please see previous Executive reports in this connection.**

It is to address the shortage of supply in artificial grass pitches identified in the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS). The additional opportunities for participation in sport will have a positive impact on improving the health of children and adults.

The quality and range of facilities are designed to achieve the FA ground grading for a Step 4, thereby enabling and encouraging local teams playing in lower leagues to achieve promotion and progress through the league system to this level. The Sports Hub provides an opportunity for local teams to train and play league matches. WBC project that the 3G AGP will have around 90% of programme time for football. Some teams will be able to use the sport hub for their home venue for league matches.

A competitive procurement process will be undertaken to ensure high quality management for the sports hub from an experienced leisure operator.

Newbury Rugby Club will have 8 hours protected time each week during the season primarily for coaching children to play rugby. This is the same amount of time that Newbury Rugby club currently plays on the grass pitch that will be replaced by the new 3G pitch.

Question

Why can't the development be higher than Step 4?

Response

The vast majority of teams in West Berkshire play at levels below Step 4 and a key primary aim of the development is to meet demand from local teams. The primary reason the development cannot go beyond Step 4 facility because it would result in the loss of grass pitches that are situated adjacent to the sports hub facilities.

Question

Has the necessary governance been followed?

Response

Yes. The award of the contract via the UK Leisure Framework Agreement was considered and approved by the Executive Committee on December 16th 2021. Separately the Local Planning Authority's District Planning Committee considered the Sports Hub scheme on 2 March 2022.

Question

Have alternative options been sufficiently explored?

Response

Yes – alternative sites which were considered following feasibility studies were:

- Henwick Worthy Sports Ground
- Northcroft Park
- The Diamond at Greenham.

Question

Views of the Rugby Football Association (RFA) and Football Association (FA) ports Governing Bodies

Response

Yes, we have considered their views. Please note the Governing Bodies of Sport are not statutory consultees in relation to this development. Note that the primary issue for the RFU was that it wished to see a full size adult rugby pitch. A full size adult rugby pitch could not be accommodated on the site (**it is larger than the existing grass pitch**). An expansion of the pitch would have resulted in the loss of adjacent grass pitches used by Newbury Rugby club. This proposal was not supported by Newbury Rugby club.

The Football Association wished to see the Sunday morning time dedicated to football. This time was required by Newbury Rugby club for the training of their junior rugby players. There were also differences of opinion on some other elements of the scheme, but Sport England, who is the statutory consultee, raised no objections to the proposal.

Question to Executive Committee - 10 February 2022

Question

Please will the Executive confirm the Council will immediately sign and date the Joint statement by West Berkshire Council and Sport England on the West Berkshire's Playing Pitch Strategy and Newbury Sports Hub 21st July 2021 to verify/authenticate it and ask Sport England to do the same?

Response

This is a statement, not an agreement, which was issued by Sport England's communications team stating their position on future working relationships with this Council on July 13th, 2021. Such statements do not need to be signed.

Question

Please will the Executive confirm why it approved the Award of contract to build Newbury Sports Hub (Ex4149) as part of a replacement strategy referred to at the Executive meeting 16 December 2021 to public question (6), when to date (31st December 2021) the Service Director - Development and Regulation has not granted planning permission. (This is regardless of the fact the Faraday road replacement strategy was not submitted with the application and may not be approved).

Response

The Executive Meeting took place the day after the Western Area Planning Committee approved the consent for the development of the Sports Hub. The Executive was conscious of the timescales needed to allow Newbury FC to play matches in the Hellenic League at the Sports Hub, which may have been considered by that League for the 2022/3 season, if the project was completed by July 2022. Subsequently the application was called in to District Planning Committee to be heard early next month.

Our Officers are always diligent so the Council's award of contract would always be subject to grant of planning as referred to in the Report to the Executive (Legal Implications section).

Question

Given the huge difference between a step 6 facility and a step 4 one, why did the Executive ask for a step 6 planning application at Western Area Planning, when they intend to build a set 4 capable facility?

Response

The plans submitted are seeking to deliver up to a Step 4 facility. However, the teams currently scheduled to play at the ground are currently playing at Step 7 level. The planning application is being processed on the basis of the proposed maximum use applied for, which is a Step 4 facility. If planning permission is granted, this will allow for existing teams to continue to use the site if they progress, up to a level of Step 4. The Council is keen to give local teams every opportunity to raise through the leagues and top-class facilities are an important element.

In addition, if the London Road Industrial Estate redevelopment, incorporating the old football pitch achieves planning consent in the future, the Sports Hub development could be considered as partial mitigation for the loss of the old Faraday Road Stadium. Sport England have advised that they would attach a number of conditions in order for them not to object, one of which is that the proposed new AGP and associated works is designed and delivered to a specification that would be capable of meeting the FA league requirements for a Step 4 football facility.

In light of these factors, it was thought prudent to future proof the proposals

Question to Executive Committee - 16 December 2021

Question

Does the revised doubling of the upfront capital cost to £3.351 million include the following items? :-

- 1) 'Lease premium' payable to Newbury Rugby Club?
- 2) ALS fees already committed to submit the planning application and any future ALS fees associated with this planning application/project?
- 3) Capital Costs for any grass pitch replacement, due to the loss of the grass pitch at Newbury Rugby Club (e.g. Manor Park and Calcot Linear Park), and
- 4) The annual sinking fund allocation of £35,000 per annum (£1.4 million over 40 years)?

