

CABINET

8 FEBRUARY 2021

Present: Councillors Forward (Chair), Fitzgerald (Vice-Chair), Barnett, Batsford, Chowney, Evans, O'Callaghan and Rogers.

304. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

305. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

306. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 4th January 2021 be approved as a true record.

RESOLVED - the Chair called over the items on the agenda, under rule 13.3 of the council's constitution, the recommendations set out in minute number 307 are agreed without being called for discussion.

307. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021/22

The Managing Director submitted a report to approve the Pay Policy Statement 2021/2022, as required by the Localism Act 2011.

The majority of the statement reflects current policy, practice and procedures adopted by the Council and it is cross referenced to other documents including the Council's severance scheme and transparency requirements.

Under rule 13.3 the recommendations of the report were agreed without being called for discussion.

RESOLVED:

Recommendation of the pay policy statement to full council for approval

Reason:

The Localism Act 2011 requires Hastings Borough Council to prepare and publish an annual pay policy statement. The purpose of such a statement is to provide information about Council policies on a range of issues relating to the pay of its workforce, particularly its senior staff and its lowest paid employees. A Pay Policy must be prepared for each financial year and must be approved by Full Council, and published.

308. CHURCHFIELDS BUSINESS CENTRE - INCUBATOR UNITS

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The Assistant Director, Financial Services and Revenues, presented a report to consider whether the Council wishes to proceed with the development of incubator units at Churchfields Business Centre. If agreed an increase in the Capital budget allocation would be required, which is a decision of Full Council.

The Council included the scheme in its Capital programme when determining its budget in February 2020 at an initial estimated cost of £3.3m (includes £800,000 of external funding).

As the project has developed a number of additional opportunities have arisen to increase the deliverables. The specification of the build has been amended to meet higher sustainability criteria, and the project scope has been amended to include works that will facilitate a second phase of investment for additional units.

The most significant change is that the scheme has been included as 'a shovel ready' project in the Town Investment Plan (TIP) submission to Government for funding as part of the Town Deal programme. The TIP identifies that investment in the town's employment and enterprise infrastructure is essential to drive economic growth. Whilst none of the funding requests from this programme can be guaranteed at this stage, the additional £750,000 'ask' for this scheme would significantly reduce the council's overall costs.

Councillor Chowney proposed approval of the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Fitzgerald.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

Cabinet recommend to full Council that the scheme proceeds and that the Capital budget be increased to £4.5m (an increase of £1.2m), in the knowledge that there is a potential funding source of up to £750,000 if the Town Investment Plan is successful and the full funding ask is allocated.

Reason:

The land is allocated for employment use in the Development Management Plan (DMP). Significant external funding has been obtained for a development which will increase the availability of high-quality business premises, enabling business growth, retention and churn by improving the local employment and enterprise infrastructure. Employment growth is dependent on having new industrial space available and this project supports the wider market and inward investment demands.

309. COVID-19 UPDATE

The Managing Director provided a brief updated on the Covid-19 pandemic and informed the Cabinet that the national lockdown is having an impact locally. Rates of new infection in Hastings are reducing in line with the England average. However, the number of infections, and the number of people in hospital with Covid-19, is still far too high.

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Hastings Borough Council is working closely with local NHS colleagues to get information and communications about the vaccination programme to residents. This is important to enable those in the top 4 most at-risk groups to get vaccinated as easily and quickly as possible. It is becoming clear that in the next phase of the vaccination programme there will be a far greater role for local authorities. Vaccinating the remaining cohorts will be a complex logistical effort and councils are best placed to support and facilitate the programme locally.

The Council has been watching closely how other areas have undertaken surge testing due to the South African variant. Issues of trust and local knowledge will be key to the success of a mass testing programme and plans are in place should such testing be required in Hastings.

Issues of stress, fatigue, and mental health are rising across staff in the public and voluntary sectors. However, colleagues and partners are committed to helping local people and businesses and will continue to do their very best in these extraordinary times.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 6.17pm)