

SUDBURY TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF SUDBURY TOWN COUNCIL HELD VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE ON WEDNESDAY 17TH MARCH 2021 AT 6.30PM

Present: Mr J Owen Mayor of Sudbury, in the CHAIR.

Mrs J Antill	Mr S Hall
Mrs S Ayres	Ms E Murphy
Mr N Bennett	Mr A Osborne
Mr T Cresswell	Miss A Owen
Ms L Fowler	Mr R Spivey

Mr C Griffin	Town Clerk
Mrs J Budd	Deputy Town Clerk

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors O Forder, Mrs J Osborne and J Sayers.

Councillor D Williams was absent but no apologies had been received.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with guidance from Babergh District Council's Standards Committee, Mrs S Ayres, Mr T Cresswell, Mr A Osborne and Miss A Owen declared that they were Babergh District Councillors. Mr Owen declared that he was a Suffolk County Councillor.

Mr Osborne declared a non pecuniary interest in item 5.

3 DECLARATIONS OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

No declarations were received.

4 REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

No requests for dispensation had been received.

5 SALE OF BELLE VUE HOUSE AND ADJACENT LAND

Members discussed Babergh District Council Cabinet's decision on Thursday 11th March to select a preferred Bidder for the purchase of Belle Vue House and adjacent land.

Paragraph 4.24 of the Babergh District Council report considered by their cabinet gave the details of the six bidders as follows: *"An outline of proposals received is shown below. None of the bids propose to remove the house."*

BIDDER	Type	Summary of Proposal
A	Carehome	New build carehome on pool site with communal/ancillary conversion of house
B	Retirement	New build retirement living development pool site, house conversion to two residential dwellings
C	Residential	Bid for house only to convert to two residential dwellings
D	Residential	New build residential development on pool site and house conversion to residential
E	Community	Conversion of house for range of community and ancillary uses
F	Community	Creation of new park entrance with refurbishment/conversion of house for community use/private short-term lets

The Babergh District Council Cabinet resolved to “*approve the preferred recommended proposal, Bidder B, including the financial bid outlined in the confidential report*”.

“The Cabinet agreed up to 100% from the sale of the site will be diverted to ensure the creation of a new entrance to Belle Vue park, café and toilet facilities”.

Members were concerned that Babergh District Council had not released any further details of any of the bids, so nothing further was clear on the content of bidder B’s proposal. Members considered maps showing the overlap of the view down King Street towards Belle Vue with the ‘Red Line’ area of land for sale. These suggested that any new park entrance would have to be to the south opening on to the Belle Vue roundabout and not facing towards the town centre. A ‘mock-up’ photograph of the potential view from King Street, using a 4-storey building similar to the new construction at Crown Buildings on Newton Road, showed that up to three quarters of the view of the park could be obstructed under the sale plans. This was acknowledged to be a worst-case scenario, but members were keen to be given access to the actual plans to be reassured on this aspect.

It would appear that from what little was known of Bidder B’s plans, the Town Council’s policy of keeping the front of the park as open space with an unobstructed view when looking down King Street had been ignored as the proposed retirement living building would be in the direct line of sight.

Concerns were also raised over the statements that some bidders, including Bidder B, demanded additional land from the park outside the ‘Red Line’ area offered for sale. This might lead to a stand-off situation where the developer threatened to demolish Belle Vue House unless additional land were included in the sale.

7.25PM – Councillor Mrs J Antill left the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Mayor and the Town Clerk write a letter to the Cabinet at Babergh District Council informing them of the Town Council’s disappointment at their decision to sell Belle Vue under these conditions. The letter should identify the main areas of concern, especially where there was ambiguity in the statements made at the Cabinet meeting, and ask for written confirmation on these.

6. **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC (WHICH TERM INCLUDES THE PRESS)**

7.47pm - That pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the business specified in item 9 on the grounds that if the public were present during this item, it is likely that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information.

7. **POSITION ON THE FUTURE OF BELLE SITE**

Councillor Spivey recommended that members look at the range of practical alternative options that would be available as a 'fallback' plan should Babergh District Council Cabinet's proposed Bidder withdraw.

Members felt it was important for Sudbury Town Council to work alongside all community groups and professionals who had relevant knowledge to contribute to enable them to express their ideas in a suitable format.

A working group was proposed to identify the key individuals and groups interested in working together on alternative plans. It was suggested that such a co-ordinating working group be set up involving Councillors who were not serving on the planning committee, either at town or district level, to avoid any perceived conflict of interest.

RESOLVED

That a working group be set up chaired by Councillors R Spivey and that Councillors O Forder, J Antill and L Fowler be invited to be members. That this working group then ask for suitable members of the public who are interested, or have expertise, to join them.

Councillor Spivey agreed to this and would arrange a first meeting.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 8.00pm

Chairman.....