Response

1. No this is a one off payment to Newbury rugby club to improve facilities that pertain to the rugby pitches such as improved lighting. This budget is not related to the creation of the new Pavilion, 3G pitch or the creation of the new Step 4 grounds
2. Yes
3. No – these costs will be ascertained following feasibility studies being undertaken at two locations these pitches all support a 10 year playing strategy.
4. No – the sinking fund has a separate budget allocation and is projected to be spent in 10-year cycles, when the 3G-pitch replacement is required.

Supplementary question

The point that I am making is that you are looking at £4 million rather than £3.3 million which is a hell of a lot of money and I just wonder whether people are aware within the council chamber and within the public how much money you are spending on something which is not a replacement football ground?

Response

I don't know where you get the £4 million from

Question

With reference to the Project risk assessment (Newbury Football Foundation), why is there no control strategy in place to counter the very likely possibility of a Judicial Review?"

Response

We have robust governance arrangements in place and officers have confirmed that they are completely satisfied that such procedures would limit a successful Judicial Review action

Supplementary Question

I'm wondering why it wasn't on the documents. Every other thing on that documents was mitigated or proposals for mitigation, but the last one (the Judicial Review), which I actually think is quite likely since it's not a replacement of the Faraday Road football pitch, there didn't seem to be any mitigation of it

Response

As I've said, the officers don't regard it as a risk.

Question

In Sport England's response to the Business Case for the Monks Lane Sports Hub, their estimate of your annual losses would amount to around £150,000. Add to this the cost of over 60,000 per year to service the £3,000,000 + loan for the build, takes the overall subsidy required to over £210,000 per year for 40 years. Is this executive happy to be the one which commits this future administration to underwrite this facility for over £200,000 pa for the next 40 years?

Response

Sport England has advised that it has no objection to the indicative business plan. The figures referenced in the question are highly improbable. To ensure best value is achieved for the operation of the Newbury Sports Hub, the management of the facilities will be subject to open market competition in the leisure market. The costs for the management of the Sports Hub will not be finalised and agreed until the completion of this tender process in the middle of 2022.

To answer the second part of the question directly the answer is yes. We are providing a state-of-the-art Sports Hub for the benefit of West Berkshire residents. This has massive benefits in terms of not just sporting engagement but also educational and motivational and of course general health and wellbeing both physical and mental.

Supplementary Question

Given that future administrations are going to have to bear increasing costs to mitigate the impact of climate change, plus ever increasing costs for social care, and maybe future pandemics and other demands, is it not completely irresponsible to commit to this spend, when you could have a better facility with an extra training pitch, a full clubhouse with accesses way better for active travel and public transport and which will not require any subsidies to be retained and will be retained by the council as an asset. Why won't you just cut your losses and back the superior Newbury Community Football Group proposal to re-develop Faraday Road football ground?

Response

In relation to whether the scheme is irresponsible the simple answer is no. We have a playing pitch strategy which runs for 10 years, which noted that there was a shortage of 8 3G pitches and also grass pitches and this council is working towards addressing that strategy

Question

"What are the forecasted total running costs for the proposed 40 year lease for the planned sports hub at Newbury Rugby Club

Response

It is a fairly complex response and so you may wish to look at it in writing subsequently. The capital cost of the project over the life of the lease (subject to planning conditions) is projected to be in the region of £3.351m plus a relatively small premium payment to Newbury Rugby Club for improving other facilities on their site (such as floodlights etc.) which is still being agreed. This capital sum will be borrowed in the normal way through the Public Works Loan Board.

The annual Capital Financing charge to Revenue budget, including repayment of the capital sum, is estimated to be circa £122,000 pa over 40 years using current PWLB annuity fixed rates as an assumption along with the annual £35,000 sinking fund contribution to replace the artificial pitch every 10 years, as advised by the Football Association and the rent for the lease at £41,000 per annum. All three items provide a total annual revenue cost of £198,000.

Final revenue costs will be determined following the tender for the new leisure management contract which will be conducted in 2022

Question

Does the Council really believe that this Sports Hub can be up and running by the first week of July 2022?

Response

Yes provided we meet planning conditions and there are no legal challenges

Supplementary question

That's a strong proviso. I have been living in this area for nigh on 64 years and am yet to see the council do a capital project on time and in budget, unless you can tell me of any others that you have done. I am worried that you won't get anywhere near July. Can you show any sign that you have met the budget?

Response

I can't do that but what you will see is later on the agenda a report to start the work on this scheme in January, and we have a 26 week construction period, which will hit July.

Question

At the site visit to Monks Lane, the planning officers categorically stated that the facility was designed to support a step 6 club, yet the report issued for item 6 of this agenda clearly states step 4- please clarify?

Response

I can confirm that the Sports Hub is designed to fully accommodate a Step 4 Club

Supplementary question

"I would just like some clarification as there is a lot of confusion. Am I right in saying that Monks Lane is not a replacement, but may be used in the future for replacement or part of a replacement strategy. Is that right? At this point in time it is not being built as a replacement. Is that a fair assessment? At the moment it is not a replacement but in the future it may be used as part of a replacement or part of a replacement strategy?"

Response

It is certainly part of a replacement strategy

Question

From the Value for Money and governance perspective, why has the Council, or its agents, not made a direct comparison of this Monks Lane proposal with similar scheme such as the NCFG 3G pitch and new clubhouse proposal for Faraday Road (which had already been approved by the WAP committee)?

Response

The Newbury Sports Hub represents high quality development and value for money. This is in confirmation with our playing pitch strategy. We are all aware of the Council's proposals for the wider regeneration of the London Road Industrial Estate which includes Faraday Road.

Supplementary question

It is confirmed that it is £200,000 per annum that you will be subsidising this facility for, and I don't think that's good value for money at all so why are you not considering other more practical or suitable alternatives rather than just this one that you are looking at? It's not good value for money.

