

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES
21 SEPTEMBER 2011**

Present: Councillors Clark, Corello, Hodges, MJ Lock, Pragnell (in the Chair), Sabetian and Turner (as the duly appointed substitute for Councillor Westley)

Lead Members in attendance: Councillors Birch and Kramer

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Westley

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

13. CALL-IN TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – REVIEW OF CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2011/12 TO 2013/14 (EAST HILL CAFÉ SCHEME AND DRILL HALL SITE)

Jayne Butters, Borough Solicitor, presented the call-in to scrutiny, relating to the decision of Cabinet on 5 September 2011, concerning the Review of Capital Programme 2011/12 to 2013/14, specifically the deletion of the East Hill Café scheme and Drill Hall site had been called-in to scrutiny on the request of the Chair of the Committee. The report also set out the options available to the Committee:

- (a) to take no action;
- (b) to refer the matter back to Cabinet with recommendations; or
- (c) to refer the matter to Council for consideration.

Councillor Pragnell re-iterated his reasons for calling the decision in, explaining that he did not think everything had been taken into account at the Cabinet meeting, questions remained unanswered and other alternatives were not considered.

Councillor Pragnell also asked for clarification concerning the lack of interest in the East Hill Café scheme. Neil Dart, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources, explained that the original scheme was devised and advertised, however there was only limited interest. Amy Terry, Estates Manager, explained that there had been some enquiries in response to the adverts inviting expressions of interest but only one person attended the open viewing and at the closing date no interest was received. Neil Dart also explained that the programme needed to be financially viable and cover any loss of income from the ice-cream van that was currently on the site.

With regard to the Drill Hall site, Councillor Pragnell invited Councillor Beaver, as shadow Lead Member, to the table to give his view of the decision made.

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Councillor Beaver remarked that he felt there was no need to delete this from the Capital Programme, as it could remain an aspiration for future years.

There was much discussion from the committee on the purchase of the site. Neil Dart explained that this was not viewed as a sound financial investment. To purchase the Drill Hall would cost circa £90,000; other works needed on the site (i.e. demolition) would also cost circa £90,000. What would be left was an asset that was only worth £100,000. As such the purchase would not represent value for money.

Councillor Sabetian asked what, in real terms, would it mean to keep the scheme in the Capital Programme. Neil Dart explained that, currently, £133,000 was allocated within the Capital Programme for this scheme. As the cost had risen to £180,000, then extra funding would need to be sought.

Councillor Birch, Leader of the Council, commented that it would be foolish to go against officers' professional advice and there were no overwhelming reasons to ignore such advice.

Councillor Corello asked for comments regarding the questions that were unanswered at the Cabinet meeting. Councillor Cooke had asked a question relating to 'Invest to Save' and had not received an answer. Councillor Birch replied that he could not see where there was any evidence of this option being viable in relation to the Drill Hall site. He also commented that the Capital Programme was not aspirational, but detailed what the Council were planning to implement over a number of years.

RESOLVED (by 4 votes to 3) that:

- 1. the Committee take no action; and**
- 2. the Cabinet decision become effective immediately.**

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 6.51pm)