

Devolution Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Ditchling Room, Southover House, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1AB, on 20 February 2020 at 10.00am

Present:

Councillor Roy Clay (Chair)

Councillors Julie Carr, Imogen Makepeace and Christine Robinson

Officers in attendance:

Mark Langridge Kemp (Head of Property, Delivery and Compliance), Kate Slattery (Solicitor) and Jennifer Norman (Committee Officer, Democratic Services)

Also in attendance:

Councillor Ruth O'Keeffe MBE (Cabinet member for Tourism and Devolution and Joint Leader of the Independent Group)

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2019 were submitted and approved, and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

2 Apologies for absence/declaration of substitute members

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Ron Maskell and Phil Boorman.

3 Declarations of interest

Councillor Makepeace declared a non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 5, *Devolution of Open Spaces to Town and Parish Councils*, as she was a member of Lewes Town Council.

Councillor Carr declared a non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 5, *Devolution of Open Spaces to Town and Parish Councils*, as she was Vice-Chair of Friends of Riverside Park.

Councillor Robinson declared a non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 5, *Devolution of Open Spaces to Town and Parish Councils*, as she was a member of Telscombe Town Council.

4 Written questions from councillors

There were none.

5 Devolution of Open Spaces to Town and Parish Councils

The Committee received the report of the Head of Property, Delivery and Compliance (HPDC), which provided an update on the progress of devolution requests from town and parish councils within Lewes District, and to confirm the next steps in the devolution process.

The HPDC highlighted that the Council had supported the devolution of open spaces to town and parish councils within Lewes District since 2014. In 2019 Cabinet also agreed revisions to the Council's Transfer and Disposal Policy to include reference to devolution, confirming the Council's commitment to the devolution process.

In 2015, a list of possible devolution sites was collated and Officers were working through the sites. The HPDC explained that although despite the Council's commitment to the devolution process and the best endeavours of Officers, it had been difficult to reach a conclusion on a number of sites either because sites that have come forward were no longer desired by town or parish councils, or due to complex legal issues that have proved lengthy to resolve.

The HPDC provided a detailed update regarding sites for devolution to Lewes Town Council, as set out in sections 2.1 to 2.1.2 of the report, noting that the monetary figure of '£76,23' listed for Stanley Turner Recreation Ground in section 2.1.1 be amended to read '£76,230'.

The Committee queried whether the figures listed in section 2.1.1 of the report were annual figures. The HPDC confirmed that the figures were annual and that they included any income generated as well as any expenditure, noting that the figures varied from year to year.

The Committee queried whether Mountfield Pleasure Ground Trust and Stanley Turner Recreation Ground were considered one site. Officers explained that they were two separate sites and two separate registered charities gifted to a previous incarnation of Lewes District Council. Officers further explained that Lewes District Council was the sole trustee of the registered charities and that any decisions in relation to the sites must go to Full Council (meeting as the trustees) for approval.

The HPDC provided a further update regarding sites for devolution to Newhaven Town Council, as set out in sections 2.2 to 2.2.3 of the report, and East Chilington Parish Council, as set out in section 2.3 of the report.

The HPDC brought the Committee's attention to future devolution projects as set out in 2.4 of the report, noting that the original list of possible devolution sites was contained in appendix 1.

The Committee requested that any updated schedule of devolution sites brought to future meetings identifies clearly both the sites which have been removed from the list, as well as any sites to be added. This was agreed by Officers.

Officers updated the Committee in relation to Hollycroft Field and advised the Committee that devolution of this site to East Chiltonton Parish Council has been completed.

Resolved:

- 1) That the position with regard to Lewes Football Club be noted;
- 2) That the delay of devolution of Mountfield Pleasure Ground Trust until resolution of issues relating to Lewes Football Club be noted;
- 3) That officers be allowed to work with town and parish councils within Lewes District to review sites for future possible devolution, including the removal of the Castle Hill Newhaven site for reasons outlined in the report;
- 4) That Stanley Turner Recreation Ground be removed from the list of sites to be devolved for a temporary period of two years; and
- 5) That Officers present an updated schedule of future devolution sites to the Committee at its next meeting and prior to any possible recommendations to Cabinet by the Committee.

(Councillor Makepeace declared a non-prejudicial interest in this item, as she was a member of Lewes Town Council. She therefore took part in the consideration, discussion and voting thereon.)

(Councillor Carr declared a non-prejudicial interest in this item, as she was Vice-Chair of Friends of Riverside Park. She therefore took part in the consideration, discussion and voting thereon.)

(Councillor Robinson declared a non-prejudicial interest in this item, as she was a member of Telscombe Town Council. She therefore took part in the consideration, discussion and voting thereon.)

6 Date of next meeting

Resolved:

That the next meeting of the Devolution Committee be held on Thursday, 25 June 2020, at a time and location to be confirmed by Democratic Services.

The meeting ended at 10.50am.

Councillor Roy Clay (Chair)