Response

This Council does not own any suitable land within a 20-minute drive time specified as a replacement in part for Faraday Road, so even if an alternative site could be found either to rent or buy from a third party there would still be either a revenue or capital spend. Further, delays in going through this process would inevitably lead to further building cost inflation not to mention legal and design fees

Question

Is the sports hub no longer 'good value for money' at £3.35m, since the definition from the Varsity Consulting report (referenced in the meeting appendices), cited £2.5m- £3m as the range for good value for this type of scheme?

Response

May I suggest you read the Varsity Consulting report again and in particular paragraph 3.3. This states that the scheme is good value for money coming out at £2,879 per square metre against typical costs of between £2,500 and £3,000 per square metre. It does not cite £2.5m - £3m as the total development cost of the Sports Hub. I think that your confusion is that this report relates to the club house only. The 3G pitch, stand, turnstiles and floodlights are all under a separate contract

Supplementary question

So we know that delivering the Sports Hub, not just building it, will cost closer to £4m next year, not just the £3.35m build cost. The FA have indicated that this money could provide 3 or 4 AGPs. So rather than ploughing all this money into a single Sports Hub in Newbury, which by the way is not tested yet whether it will meet the like for like requirement to be a replacement for Faraday Road football ground. Have you considered alternatively using this money to build 3 or 4 of the 8 3G pitches needed across the district, thus bringing greater benefits to council tax payers across the whole district?

Response

I think perhaps that what you are misunderstanding is that a 3G pitch costs something in the region of £1.35m for just the pitch. As you know, you would then need changing rooms and toilet facilities, so I am afraid you are not comparing like with like

Question

What is the cost to the taxpayer over the life of the lease of the Sports Hub in both capital and revenue terms?

Response

The capital cost of the project over the life of the lease (subject to planning conditions) is projected to be in the region of £3.351m plus a relatively small premium payment to Newbury Rugby Club for improving other facilities on their site (such as floodlights etc.) which is still being agreed. This capital sum will be borrowed in the normal way through the Public Works Loan Board.

The annual Capital Financing charge to Revenue budget, including repayment of the capital sum, is estimated to be circa £122,000 pa over 40 years using current PWLB annuity fixed rates as an assumption along with the annual £35,000 sinking fund contribution to replace the artificial pitch every 10 years, as advised by the Football Association and the rent for the lease at £41,000 per annum. All three items provide a total annual revenue cost of £198,000.

Final revenue costs will be determined following the tender for the new leisure management contract which will be conducted in 2022.

Supplementary question

You'll know from previous discussions that we don't think that's good value for money and we think that the money would be better spent elsewhere or on current services. Would you agree that there would need to potentially be corresponding rises in council tax or cuts in services in order to support those costs that you have just outlined, particularly the revenue cost

Response

To put this in perspective the annual budget of this council is one of nearly £140 million, so £200,000 per annum is not a massive element that should effect the council tax rate.

Questions to Full Council - 2 December 2021

Question

As the Football Association/Football Foundation (FA/FF) have stated that "they do not accept that the proposal (Monks Lane, Sports Hub) would represent a satisfactory replacement for Faraday Road Stadium" will the Council please confirm that they will now take the sensible decision to look urgently at other more suitable and more cost effective options

Response

The Football Association and Foundation are not Statutory Consultees in the planning process but their comments are taken into account by Sport England who are. In a roundabout way you are correct, in that Sport England require a further new grass pitch to replace the existing grass pitch at the Rugby Club which is being used to create the Sports Hub to fully replace the old Faraday Road ground. WBC has identified two possible pitches in the District, both owned by this Council and

feasibility studies are being worked up on both with a view to submitting a planning application by the Spring, well within Sport England's 18 month timeframe .

Sport England is the statutory consultee and have clearly stated "there is a strategic need for a fit for purpose AGP in this location." They will not be objecting to the Sports Hub application but will object to any application to redevelop the former pitch until the new Grass Pitch is operational. WBC officers will continue to work with the Football Association and Football Foundation to develop the football programme at the Monks Lane sports hub over the coming months.

This administration considers that it has found the ideal solution for the provision of league football in West Berkshire but we also continue to seek out other opportunities for both Artificial and Grass pitches and several preliminary discussions are underway with Officers in order to meet our commitments to the 10 year Playing Pitch Strategy approved last year.

Supplementary question

My concern is that the members of this Council and the public aren't aware of the full nature and costs associated with this scheme. If it didn't meet the requirement for a replacement of Faraday Road that would be ok, but the full cost is huge - £12m. I would urge Council to look under the bonnet before a decision is made. Will the Council agree to have a complete review of the costs and mission statement of this scheme before any decision is made?

Response

I don't recognise the figure of £12m. We are producing a sports hub with major effects and improvement on what was previously Faraday Road for football in the Berkshire area. The support of Newbury Football Club says a lot about the need and desire for it.

Question

"With the shortage of eight 3G pitches in the district, does the council believe that spending upwards of £12M on just 1 new AGP at Monks Lane Sports Hub, is value for our council tax payer's money?"

Response

If this was for a simple Artificial Grass Pitch or AGP, I would wholeheartedly agree with you, but it is not. In any event, whilst the total 40-year cost is still unknown due to retendering of the Leisure Management Contract the figure that you put into your question is one that is wildly inaccurate.

The Sports Hub development that we are proposing is not for one simple AGP but to create a new ground that achieves the FA Step 4 Ground Grading requirements.

