

APPENDIX 4

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET
HELD ON 22 MARCH 2016 AT 2.00 PM
AT ASHCOMBE SUITE, COUNTY HALL, KINGSTON UPON THAMES, SURREY KT1
2DN.**

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Cabinet at its next meeting.

50/16 THE AGREEMENT WITH SURREY WILDLIFE TRUST FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL'S COUNTRYSIDE ESTATE [Item 10]

Both the Chairman, Chris Wilkinson and the Finance Director, Roger Wild from Surrey Wildlife Trust were in attendance for this item and were invited to speak.

Mr Wilkinson made the following points:

- This was an important paper, which provide the direction of travel for Surrey's Countryside Estate
- It recognised the severe budgetary constraints that the County Council was under
- He supported the proposals and had worked hard with Council officers to get to this stage
- The five year rolling business plan had been produced by Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT), as part of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between SWT and Surrey County Council (SCC)
- SWT was a conservation organisation
- The proposals set out in the report provided an opportunity to generate income to help the estate, SCC and wildlife.

Mr Wild made the following points:

- That SWT had been working closely with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning
- In relation to the strategic goals of SCC, these proposals 'ticked all the boxes'
- Budget demands for other services meant that it was vital to make SWT self financing
- He stressed the importance of protecting the environment and thanked SWT officers for the work that they had achieved during the last two years
- Referred to the partnership meeting which had taken place the day before and provided confirmation that the trustees were supportive of this approach
- That paragraphs 6 and 7 in the report set out the governance arrangements and those that had endorsed this approach, following detailed consideration of other options
- The MoU formalised the commitment of SCC /SWT to work together and that the five year rolling business plan had taken considerable time to put together

- Drew attention to the report from Knight Frank, commissioned by SCC Property Services, in relation to the Property Asset Management Plan
- Confirmed that there would be closer joint working between SCC and SWT, which will be robust and accountable, using agreed key performance indicators
- Finally, he said that there would be an annual review of the business plan by the Economic Prosperity, Environment and Highways Board, plus an annual report to Cabinet.

Cabinet Members made the following points:

- That many residents would welcome the proposals
- Norbury Park and the work that SWT had undertaken there had offered many opportunities for residents' leisure time, including those for young people
- The report set out the relationship between SCC and SWT
- That the county of Surrey had large areas of green space. It was important to increase the number of residents who could enjoy access to it, as detailed in paragraph 23 of the report – public health implications
- The SWT Finance Director was asked about the risk management and implications of the annual business cases. He responded by stating that future business plans would set out a number of different routes, including some trading opportunities and that there would be a number of different opportunities being considered to increase footfall. He also confirmed that SWT had recruited an income generation team. In relation to governance processes, SWT had worked with council officers to obtain a clear vision, project boards were in place for certain key initiatives and the SWT management team were committed to making it work.
- The key point was to ensure that Surrey residents continued to enjoy Surrey's countryside and that SWT delivered value for money for Surrey's taxpayers
- That Surrey countryside was also enjoyed by those living in a more urban environment
- That Equality Impact Assessments would be carried out as improvements arising from the application of new processes were proposed.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Chief Executive and Finance Director from SWT for attending the meeting and for their contribution to the debate. He said that he believed that SWT now had a good management team in place.

He also said that he hoped SWT would consider recruiting apprentices for some areas of their work.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Surrey Wildlife Trust decision and recommendation be noted and endorsed.
2. That the Strategic Director for Environment and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning and the Director of Legal, Democratic and Cultural Services be required to work with Surrey Wildlife Trust to ensure the business plan is delivered.

Reasons for Decisions:

Approval of the recommendations will put in place a mechanism to make the management of the Countryside Estate more efficient whilst improving and maintaining the countryside, delivering improvements for visitors, reducing the Council's financial contribution to nil by December 2021, and agreeing the distribution of any surplus income thereafter.

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