

Present: Councillor Gary Hewson (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Bob Bushell, Councillor Jackie Kirk, Councillor
Edmund Strengiel, Councillor Ronald Hills and Councillor
Andy Kerry

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Karen Lee

9. Confirmation of Minutes - 27 July 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2016 be confirmed.

10. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item(s) of business because it was likely that if members of the public were present there would be a disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

11. Request to Call-in an Executive Decision: Community Services Review

The Chair invited the councillors presenting the request, Councillors Hills and Kerry, to speak to the Committee regarding their request to Call-In the Executive decision that was made at the meeting held on 22 August 2016 in respect of Community Services Review.

Councillor Hills outlined his concerns relating to the review of the service. Councillor Hills explained that he felt the decision was unjustified and was open to challenge based on the evidence considered throughout the decision making process. These were namely:

- That the report did not contain sufficient information about how the maintenance of Hartsholme Country Park would operate following the staffing changes.
- Hartsholme Country Park was the largest park in the city and a significant proportion of it was an area of Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI), however following these changes it would receive less attention than other parks in the city.
- That the report stated the annual cost for grounds maintenance was £50,000 however the report was vague regarding what this would actually cost, and who would be carrying out these duties.

The Committee asked questions of Councillor Hills and Kerry and the following main points arose from the discussion:

- That the reasoning behind the report was to improve the parks and open spaces across the city and was not based on the 'politics of envy'.
- Councillor Hills explained that it felt as though the change to the service was only put in place to re-direct money to the Council's budget rather

than improve the parks themselves. Committee members disagreed stating that the changes would provide additional funding by making use of existing staff allowing further improvements to be made to the parks and open spaces.

- That the reports had been through both the Trade Union joint committee and Policy Scrutiny committee without problem. When discussed at these meetings the changes had been seen as positive.
- That the report stated that the grounds maintenance would be dealt with through contractors and therefore there would not be any detrimental impact to the aesthetics of the park. However, it was not explained how this would operate on a day to day basis.

The Chair invited Councillor Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Recreational Services and Health to make a response in respect of the Call-in request.

Councillor Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Recreational Services and Health:

- Informed that work to the park was scheduled on a work programme. Following the review some of the work would be carried out by contractors rather than volunteers in the park. The work would still be carried out only by a contractor as opposed to existing staff.
- Stated these changes had not been made out of the 'politics of envy' as they were designed to enhance all parks and open spaces across Lincoln
- Advised that the changes to the way the staffing would operate would in effect actually increase the number of people available to carry out duties within the park, thus allowing more improvements to be made.
- Continued that where a service had been reduced for example the reduction of football pitches, this was due to a decline in demand. In this case there had been a decline in local football teams, and therefore some pitches were not used.
- Reminded members that parks were not a statutory function and central government had changed the way they would be funded, the new posts would utilise staff experience to apply for funding bids to bring in extra revenue towards the parks and open spaces.
- Informed that Hartsholme Country Park was also experimenting with more camping and glamping options within the park to generate additional revenue.
- Reminded members that this report had been through both the Trade Union members and the scrutiny process, both of which had fed back positive comments. No concerns were made about the decision or the contents of the report throughout these stages.

The Committee agreed that the evidence was sufficiently presented throughout the decision making process and councillors had ample opportunity to feed comments in during the scrutiny stage. The Committee agreed the information was adequate to come to an informed decision during the time it went to Executive. The main reasons to withdraw the call-in were:

- The Committee felt that there was adequate evidence presented within the report during the Trade Union and Policy Scrutiny discussions for the Executive to make an informed decision.
- That there were inbuilt controls to prevent the new staffing arrangements having a detrimental effect on Hartsholme Country Park due to scheduled monitoring and reviews.
- The Committee felt that this decision was developed to benefit all and should be a positive impact on the parks and open spaces across the city.
- That existing members of staff time would be free to apply for funding which had the potential to encourage additional revenue for the parks and open spaces.

Members voted 3 – 1 to withdraw the application for call-in

RESOLVED that the withdrawal of the call-in request be noted.