In addition to an AGP that meets world-class standards, the development includes a pavilion with 4 team-changing rooms, officials changing rooms, a medical room, a kitchen with servery, social area, club meeting room and public toilets. It also encompasses two covered spectator stands, state of the art directional floodlighting, 52 car parking spaces, new electrical vehicle charging points and significant ecological improvements in the adjacent areas. It will provide capacity for up to 38

teams to train and play matches for 80 hours a week compared with a grass pitch capability of only 6 times a week. I would also add that the building is designed to be carbon neutral using a small amount of carbon offset and to meet BREEAM Excellent rating for provision of energy.

This quality and environmental commitment comes at a cost but as a council we need to lead by example if we are to expect developers to follow in the planning process so we can meet our Climate Emergency Promises.

This is a facility for which Newbury and West Berkshire will be proud of and for which most clubs would give their eye teeth. Hence the support from both Newbury FC and the Hellenic League in which they currently play at a Step 7 level.

This is part of our Playing Pitch Strategy approved by this administration in February last year which is in the process of annual review with Sport England. This review was slightly delayed this year because of the impact of Covid. As you know Sport England are making no objection to the Sports Hub planning application and we continue to have an excellent ongoing dialogue with clear benefits to sport and playing pitch provision in West Berkshire.

Given this background, yes, I do consider this facility to be good value for the Council Taxpayer both in terms of sporting facilities and community health and wellbeing.

Executive Committee - 18 November 2021

Question

At the last Planning & Highways Committee meeting on the 25th of October, Newbury Town Council resolved to ask whether the WBC Executive could conduct a final public consultation on the Monks Lane Sports Hub application, reference 21/02173/COMIND. The reason given is that, as the new amended application has been validated, and the full costs associated with building and operating the Sports Hub is now known, the public should have a final opportunity to have a say as to whether they agree with the proposals.

Response

There are no plans to undertake a further public consultation on the Sports Hub. The reason for this is that public support has already been determined for the development. Additionally the need to increase the provision of Artificial Grass Pitches is paramount. The Playing Pitch Strategy has identified a shortfall of 8 full sized Artificial Grass Pitches across West Berkshire and it is evident that a new AGP can meet the playing requirements of 38 teams and is needed to support the increasing population of Newbury

Question

The Council is intending to borrow funds from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) for the Monks Lane Sports Hub proposal (assuming that it gets the go ahead). Can the Council please provide full details of the arrangements including:

- The amount the Council plans to borrow from the PWLB for this proposal and be clear regarding what capital items it will cover, upfront and ongoing.
- The period of time it will be repaid over
- The interest rates (variable or fixed)
- When the principal sum will be repaid
- The process / governance which needs to be followed by West Berkshire Council before any PWLB borrowing contract is entered into

Response

Technically the lease does not commence until completion of works, with the development phase being undertaken and the legal contract called and agreed to lease to which is appended the agreed lease for subsequent signature upon completion of works. The only capital expenditure foreseen during the period of the lease therefore, apart from routine maintenance and decoration, will be the replacement of the pitch every 10 years. The recommendation from Sport England is to make allowance of £35k per year sinking fund to allow replacement in years 10, 20 and 30 with a total cost of £1.05m. Clearly we would not propose to replace the pitch at year 40. This amount may reduce as there are early signs that the life of an AGP may be significantly longer than 10 years.

The amount the Council borrows is subject to commercial confidentiality based on the procurement and price secured by Alliance Leisure Services. The capital items it will cover are: Pavillion incorporating 4 team changing rooms, officials changing area, medical room, kitchen, social area, committee room, and public toilets. Also 3G

Artificial Pitch (meeting World Rugby Regulation 22), fencing, spectator stands, spot lighting (x6) storage areas and 52 car parking spaces.

The period of repayment will be no longer than the estimated asset life of 40 years.

This will be borrowed at a fixed annuity rate. The current rate over 40 years is 1.93% (certainty rate) the actual rate will depend on the first drawdown on the project.

The principal sum will be repaid during the 40 year term with the likelihood that the capital repayments will start after the first 2 – 3 years once the facility has been properly established.

Once the capital project has been agreed by Council as part of the capital programme the borrowing will be undertaken by the Council's treasury team when the funding requirement is deemed necessary after considering the Council's overall cash flow position and in accordance with the Council's Constitution. This is standard procedure for all capital projects and is, of course, subject to call in by the Oversight and Scrutiny Committee

Question

When deciding on the proposed Sports Hub (based at Newbury Rugby Club) which other locations were considered and rejected?

Response

The other sites which have been explored for the location of a 3G pitch as a replacement for the Faraday Road Stadium were:

- Northcroft Park – reason for rejection: Flood risk, area would have impacted on cricket provision on the site
- The Diamond – reason for rejection: -Site too small. No current support facilities available with limited options to expand to Step 5 if required.
- Henwick Worthy – reason for rejection: Not in Newbury, a Step 6 or Step 5 facility would have impacted on other grass pitches available on the site.

Executive Committee - 14 October 2021

Question

Can the Council please confirm what contracts have been placed with Alliance Leisure and / or Alliance Building Services, when these contracts were placed, the value of these contracts and the scope.

Response

Alliance Leisure Services were appointed on June 15th 2021, to find a solution for the delivery of a 3G pitch, pavilion, spectator stand and car parking to achieve the FA Step 4 ground grading standard. Further, to complete design and tendering for these works utilising the UK Leisure Framework Agreement and progress the scheme to cost certainty. And finally, to act as agent in the submission of the planning application. The value of this work is £126 565.

Supplementary question

So what you're saying is that so far the only contract is for the planning application for £126,565 and no other contract has been released whatsoever with Alliance Leisure, is that what you are telling me?

