



Executive Committee

Tuesday, 13th December,
2022

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), and Councillors Karen Ashley, Joanne Beecham, Peter Fleming, Lucy Harrison, Anthony Lovell, Emma Marshall and Craig Warhurst

Also Present:

Councillor Joanna Kane

Officers:

Michael Birkinshaw, Peter Carpenter, Sue Hanley, Guy Revans, Michael Rowan and Carl Walker

Principal Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley-Hill

92. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Nyear Nazir.

93. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

94. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 8th December 2022, Members had pre-scrutinised the report on the Appropriation of Land off Ipsley Church Lane for Planning Purposes, which was due for consideration during the Executive Committee meeting. At the end of their debate, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had endorsed the recommendation in the report.

The Leader commented that he was aware that a number of members of the public had either spoken or submitted evidence in writing for consideration at that meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. On behalf of the Executive Committee, the

Chair

Leader thanked those residents for their time and for making their contributions.

95. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday 6th December 2022 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

96. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Officers confirmed that no Questions on Notice had been received for consideration at this meeting.

97. APPROPRIATION OF LAND OFF IPSLEY CHURCH LANE FOR PLANNING PURPOSES

The Bereavement Services Manager presented a report on the subject of the appropriation of land off Ipsley Church Lane for planning purposes.

Members were advised that the Council had already been granted permission by the Planning Committee for change of use of the land at Ipsley Church Lane for use as a cemetery. Part of the conditions that had been applied to this planning permission had related to the need for the Council to preserve the biodiversity of the land once it was in use as a cemetery.

The Council had the power, under Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972, to appropriate land belonging to the authority for planning purposes. The appropriation of the land was required as it was classified as primary open space. In order to appropriate the land, the Council had had to advertise locally its intention to do so for a period of two consecutive weeks and this was subject to public consultation. In this context, the Council had placed three advertisements in the Redditch Standard in September 2022 advertising the authority's intention to appropriate the land. The first advert had contained an incorrect email address and therefore the decision had been taken to place an advertisement in the local press for a third week, thereby ensuring that the process was publicised for a longer period of time than was stipulated in the legislation.

A total of 69 objections had been received from the public during this consultation process. A number of issues had been raised by the public, many of which related to planning considerations, such as issues relating to ground water and highways concerns. The

main point that had been raised by a majority of respondents had related to concerns that there would be a loss of recreational space. Many respondents had highlighted that they used the land for a range of recreational purposes, including to walk their dogs, sledging, running and for picnics in the summer months.

When considering objections about the loss of recreational space, the Executive Committee was advised that it was important to take into account the availability of other recreational space near to the site and the impact that the appropriation of the land would have on the availability of recreational space locally. Members were advised that the site itself measured 4.6 hectares. Within a kilometre of the centre of the site, there was a further 55 hectares of open space, which could be accessed within approximately 600 metres from the site. The site represented around 8 per cent of the land in that area of the Arrow Valley Park. In the wider context of the whole of the park, comprising 364 hectares, this site represented just over 1 per cent of the open space available for recreational purposes.

During consideration of this item, reference was made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's pre-scrutiny of the report at a meeting held on 8th December 2022. Concerns had been raised at this meeting that there would be a loss of open space as a result of the appropriation of the land. However, the Executive Committee was informed that in planning terms, there would be no loss of open space as a result of the appropriation of the land. Instead, Planning Officers had previously advised that the typology of the open space would change from parks to a churchyard, cemetery or crematoria open space.

The Executive Committee was advised that there were no direct financial implications arising from the proposals detailed in the report. However, there were indirect financial implications, insofar as the Council had already committed funding to works on the cemetery, including the planning process.

There was a need for the Council to have a clear approach to management of the land following its appropriation and appropriate arrangements were in place. The appearance of the cemetery remained to be determined, which would form the focus of the next report on this subject to the Planning Committee. The Council would take into account responsibilities in respect of protecting the biodiversity of the land as part of this stage of the process.

Following the presentation of the report, the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services welcomed the report and in doing so commented that the Council had a moral responsibility to ensure that burial provision was available to residents living in the Borough.

Members discussed the report and questioned how the number of objections received during the latest consultation process compared to the number of objections that had been received by the Council when the planning application had been submitted in 2021. Officers advised that there had been approximately 840 objections received in response to the planning application and 69 objections received in relation to the latest consultation process.

Reference was made to the new typology of open space that would apply to the land following its appropriation, which would be churchyard, cemetery and crematoria open space. Members commented that this would be close to Ipsley Church and questioned whether this would cause any conflict. Officers clarified that this was the typology classification in terms of open space in the planning process, which was separate and unrelated to the role of Ipsley Church. Members were also advised that Ipsley Church had submitted an objection in the planning process.

Consideration was given to the length of time it would take for all of the land to be used for burial plots. Officers explained that it would take between 80 and 100 years after the first burial before the cemetery would be full at the site. During that time, the site would remain available for recreational use, although it was acknowledged that some people might not feel comfortable using the land for recreational purposes once burials had started to take place.

The Committee subsequently discussed the action that was being taken to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the site and questions were raised about how this would be managed once burials started to take place. Members were informed that the Council had an opportunity to design the cemetery in a way that would enhance the biodiversity of the land. As discussed at previous meetings, there was no requirement for the cemetery to have a traditional Victorian appearance. Instead, there were a range of options available, including woodland burials. The Council would work with an ecologist to ensure that appropriate arrangements were in place.

Questions were raised about the potential for burials to be situated in rows, rather than in different locations at the site once it started to be used. Members commented that there were some residents who might otherwise be concerned about potentially causing offence or showing disrespect by inadvertently stepping on a grave. Officers explained that the interior of the site would be considered as part of the next stage of the planning process. Similarly, gravestones and the potential for more significant memorials to be installed by families would also be considered as part of this process.

RESOLVED that

the Land off Ipsley Church Lane be appropriated under section 122 (2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 for planning purposes.

98. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members considered the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6th October 2022. The Leader confirmed that there were no outstanding recommendations arising from that meeting requiring Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6th October 2022 be noted.

99. MINUTES / REFERRALS - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE PANELS ETC.

The Chair advised that there were no referrals from either the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or any of the Executive Advisory Panels on this occasion.

100. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

The Chair advised that there had been no changes in respect of Executive Advisory Panel meetings since the previous meeting of the Executive Committee.

During consideration of this item, in relation to the work of the Member Support Steering Group, the Chair commented that cyber security training was due to be provided to Members at a session scheduled to take place on Wednesday 14th December 2022. All Members were urged to attend this training.