

The Cabinet

Wednesday 27 May 2020 at 15:30 at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

- Present:** Councillor Y Davies (Chair);
Councillors Ali, Crompton, Hadley, Millard, Shaeen,
Taylor and Underhill.
- In attendance:** Councillors E M Giles, L Giles, Padda and Singh.
- Officers:** David Stevens (Chief Executive), Alan Caddick (Housing and Communities), Neil Cox (Director – Prevention and Protection), Lesley Hagger (Executive Director of Children’s Services), Alison Knight (Executive Director – Neighbourhoods), Elaine Newsome (Service Manager – Democracy), Sue Stanhope (Interim Director – Human Resources), Tammy Stokes (Interim Director – Regeneration and Growth), Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic Services Manager), Surjit Tour (Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer) and Chris Ward (Director – Education, Skills and Employment).

32/20 **Apology for absence**

Members noted the apology of Councillor Moore, Chair of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board. The Leader, on behalf of the Cabinet, wished Councillor Moore her best wishes for a speedy recovery.

33/20 **Minutes of Meetings**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 May 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

34/20 **Additional Business**

There were no additional items of business to consider.



35/20 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Hadley declared a pecuniary interest in Minute No. 36/20 (Brandhall Golf Course – Potential Options for Future Use). She subsequently left the meeting during consideration of this item.

36/20 **Brandhall Golf Course – Potential Options for Future Use**

With reference to Minute No. 75/20, the Cabinet gave consideration to the outcomes of extensive public consultation undertaken on the proposed closure and alternative use of Brandhall Golf Course and to the recommendations of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board.

Alternative options for the proposed site considered were:-

- a new park/open space;
- the creation of a new school to replace Causeway Green Primary School;
- new local housing;

The results of feedback received following extensive consultation was summarised as follows:-

- despite a high level of engagement, only 712 residents completed the survey, an estimated 100 people attended the ‘drop in’ sessions and 37 people wrote directly to us to express their views;
- the majority of people who participated in the consultation never or rarely used the facility and around half of survey respondents would not be affected if it were to close;
- objections to the Council’s proposals were expressed by some golfers and local residents. This was mainly captured at face-to-face sessions and via general written enquiries;
- overall, those who lived closest to Brandhall Golf Course, had similar views to those from other areas of Sandwell;
- most survey respondents felt that the amenities that the Council was proposing were important, with most respondents opting for Option 3 of the development proposals;
- the consultation findings supported the outcomes of the Golf Needs Assessment carried out previously (i.e. that the facility was underused by Sandwell residents in general). In particular, the majority of local residents did not use the facility and would not be affected if it closed;
- many of the concerns raised could be mitigated through the delivery of the Council’s proposals and careful consideration would be given to addressing these concerns.

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If the Council took no action, the Council would be required to continue to support a golf facility at a current annual net cost of £257k. With a declining membership, the annual net cost to the Council would increase for a facility that required major investment.

Whilst alternative uses had been considered, the land was located in a predominantly residential area. It was not considered appropriate for alternative uses such as commercial use to be considered. Residential, educational and recreational uses would greatly support the Council's 2030 Vision for the borough.

The Golf Course and Club House were both currently closed due to the enforced closure of golf courses and hospitality services as a result of COVID-19 government guidance. Given that the course had been closed for a period of nine weeks due to the coronavirus outbreak and it had not been possible for essential and planned maintenance to be carried out, it would take considerable time and money to return the course to playable use. This would also take resources and staff away from essential Council services. Having considered a number of various options that were not feasible, the Cabinet were minded to approve the closure of the course indefinitely.