Response

I stand by my original answer, which I think answered that point very clearly.

Full Council - 9 September 2021

Question

With respect to the "Monks Lane sports hub" proposed development, please can you confirm when will the Council be undertaking a competitive tender process which is in line its procurement policy / strategy that will be visible to the public, for all elements of the project?

Response

The Council has utilised the UK Leisure Framework to appoint Alliance Leisure to undertake the development of the Monks Lane Sports Hub and this includes the completion of the tender process. It is anticipated that tenders will be returned on October 8. An Executive committee decision is planned for November 18 to consider the award of the contract

Question

Does the council state the planned activities and milestones with times that are needed in order for the proposed sports ground at Monks Lane to be delivered and operational by their own publicised date of March 2022

Response

The Council's ambition has always been to complete the development by March 2022. However, this timescale is influenced by the planning determination and the decision of Sport England which is a statutory consultee for the planning application. We continue to monitor progress with the planning app process and we'll review as necessary

Question

Has the council yet undertaken a competitive tender process for the delivery of their now released plans for the Monks Lane Sports Hub project and when will the details be available?

Response

The competitive tendering process is currently in progress and is being conducted by Alliance Leisure who have been appointed to do this work through the UK Leisure Framework Agreement. As mentioned in an answer to a previous question, tenders are due to be returned by October 8th. An executive decision is planned for November 18th to consider the award of the contract.

Supplementary Question

So does the portfolio holder not agree that given the executive stated aim of a new sports hub being completed by March 2022, something promised to Sport England and there's a major reason behind the withdrawal of the objection to the Faraday Road Football Club application, that not providing details to other Members, not involving Ward Members, in any of this process, given that the Monks Lane development will have a very large impact on the residents of my ward and the other Members that represent that ward. You know that by not doing so, by not involving people, by making us ask questions in the format that we're having to ask the questions i.e. in public like this, that we're failing the most basic scrutiny test and it drives conspiracy theories which we don't really need to drive. So would you agree with me on what I've said please?

Response

We undertook a very detailed consultation exercise which included a webinar. Clearly the planning process is going through now which gives another opportunity for both Members and opponents to have their say. I think we've done the most we can

Question

Will Monks Lane Newbury Sports Hub be completed within the proposed timescales?"

Response

The Council's ambition has always been to complete the development by March 2022. However, this timescale will be influenced by the planning determination and the decision of Sport England which is a statutory consultee for this planning application. We continue to monitor progress with the planning process and we'll review if necessary

Supplementary Question

You'll be aware as well that there's well-reported shortages of materials, haulage and staff affecting the building trade. Are these likely to affect your proposed timescales?

Response

I'm afraid I can't say. I mean I am well aware of these shortages clearly, but it depends on whether the contractor we've selected can sort themselves out or not I suppose.

Question

How much funding is the council allocating to the lifespan of the replacement pitch at Newbury Sports Hub?

Response

The Council has allocated a sinking fund of £25k per annum to cover lifetime replacement but is keeping this figure under review in light of increasing inflationary costs.

Supplementary Question

Can you just remind me what the lifespan is considered to be please?

Response

About 10 years

Question

How long were WBC in negotiations with Sports England to get their approval for the Newbury Sports Hub?

Response

The Council has not completed any negotiations with Sport England as we do not require their approval for the Newbury Sports Hub. Sport England is a statutory consultee in relation to the Sport Hub development and make their decisions in according with the National Planning Policy Framework.

Supplementary Question

Does that mean there were no formal or informal discussions with Sport England about the hub?

Response

We are always in discussion with Sport England about all matters sport. So yes of course we had discussions with them and about the playing pitch strategy as well.

Question

Is the new Sports Hub to be a net carbon zero project?

Response

Net Zero Carbon focuses on two main sources of carbon, operational energy use and embodied carbon. The main principles of net carbon zero are to reduce construction impacts, reduce operational energy use, increase renewable energy supply, and finally consider offsetting any remaining carbon. Net Zero Carbon at present does not have a universal standard but rather several toolkits and bodies that assess a buildings potential to be Net Zero Carbon over its lifetime. West Berkshire Council have chosen to adopt a more traditional industry standard of BREEAM on Newbury Sports Hub, along with most Local Authorities.

The building overall will achieve BREEAM very good and the operational energy use of the building will achieve the BREEAM excellent standard. I can confirm that environmental issues were confirmed to the design team as a crucial importance from the very start they are still working out the detailed design but expect to be not quite net of carbon zero so we propose to achieve this through carbon offsetting.

Supplementary Question

I am just a little surprised at that because BREEAM excellent all round should have been our target. But the main issue I saw was in the planning and I'd like you to confirm that there is in fact no solar at all on this new facility?

Response

The original brief is to try and get to BREEAM excellent and the advice from the consultants it was almost impossible to achieve on this building, for a variety of reasons. In terms of the lack of solar, the issue is the orientation of the building, it goes north south and I'm informed by consultants that doesn't really meet the ideal standards for solar

Question

Who will own the built asset should the sports hub go ahead given considerations leasehold and freehold

Response

This question reads just a wee bit strangely but I'm assuming you're asking who will own the leasehold and freehold at the sports hub. And that the land deal was extensively detailed in the Executive report on the 29th April. But to remind you of those details, the Council will own the built assets for the duration of its leasehold interest which is 40 years. On termination of the lease the land and the fixed assets will revert to the landlord which at present is Newbury Rugby Club.

Question

Given Sports England preference for cross party meetings to ensure continuity of sport facility delivery, why does this council have conservatives and officer only meetings and not share minutes of these meetings with all parties?

