

CABINET

1 NOVEMBER 2021

Present: Councillors Forward (Chair), Barnett (Vice-Chair), Batsford, Chowney, Evans, Rogers and Webb.

372. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

373. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor	Item	Interest
Forward	375	Personal – Member of the Town Deal Board.

374. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting held on 4th October 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 minutes number 376 and 379 are agreed without being called for discussion.

375. HASTINGS TOWN DEAL PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Assistant Director, Regeneration and Culture, presented a report to approve the revised investment programme, set out arrangements for the delivery of the Town Deal Programme and provide an update on the Levelling Up fund.

The report provides an update of the work undertaken to reprofile the Town Investment Plan to fit within the funding allocation of £24.3 million. There is also an option to utilise some of the funding for management and administration of the programme with proposals set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

Both the reprofiling of individual projects, and the proposal to utilise the Management Allowance to establish a programme management team, have been approved by the Town Deal Board and submitted to government. The council is currently awaiting the grant funding agreement from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Councillor Barnett proposed approval of the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Rogers.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

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- 1. To approve the revised investment programme profile (Appendix 1) as agreed with the government and authorise the signature of the Grant Funding Agreement when provided by the government.**
- 2. To delegate to the Assistant Director of Regeneration and Culture, in consultation with the Lead Member for Regeneration, the authority to offer grants and payments to partner organisations to deliver their projects as identified in Appendix 1.**
- 3. To delegate any alterations to the Town Deal programme to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Town Deal Board and the government office.**
- 4. To approve funding of up to 5% of the Town Fund allocation towards the early development of projects to assist them in preparing clear design concepts, seek professional advice and prepare indicative costings.**
- 5. In addition to above, to approve the use of the Management Allowance (M&A) of £1.215m, provided for by the government, to establish a Town Deal Programme Management Team and support related programme activities as agreed by the Town Deal Board (see Appendix 2). This is in addition to budgets approved by June 2021 Cabinet and as revised in item 9 below.**
- 6. To delegate to the Assistant Director of Regeneration and Culture, in consultation with the Lead Member for Regeneration, to develop a HBC Levelling Up capital project bid and submit to government when the new prospectus and deadlines are published. To utilise the £125,000 of capacity funding recently awarded by the government to prepare for the bid.**

Reasons:

1. The Town Investment Plan (TIP) has been developed with the Town Deal Board and wider stakeholders. The projects in the TIP will act as a catalyst for the transformation and recovery of Hastings Town Centre for the benefit of the whole town. The Town Centre contains our largest employment base, learning and skills opportunity for our residents.
2. The TIP provides for a 5-year 're-set' strategy for the town addressing a wide range of economic and social issues. It is an opportunity to commence the recovery process from the pandemic and is expected to lead to other investment opportunities including those emerging from national and local funding streams, as well new inward investment.
3. The TIP has now been re-assessed by government and £23.085m (excluding £1.215m M&A Allowance) of funding has been allocated for projects – see Appendix 2.

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4. The Grant funding agreement allows for early development costs up to a maximum of 5% of stated grant allocation per project.
5. As the accountable body, Hastings Borough Council will retain overall responsibility for the delivery of the programme. Project management and delivery support will continue to be provided by the Council in conjunction with partner agencies.
6. The Levelling Up funding is a new opportunity for the council to potentially bid for up to £20m of capital grants (under current government guidance), which is expected to be open over the next six months.

376. ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT (ARG) UPDATE

The Assistant Director, Financial Services and Revenues, submitted a report to update cabinet on the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) spend and to agree how the remaining funds should be spent.

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

RESOLVED:

- 1. To approve how the remaining ARG funds are to be spent as per the proposals in this report.**
- 2. To authorise the Chief Finance Officer to make any adjustments, as required, in consultation with the lead member for Financial Management and Estates to ensure the remaining available funding is distributed in line with Central Government guidance.**

Reasons:

1. With the limited funds remaining, it is vital that we make best use of the money and give assistance where it is most needed.
2. As the level of funding cannot be exceeded, it is important to be able to make changes in a timely manner in order to minimise delays in awarding the remaining financial support.

377. AGREEING THE WAY FORWARD FOR FUTURE OF THE GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE

The Assistant Director, Environment and Place, presented a report to agree the way forward for the Grounds Maintenance Service from November 2022.

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The Grounds Maintenance Service delivers the basic maintenance required to keep the council's parks and open spaces attractive, safe, and clean. Work already undertaken suggests that bringing the service in-house is likely to improve flexibility for the council in meeting challenges such as climate change. An in-house service will also maximise opportunities arising from the Town Deal and help the council improve local biodiversity.

As resources have been diverted to support the pandemic response a business plan for an in-house service has been delayed. It has also become clear that expert external support will be required to review the in-house service option and develop a comprehensive business plan.

Therefore, the existing grounds maintenance contract has been extended for a further year to November 2023.