Agreed:-

- (1) that details of the outcomes of the public consultation regarding the proposed closure and alternative uses of the Brandhall Golf Course site be noted;
- (2) that the responses to the recommendations made by the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board be noted;
- (3) that the closure of Brandhall Golf Course and Club House be approved;
- (4) that the Brandhall Golf Course, currently closed due to COVID-19, remain closed and the Executive Director – Neighbourhoods enter into a Deed of Surrender with Sandwell Leisure Trust in respect of the existing lease;
- (5) that the Executive Director – Neighbourhoods serve the appropriate notice to Brandhall Golf Club in respect of the existing lease on the Club House (if necessary);
- (6) that the Executive Director – Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Interim Director – Regeneration and Growth, develop a Master Plan for the future use of the Brandhall Golf Course and Club House site to be submitted to Cabinet in due course.

37/20

Children's Centre Contracts

It was reported that the current contracts for the operation of the core Children's Centre services in Sandwell would expire at the end of March 2021. A re-procurement process should start in May 2020 but this was not possible due to the current Coronavirus pandemic which had resulted in major delays in undertaking the necessary consultation with elected members and the local community.

The Cabinet considered the following options:-

- immediately commencing a re-procurement – however it was felt that this would not fit the direction of travel for the future delivery of children's centres as set out in the Corporate Plan and there would be insufficient time to consult key stakeholders;
- bring the operation of core children's centres into the local authority. This would require the TUPE transfer of existing children's centre staff that meet the TUPE requirements into the local authority however it would greatly impact the voluntary and community sector offer and would require considerable input from legal, finance and Human Resources services at a time when the Council's focus must be elsewhere;
- extend the contract for a shorter period, for example 6-9 months. This option was discounted due to the current lack of certainty about when the necessary consultation could be completed. The longer 12-month timescale would provide more assurance that the work could be completed and carefully considered prior to the next report to Cabinet in 2021.

Approval was therefore sought to extend the current contracts for a further twelve-month period until 31 March 2022.

The Chair of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board supported the proposal, which would have no adverse implication on the Council's finance or other resources. However, he felt that the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board had a role in scrutinising performance of children's centres to ensure that the highest quality and consistency of services across the Borough. In particular, the Board would like to see:-

1. core centres grouped together into three lots to reduce administration and management costs, their performance data should also be split across these 3 lots;
2. approximately four years data to analyse the trend in performance of these centres;
3. the budget was allocated based primarily on the numbers of children in the respective areas and it would be helpful if we could see the budget broken down in more detail;
4. reassurance that there would be considerable interest in future tendering opportunities.

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In response, the Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life confirmed that a future report would be submitted to the Scrutiny Board on the performance of children's centres and the above points would be addressed at that meeting.

Agreed that the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer agree a 12-month extension to the existing children's centre contracts until 31 March 2022.

38/20

Soil Stack Replacements

Approval was sought to award a contract to undertake soil stack replacements to various locations within housing stock owned by Sandwell Council.

The contract would also include a survey of soil stacks in all high-rise blocks to provide up to date stock information on the age, condition and any remedial works required.

The Council was seeking to appoint one contractor to undertake the replacement of soil and vent pipes within the Council's housing stock. The contract period would be for four years, from April 2020 to March 2024.

In accordance with the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules, the tender of Vinci Construction UK Limited was a fully compliant bid inclusive of being priced on the basis of the soil stack replacement system specified within the tender documentation.

The Cabinet gave consideration to an alternative option to continue to provide a repairs service to those properties affected by the deterioration of the soil pipes and the associated leaks. However, given the age of the pipework and the issues that had occurred since their installation, typically over 60 years ago, this would not be feasible. It was therefore proposed to award the contract to Vinci Construction UK Limited.

The report was accompanied by a presentation by the Director – Housing and Communities.

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Agreed:-

- (1) that the Director – Housing and Communities award the contract to undertake soil stack replacement to various properties to Vinci Construction UK Limited for a contract period of four years, from April 2020 to March 2024 to a value of £750,000 per annum;
- (2) that in connection with Resolution (1) above, the Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer enter into an appropriate contract with Vinci Construction UK Limited.

Meeting ended at 15:59

This meeting was webcast live and is available to view on the Council's website https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Sy33Nnf_Dg