Response

The Council has engaged extensively with the Community regarding the proposals for sports facilities in West Berkshire. The Council has also been in regular communications with Sport England regarding the same. The playing pitch strategy was approved by Council in February 2020 after extensive public consultation. It provides for annual meetings between the Council and Sport England. The first lead was postponed because of Covid and is now taking now taking place next month. The Council has operational meetings with Officers in respect of delivering key schemes which are frequently part two and include commercially sensitive information. It would not be practical for all party Members to be invited to such meetings or appropriate for minutes to be circulated.

Supplementary Question

Can you confirm that Sport England has stated a preference for cross-party representatives to be discussing with them? Not just those in control just in case there is a change in the future which we hope will happen

Response

That's never been passed across to us I am afraid.

Executive Committee - 02 September 2021

Question

Excluding the cost of land provision from Newbury Rugby Club, what figure has been allocated for construction of stands and facilities and do the councillors consider that this represents good value for money, when weighed against any CIL payments from the existing pitch?

Response

WBC have appointed Alliance Leisure via the UK Leisure Framework to progress design and budget costs. This is an ongoing process and detailed design is progressing at this juncture. We expect tenders to be returned for the project in October and will have cost certainty at that stage. We are not aware of the application of CIL in relation to the Faraday Stadium as the stadium has been closed for 3 years and the Council has not proposed its redevelopment. WBDC is seeking to develop Newbury Sports Hub as an enhanced replacement for the Faraday Stadium.

Full Council - 8 July 2021

Question

Is the Council's proposal for a new Sports Ground at Monks Lane intended to be a replacement for the Newbury Football Ground at Faraday Road, yes or no?

Response

Neither yes nor no would be an appropriate answer. I would refer you to the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy approved by the Council in February 2020.

The development of the Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) at Newbury Sports Hub will provide opportunities for clubs that previously played at Faraday Road to train and play matches, including Newbury Men's and Ladies teams. Alongside this development the Council is also actively exploring other options to increase the number of grass pitches available for football including the provision of more artificial grass pitches. I hope to be able to make an announcement in the next few weeks about the first of these once feasibility studies are completed.

Question

Did the Council receive the endorsement / support of Sport England and the FA before approving the Delegated Officer Decision, DOD4102, dated Tuesday 15 June 2021, that provides authority for "the appointment of Alliance Leisure for the development of the Newbury Sports Ground to progress through planning, design, pre-construction and construction phases to completion?"

Response

The Council is in regular communication with Sport England and the FA and has received written communication detailing their requirements for the Newbury Sports ground development. It is however not the role of Sport England or the FA to provide endorsements to the appointment of developers for specific projects. However we can advise that Alliance Leisure, as the sole supplier of the UK Leisure Framework Agreement, are well known to Sport England and in regular

communication with Sport England in relation to facility development and planning issues.

Question

Can the Council confirm that the proposed Sports Ground at Newbury Rugby Club is still due to be open and in use by the Public in March 2022?

Response

As I have consistently said that has always been our intention but obviously conditioned by the need to obtain detailed planning approval.

Executive Committee - 15 July 2021

Question

Given that the new sports ground/ football pitch is being dealt with by Delegated Officer Decisions and a firm has been appointed to oversee the management of construction, can the council please reveal the provisional cost of construction and the acquiring of land? Is it true that the cost will be 5 million pounds? Where will the funds come from to pay for it?"

Response

The land leasing agreement is confidential. It is not true that that cost will be £5M. The Council has set aside a capital budget to fund the project. To date that the Council has committed £126k for Alliance Leisure to progress the planning application and pre construction works.

Executive Committee - 10 June 2021

Question

Can the portfolio holder determine whether the astroturf proposal at the Newbury Rugby Club site is intended as a replacement for the Faraday Road football ground or is to address the shortfall of artificial pitches as outlined in your Playing Pitch Strategy adopted in February 2020?

Response

The development of the Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) at Newbury Rugby Club addresses both. Within the Playing Pitch Strategy the Faraday Road Stadium is referenced as Priority 1. In providing the new AGP the local authority will maintain and enhance provision for football for the Newbury and Thatcham areas for both training and match play and be available for significant use by local community clubs.

Question

Have you been given any indication from Sport England as to their view of the proposals for the development of the new Newbury Sports Ground at Monks Lane?

Response

Sport England have provided guidance detailing their statutory role, including the 5 Sport England Policy Exceptions, which detail the circumstances in which they would permit development on a playing field. Their correspondence relayed a number of observations relating to technical design and planning matters. Sport England also summarised the respective views of the RFU and the FA. Their communication indicated that subject to addressing the technical and planning matters the proposals could meet planning policy exceptions E4 and E5.

Executive Committee - 29 April 2021

Question

Why are items, which are not related to negotiations with the Rugby Club, such as the estimated budget for upfront capital costs, ongoing running costs, sinking funds etc being covered in part 2 rather than being made available to the press and public as they should be?

Response

We have excluded ongoing running costs from the Part I report on the basis that it is confidential, commercially sensitive information and the deal has not been finalised. The running costs are part of the ongoing discussions within the Joint Use Agreement which seeks amongst other things to find cost savings through shared services such as ground staff.

The constructions costs which have been included in the Part II papers are all estimates. There are no agreements underpinning them and as such until the agreements are in place they would be considered as commercially sensitive from the tenderers.

Once the deal is done on both the land and construction elements then those figures will be publicly available.

Question

What are the forecasted key milestone dates for the new football ground proposals, including the planning submission and decision date, the tender process start and finish dates and the construction start and completion dates that will enable this new facility to be operational by March 2022?

