

## Minutes

### PETITION HEARING - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PROPERTY AND BUSINESS SERVICES

14 April 2015

Meeting held at Committee Room 4 - Civic Centre,  
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p><b>Committee Members Present:</b> Councillor Jonathan Bianco (Chairman)</p> <p><b>LBH Officers Present:</b> Mike Paterson Charles Francis</p>
1.	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING</b> <i>(Agenda Item 1)</i></p> <p>None.</p>
2.	<p><b>TO CONFIRM THAT THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE IN PUBLIC.</b> <i>(Agenda Item 2)</i></p> <p>The meeting took place in public.</p>
3.	<p><b>TO CONSIDER THE REPORT OF THE OFFICERS ON THE FOLLOWING PETITIONS RECEIVED.</b> <i>(Agenda Item 3)</i></p>
4.	<p><b>VACANT SITE NEXT TO THE KINGS ARMS PUBLIC HOUSE, HAREFIELD</b> <i>(Agenda Item 4)</i></p> <p>No Ward Councillors attended the meeting.</p> <p>In accordance with the Council's Constitution a representative of the petition was invited to address the meeting.</p> <p>The petitioner thanked the Council for convening the meeting at such short notice.</p> <p>Concerns and suggestions from the petitioner included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The petition requested the Council to consider making a bid by 17 April 2015 for the vacant site next to The Kings Arms Public House, owned by Tesco in order to build a community centre for Harefield village.</li><li>• The e-petition had been signed by 118 local residents which was significant as it was compiled during the school holidays when it had been quieter than normal.</li><li>• The plot of land was the last available for potential development which abutted the village green.</li><li>• The hope was expressed that if a successful bid was made and the land acquired, it could be used to build a community centre for a number of uses</li></ul>

including: tea / coffee for retired residents and by parents / carers when they took children to use the village green.

- Further potential uses included: as a location for the new Harefield Youth Club, as an overflow for the Harefield Children's Centre, as an NHS drop in clinic and meeting rooms for general village use.
- Additional community provision was needed for retired villagers due to the aging population.
- It was the petitioners understanding that the Council would build a new Youth Centre in the fullness of time but this would probably be located in a side street and be less accessible or attractive in comparison to the Kings Arms site.
- It was suggested that the plot of land should be purchased and then a feasibility study conducted on the land to ensure this was suitable for development to benefit the whole community. If the land was subsequently found to be inappropriate for development it could be resold.
- The petitioner agreed with the majority of the contents of the officer report (with the exception of paragraph 10) and acknowledged that the Council had to act with due diligence when using public funds.
- The petitioner raised a further option at the meeting which included the possibility of Tesco being persuaded to withdraw the sale of the land, thereby giving the Council the option and opportunity to conduct a feasibility study at some point in the future.
- It was noted that a letter had been received by the Leader of the Council and was tabled at the meeting as additional information. This letter did not support the petition. The petition organiser advised that there were several inaccuracies in the letter, which were: Mrs Rowena Scott was Acting Chairman of the Management Board, Harefield Young People's Project, not the Chairman; the letter had not been endorsed by the Chairman of the Management Board, Harefield Young People's Project, Mrs Wendy Rice-Morley, and she was unaware of its contents as she had not been present at the Management Board meeting at which it had been agreed.
- The petitioner stated that several Councillors supported the petition but these were not from Harefield ward.

The Cabinet Member, Cllr Jonathan Bianco listened to the concerns and made the following comments:

- It was encouraging to see residents were passionate about local issues which affected their communities.
- The Council had made a commitment to build a Youth Centre in Harefield.
- The Council was currently assessing a number of sites and it was commercially sensitive to comment further.
- It was noted that the central location, abutting the village green was an attractive site.
- The Council actively encouraged the use of multi-function sites. However, in the Council's experience, Youth Centres often needed to feel they had complete ownership of their own space to make them successful.
- No feasibility studies had been conducted. These were usual Council practice and were required to assess whether potential sites / plots of land would meet the Council's needs.
- Officers were aware the land was contaminated, but without survey work, the extent of this and the cost of rectifying it was unknown at this stage. Therefore, all bidders would be taking a number of known risks in acquiring the land.

- Had the lead in time to the sale of the plot of land been longer, the Council might have conducted the requisite survey.
- It was not the Council's position to speculate on land purchases.
- Previous planning permission had been granted on the site for a Tesco Express with associated residential flats above the retail premises. However, there was no approval at this stage to develop the site for community use.
- There was a possibility the land might be purchased for residential development at a price far higher than the Council might consider.

Concluding the discussion the Cabinet Member confirmed that the Council would not submit a bid by 17 April 2015 deadline. However, should Tesco alter its position and decide not to sell the land on 17 April 2015, then the Council retained the option to consider conducting a feasibility study at some point in the future.

**Resolved -**

- 1. That no bid be submitted by the Council for the vacant site next to The Kings Arms Public House, owned by Tesco.**
- 2. That if the land were not sold on 17 April 2015, the Council retained the option to consider conducting a feasibility study at some point in the future.**

The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 7.30 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Charles Francis on 01895 556454. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.