

MINUTES of the meeting of Strategic Monitoring Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday, 26th September, 2005 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor T.M. James (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs P.A. Andrews (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs. P.A. Andrews, B.F. Ashton, W.L.S. Bowen, H. Bramer, J.H.R. Goodwin, Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes, J.P. Thomas and W.J.S. Thomas

In attendance: Councillors P.J. Edwards, D.J. Fleet, Mrs. J.P. French, R.I. Matthews, J.C. Mayson (Cabinet Member Rural Regeneration and Strategy), Mrs. J.E. Pemberton, R.J. Phillips (Leader of the Council), Ms. A.M. Toon, D.B. Wilcox and R.M. Wilson

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor W.J.S.Thomas declared a personal interest in Agenda item 4: Call-in of Cabinet decision on relocation of the livestock market.

21. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 1st July, 2005 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

22. CALL IN OF CABINET DECISION TO RELOCATE THE LIVESTOCK MARKET

(Councillor W.J.S Thomas declared a personal interest.)

The Committee considered Cabinet's decision on the relocation of the livestock market which had been called in by three Members of the Committee.

On 1 September, 2005 Cabinet had identified a preferred site for a new rural business park which would incorporate a new livestock market in a location at Stretton Sugwas on land owned by the Duchy of Cornwall Estate. Cabinet's decision notice and the report made to Cabinet as amended at the meeting were appended to the report.

The stated reasons for the call-in were:

- There are alternative sites.
- Environmental Issues - flooding
- No survey has been done to discover if rural business units needed.
- There is no definition of 'Rural Industries'
- Cost. There are no indications of the cost to the Council of developing a site outside our ownership.

At the Chairman's invitation the Leader of the Council made some opening remarks. He explained that it was important to recognise that Councillor J.C. Mayson, Cabinet Member (Rural Regeneration and Strategy) had only recently been given the responsibility for managing the relocation of the livestock market as part of his Cabinet portfolio following the illness and subsequent untimely death of the late Councillor G.V. Hyde. He then emphasised that in debating relocation it was important that there was acceptance of the two principles which the Council, for a number of years, had agreed should underpin the relocation of the livestock market: that the market should be relocated and a site identified to the north west of Hereford City (the north west quadrant).

The Cabinet Member (Rural Regeneration and Strategy), reiterated that as he had newly assumed responsibility for the relocation of the livestock market he was aware that he was not as familiar with the detailed history as some other Members present. He placed on record his concern about the criticism which some Members had made of the Duchy of Cornwall Estate, and disassociated himself from that criticism. He then advised the Committee that he would be recommending to Cabinet that the consideration of a site should start again, with certain provisos.

It transpired that since the identification of a preferred site a number of other options had emerged in the north west quadrant. Councillor Mayson reported that he intended to propose to Cabinet that all options in the north west quadrant should be examined with full public consultation. He cautioned, however, that whatever location was ultimately chosen it was likely that someone would object. It was to be hoped that the public consultation would, however, help to reduce discontent.

In the course of discussion the following principal points were made:

- That the Hospital Farm site at Burghill which had at one time been identified as the preferred site had been ruled out, apparently for the sole reason of public opposition, yet even though the site at Stretton Sugwas was attracting more opposition Cabinet seemed willing to pursue it.
- That whilst much of the business for the livestock market would be generated along the A438 Brecon Road it was important that there was also a convenient link to the A49.
- That a report to the Unitary Development Plan City Centre Working Party in February 2001 had identified some 45 sites and examined each in detail. Some were in the north west quadrant most of which had defects. The report had ruled out the land at Stretton Sugwas now identified by Cabinet as the preferred option. The Cabinet Member indicated that he was aware of the report but reiterated that the search for a site should be in the north west quadrant. Hereford Market Auctioneers had clearly indicated this to be their preferred location.
- Councillor R.I. Matthews Local Member for Credenhill Ward welcomed the statement of the Cabinet Member (Rural Regeneration and Strategy) that he intended to investigate alternative sites and consult. He expressed regret that this had not happened in the first place and stressed that it was essential to clearly explain proposals to the public and get public support. There were very strong arguments such as visual impact and noise which meant that the site at Stretton Sugwas should not be pursued.
- The Leader of the Council commented that the Unitary Development Plan which had been drawn up following wide consultation had reflected the view that the

livestock market should be relocated to the north west quadrant. He noted the changes facing agriculture but observed that the livestock industry remained important for the County. The Council was legally obliged to provide a market and would do so. It was his hope that in relocating the market consideration could also be given to whether anything could be done to enhance the contribution to the economic vitality of Hereford City and the County. Wherever the livestock market was located he hoped that there would be a park and ride facility to ensure that the link between the city and the market was maintained.

- That the earlier assessment in 2001 of options to the north west of the City had finally concluded that there were two possibilities: land to the west of Beech Business Park and the Hospital Farm site at Burghill. However, the Beech Business Park site was on the Yazor gravels and a Councillor stated that the Environment Agency had indicated that it would oppose any site on the gravels. The Hospital Farm site was the best option.
- That it was important to see what other uses could be associated with the relocated market.
- That if the livestock market was relocated to the Hospital Farm site consideration should also be given to developing the site as a park and ride site.
- There was support for the conclusion reached in 2001 that any site should be in Council ownership or readily capable of acquisition at or close to agricultural land value with limited hope value attached.
- Concern was expressed at the delay in identifying a site for the livestock market and that as a consequence the development of the Edgar Street Grid, which was of such significance to the City, was also being delayed. In response the Cabinet Member advised that he would hope to complete the consultation process on options within six months.
- It was suggested that a rural business park as proposed at Stretton Sugwas would not be viable. In reply the Cabinet Member commented that that would be a matter for the Duchy of Cornwall Estate.
- Councillor Ms A.M. Toon as a Local Member for Three Elms Ward expressed concerns about the Stretton Sugwas proposal and emphasised the need for openness in discussion of the options. She also suggested that there would be benefit in a seminar for Members to ensure that they too were fully aware of the issues.
- That the report to Cabinet on 1st September had not been detailed enough and any report analysing future options needed to be detailed and robust, including a clear assessment of the costs of each of the options and in particular the cost to the Council of developing a site outside its ownership.

RESOLVED:

- (a) **that Cabinet be recommended to start again, as the Cabinet Member (Rural Regeneration and Strategy) had indicated that he proposed to do, and consider alternative sites, with full public consultation;**

and

- (b) in considering alternative sites Cabinet needed to be mindful of environmental issues such as flooding and terrain, consider carefully whether it was realistic to seek to link a livestock market to a rural business park and ensure that the report to Cabinet on options would be detailed and robust including a clear assessment of the costs of each of the options and in particular the cost to the Council of developing a site outside its ownership.

The meeting ended at 3.00 p.m.

CHAIRMAN