Response

Assuming that the proposal is approved by Executive this evening the planning application will be submitted next month concurrently with, using delegated authority the start of the process of appointing a contractor using the UK Framework Leisure Access Agreement. This approach has been approved by the Procurement Board

We expect to award the contract by late June allowing construction to commence by the end of August and the site to be operational for football use by the end of March.

Question

Is the 40 year lease (joint land deal) with the Rugby club the only contract that the Council are requesting to be approved by the Executive at this meeting?

Response

Yes It Is. As stated in my previous answer the construction contract will be dealt with under delegated authority and the Framework Agreement given that the Capital Expenditure has previously been approved within the 2021/22 Capital Budget.

Question

It is welcome that the plans have been upgraded from a Step 6 to a Step 4 facility from the start. However Hungerford and Thatcham (populations 10k & 25k) have grounds which enable them to currently play at the higher levels of Steps 2 and 3 respectively. The Faraday Road Ground has the capability to be upgraded to Step 2. It looks like the footprint of the proposed ground at the rugby club is too small to be upgraded any further. Therefore how can this be a like for like replacement?

Response

The Playing Pitch Strategy, approved by the Council in Feb 2020, clearly stated that the replacement of Faraday Road needed to be Step 6 with the ability to progress to Step 5. This strategy was supported and approved by Sport England and the Football Association. The Council has made it clear that the project is designed to meet the requirements of the Playing Pitch Strategy and it has enhanced the offer by proposing a 3G surface, enabling far greater community opportunity to play and enjoy sport and achieving a Step 4 Facility.

The initial view of the Council's consultants is that it may be possible to raise this to a Step 2 facility in the future but that this would require considerable additional expenditure which is not justified at the present time.

Question

Please can the Council confirm the Executive is aware the present draft forward plan contains all the necessary financial approval requirements to commission the construction of a Football Ground at Monks Lane to move it from Faraday Road?

Response

The reports before Members this evening details all of the relevant Information to allow them to make an informed decision. To clarify the Forward Plan Is a summary to Indicate the topics for discussion and the decision to be made.

Question

Can the executive confirm when the total development and ongoing costs to the council tax payer of the new football ground development at Newbury Rugby Club will be available for scrutiny in the public domain?

Response

We will seek and receive quotes from specialist contractors using the Framework Agreement. Once this is completed the Council will know the definitive cost of the project and financial reporting will be carried out through the normal channels that is to say quarterly updates to the Executive on Capital Expenditure against budget.

The constructions costs which we have are all estimates. There are no agreements underpinning them and as such until the agreements are in place they would be considered as commercially sensitive from the bidder. We have used estimated costs to inform our capital budget but they are much wider than just for the construction element.

Once the deal is done on both the lease and the construction elements then those figures will be publicly available.

Question

Could the Council please confirm that once full details and supporting documentation are available with respect to the Rugby club proposal it will undertake a public consultation that complies with the Government's Consultation Code (specifically the seven consultation criteria as detailed on the Local Government Association (LGA) website?

Response

The Council have operated in accordance with its consultation policy, which is compliant with the Local Government Association code. There have been multiple opportunities for the general public and interested parties to engage with officers. This process, which has been ongoing for several months, has resulted in some specific changes to improve the offer and ensure that it serves the community well into the future.

Not only did WBC undergo a full public consultation, but WBC took part in a publicly open Webinar and as I have stated the Capital Budget was approved by Executive in an open forum.

So, we have more than complied with all Consultation requirements.

Question

Could the Council please confirm exactly what additional details and documentation will be made available to the public with respect to the Newbury Rugby Club proposal prior to any legally binding documents are signed?

Response

Some minor bits of detailed design are still being worked up, but I can confirm that full details of the proposals will be provided into the public domain with the Planning Application next month. The Agreement to lease will be signed assuming Executive Approval tonight but that is not legally binding as it is dependent on achieving planning consent.

Question

Is it the Council's intention to make a decision (in Part II) at this meeting with respect to item 8 and 11 on the Executive Agenda "Newbury Sports Ground – Joint Land Deal (EX4010)" that will commit it to enter into various land agreements with the Rugby Club without putting this on the forward plan first?

Response

For the benefit of transparency to the public, we consider the Item to be correctly listed as an update on the Playing Pitch Strategy.

As you are aware Newbury Sports Ground has been through the Executive previously and had been on the Forward Plan. The 14th of January 2021 report was very clear that there will be a further report to the Executive with the final documents. The Executive this evening has before it, in Part II, the final documents and will make a decision on whether the documents, which represent the deal, are approved or not. The Executive will have all the relevant information and as such will have the full implications before them.

Other Questions

Why is the sports hub being built?

In 2020 WBC adopted a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) that shows the demand and supply and quality of sports pitches across West Berkshire in proportion to the population. The methodology used is approved by Sport England and can be applied by all local authorities to help the development of local plans. The results showed that West Berkshire needs 7 additional artificial grass pitches to meet local demand. The sports hub helps address this deficit and can cater for up to 38 teams per week.

Who can play on it?

All West Berkshire football clubs can book the facilities for training or matches and use the facilities in the new Pavillion that includes changing rooms. Showers, kitchen, social area and meeting room. You can make a provisional booking now by contacting Holly Booth on 01634 519588 (ext 2558)

How big is the proposed 3G pitch?

The pitch is 106m x 70M and is compliant with FIFA and World Rugby Regulation 22 standards

Will the pitch be available for football?

Yes it will be available for more than 70 hours per week all year round for football bookings

Is the pitch marked out for children's football?

