

CABINET – 17 JUNE 2014

Note of the Meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Committee held on 5 June 2014

1. At their meeting on 5 June the Performance Scrutiny Committee considered the decision of the Cabinet Member for Environment made on 15 May 2014 following proper notice of a call in.
2. The Committee AGREED to refer the decision back to Cabinet on the grounds of material concerns about the lack of proper consultation with local Bicester County Councillors.

Summary of the Material Concerns

3. During discussion Members acknowledged that some local members had been consulted and their responses included in the report considered by the Cabinet Member when making his decision. However, Members of the committee felt that there was sufficient doubt about the process and nature of the consultation to mean that it was not 'proper' consultation.
4. In particular a Member highlighted differences in the consultation dates in the original report compared to those referred to by officers during the meeting. In addition it was noted that there was no reference in the report to consultation with Bicester County Councillors, nor others such as the District, Town and Parish Councils, so that it seemed no information on this was presented to the Cabinet Member at the time of his decision. The Committee was advised by Councillor Nimmo Smith that he was clear from discussion at the decision meeting that this consultation had been carried out.
5. The Committee considered the question of consultation with the Town Council but noted that this was outside the reasons put forward in the call in.
6. Having no evidence as to what was included in the consultation email there was concern that it may not have provided sufficient context about the links and timing to the new development to ensure effective consultation occurred.
7. Members questioned whether emails were an appropriate method for such consultation particularly given the large numbers of emails that councillors received. It was suggested that greater efforts be made to ensure that such emails had been received. It was noted that where an email bounced back these were always followed up and that in this case there had been responses received.