Yes the pitch markings include for mini soccer and 5 v 5 and 7 v 7

Do I have to be a member of Newbury Rugby Club to hire the pitch?

No

How much will it cost to hire ?

Pricing is still being finalised but most local clubs can expect to pay in the region of £75-£80 per hour

Does the pitch have sports lighting?

Yes

Is there car parking?

52 new parking bays including 4 electric vehicle charging points and two bays for people with disabilities, plus 20 spaces for bikes

Are the total costs associated with the Sports Hub fully known and understood?

Yes

Cost estimates at October 2021 were for £3.351M based on commencing the scheme in January 2022.

Borrowing costs for the capital based on the prevailing interest rate was estimated at £122k per annum over 40 years

The total funding spent to date to complete the design of the scheme and planning process is £126,000.

Construction costs will be updated following the conclusion of the claim for a judicial review and an agreed timetable for the development.

The rental fee, premium payment and sinking fund costs are unlikely to be impacted upon by the delay.

An annual rental payment will be made to Newbury rugby club of the Rugby club of £41k per annum.

A one off premium payment will be paid to the club to enable Newbury rugby club to improve other facilities such as the replacement of floodlights.

WBC has also set aside a sinking fund of £35k per annum to ensure that the 3G playing surface pitch can be replaced every 10 years as recommended by Sport England

West Berkshire Council commissioned an indicative business plan and has committed £90k per annum to cover annual running costs. However actual costs and best value for money will be secured through a competitive procurement process that will enable WBC to compare the projected operational costs and income projections from several leading leisure operators.

There are variables that will determine the whole life cost. For example the indicative business shows income from pitch bookings based on 40% utilisation at peak times and 10% utilisation at off peak times. If an operator secures 50% usage at peak times the annual income from pitch hire may increase from £63k per annum to £79k per annum. If this income differential is multiplied over 40 years it yields an additional £640,000. Secondary spend income could also increase in this circumstance. Therefore whole life operational costs cannot be ascertained exactly at this stage and in fact costs could be lower than WBC projections which is budgeted to provide £90k per annum.

Are the real objectives for the proposed Monks Lane Sports Hub fully known and understood?

Yes.

It is to address the shortage of supply in artificial grass pitches identified in the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS).

The additional opportunities for participation in sport will have a positive impact on improving the health of children and adults.

The quality and range of facilities are designed to achieve the FA ground grading for a Step 4, thereby enabling and encouraging local teams playing in lower leagues to achieve promotion and progress through the league system to this level.

The Sports Hub provides an opportunity for local teams to train and play league matches.

WBC project that the 3G AGP will have around 90% of programme time for football. Some teams will be able to use the sport hub for their home venue for league matches.

A competitive procurement process will be undertaken to ensure high quality management for the sports hub from an experienced leisure operator.

Newbury Rugby Club will have 8 hours protected time each week during the season primarily for coaching children to play rugby. This is the same amount of time that Newbury Rugby club currently plays on the grass pitch that will be replaced by the new 3G pitch.

Why can't the development be higher than Step 4?

The vast majority of teams in West Berkshire play at levels below Step 4 and a key primary aim of the development is to meet demand from local teams

The primary reason the development cannot go beyond Step 4 facility because it would result in the loss of grass pitches that are situated adjacent to the sports hub facilities.

Has the necessary governance been followed?

Yes

The award of the contract via the UK Leisure Framework Agreement was considered and approved by Procurement Board on March 10th 2021.

The Procurement Board report was also included as Appendix E in an Executive Committee report titled "Newbury Sports Ground – Joint Land Deal "on 29th April 2021 (Confidential Part II).

The Western Area Planning Committee considered the Sports Hub scheme on 15 December 2021

A report titled "Award of Contract to Build Newbury Sports Hub" was considered and approved by Executive Committee on December 16th 2021

District Planning Committee considered the Sports Hub scheme on 2 March 2022.

Have alternative options been sufficiently explored?

Yes – alternative sites which were considered following feasibility studies were:

- Henwick Worthy Sports Ground
- Northcroft Park
- The Diamond at Greenham.

Views of the Rugby Football Association (RFA) and Football Association (FA) sports Governing Bodies

The Governing Bodies of Sport are not statutory consultees in relation to this development

Note that the primary issue for the RFU was that it wished to see a full size adult rugby pitch. A full size adult rugby pitch could not be accommodated on the site (it is larger than the existing grass pitch). An expansion of the pitch would have resulted in

the loss of adjacent grass pitches used by Newbury Rugby club. This proposal was not supported by Newbury Rugby club.

The Football Association wished to see the Sunday morning time dedicated to football. This time was required by Newbury Rugby club for the training of their junior rugby players.

There were also differences of opinion on some other elements of the scheme, but Sport England, who is the statutory consultee, raised no objections to the proposal.

Can you confirm or deny that there is a twenty year break clause for the proposed Sport Pitch at Monks Lane , and if so is it at either parties discretion

There is a 20 year break option which is only exercisable by the Council.

Can you please confirm that there is an agreement that rugby and football matches will not be allowed at the same time?

A Joint User Agreement between WBC and Newbury Rugby club will be signed that provides compliance with the relevant planning condition in relation to this matter.

It is a planning condition that the provision of adult football and rugby home matches shall be played on alternate match days in the evenings and on Saturdays and Sundays. No main adult football and rugby team matches shall take place on the same day.

The reason is to ensure the development is provided with adequate parking facilities to cope with the demand for parking, in order to reduce the likelihood of roadside parking that would adversely affect road safety and the flow of traffic.