Councillor Evans proposed approval of the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Batsford.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

- 1. Following our successful experience with the street cleansing service, a comprehensive business case is prepared for consideration by Full Council, for the option of providing an in-house grounds maintenance service. Thereby creating an innovative service fit for the future. Better able to maximise the opportunities presented by the council's commitment to addressing climate change and bio-diversity concerns, and for adding value to projects such as the Town Deal.**
- 2. A budget of up to £50,000 from the council's invest to save fund is allocated, for specialist external support to develop the service specification and comprehensive business case.**

Reasons:

1. The Council's corporate plan commitments include:

- preparing and implementing delivery of succession arrangements following the end of the ground's maintenance, and building cleaning, and public convenience cleaning contracts ending in 2022.
- Scope options to bring services back in house as part of contract reviews and renewals e.g. reviewing grounds maintenance
- Review in-house staffing capacity and skill sets as a basis for progressing inhouse delivery opportunities

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2. Following a preliminary (but detailed) options analysis, which included soft market testing, initial officer conclusions are that an in-house grounds maintenance service is more likely to provide the flexibility needed to respond to the challenges of climate change mitigation, improving local bio-diversity, and the 'greening' of Hastings through closer alignment with initiatives such as the Town Deal over the next 10 years, and that these opportunities need to be developed into a detailed specification and method statement, and detailed business case for Council to base its final decision.

3. As with the successful Street Cleansing DSO project, sufficient officer capacity and expertise is required to support the existing officer team to undertake the work to develop the new specification, and an operational 'method statement' together with the comprehensive business case. The costs of this are estimated at circa £50k.

4. That to capitalise on the opportunities presented in developing an in-house service option, and to provide time for mobilisation of a new service, the option to extend the current grounds maintenance contract by a year has been exercised.

378. SOLAR FOR BUSINESS

The Assistant Director, Regeneration and Culture, presented a report to propose that the council works with council tenants and other local businesses, to consider the installation of solar panels on their roofs.

Work on this project was paused as part of the council's response to the pandemic but has now resumed. There may be income generation opportunities however the main reason for proceeding with the project is to support decarbonisation of the energy grid and contribute to a reduction in energy costs for local businesses.

Councillor Evans proposed approval of the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Chowney.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

- 1. To authorise the spend of £1.638 million on the Solar for Business Programme which is the remainder of the £1.76 million as agreed in December 2017 Cabinet decision on 'An Energy Transition for Hastings'.**
- 2. To delegate authority to the Chief Financial Officer and the Assistant Director Regeneration and Culture, in consultation with the Leader, to agree the assessment of individual sites and to sign off for the installation of individual sites.**
- 3. To agree to the method of analysis for all sites.**

Reasons:

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1. This Solar for Business programme is a key step within the Climate Emergency response as it reduces businesses energy demand from the grid and therefore helps businesses reduce their emissions and therefore the wider borough emissions.
2. This Solar for Business programme aids the Green Recovery following the COVID crisis as it is designed to save businesses money on their electricity bills with no upfront costs for the business. This will offer businesses peace of mind and enable them to focus on building their business back.
3. The method of analysis has been developed in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer to ensure estimations of performance and financial considerations are as accurate as possible.
4. Delegating authority to the Chief Finance Officer and the Assistant Director Regeneration and Culture, in consultation with the Leader, will ensure each site is reviewed in both an economic and broader local financial and sustainability benefits.
5. Delegating authority to the Chief Financial Officer and the Assistant Director Regeneration and Culture, in consultation with the Leader, will allow for sites to be processed quickly and efficiently from point of identification through to the installation and commissioning of the PV system.

379. CONTAIN OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT FUND - REMAINING ALLOCATION PROPOSALS

The Managing Director submitted a report to set out proposals for allocation of the remainder of Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF).

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

RESOLVED:

1. That delegated authority is granted to the Managing Director or relevant nominee, in consultation with the Leader to:

- **allocate the remainder of the COMF fund (£90 351.45) in line with the scheme criteria**
- **ensure further scoping and feasibility of the headline proposals and indicative budget allocations outlined in this report where appropriate**
- **decide on the final proposals and associated budgets to be progressed**

Reasons:

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1. To set out intended direction of travel in terms of the remainder of the COMF.

380. 500 AFFORDABLE HOMES PROGRAMME

The Assistant Director, Housing and Built Environment, presented a report to outline a programme of 500 affordable homes which combines direct delivery of affordable housing by the council, alongside enhanced partnership work with Registered Providers (RPs).

Unprecedented demand for affordable accommodation is being driven by rising house prices, higher rents, and a shortage of affordable properties in the social rented sector. The pandemic has driven up temporary accommodation costs, with the council's temporary accommodation budget doubling over the last twelve months.

Therefore, the council is committing to deliver 500 homes for affordable rent in partnership with local providers. The council will also consider the direct provision of affordable rented homes.

Councillor Batsford proposed approval of the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Rogers.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

1. That the council sets a target for the delivery of 500 homes for affordable rent (capped at Local Housing Allowance rate) over the five-year period 2022/3 – 2026/7.

2. That the two main Registered Provider Partners working locally are asked to commit their support to the programme.

3. That the council undertakes a review of its own land holdings with a view to supporting this programme.

4. That the Affordable Homes Programme Pipeline (Appendix A) is kept updated to track progress against our target.

Reasons:

The supply and delivery of new affordable housing locally is failing to keep pace with rising demand. This has been shown by the growing number of people on the waiting list for social housing, as well as the increasing demand for the council's homelessness services. The pandemic has exacerbated this problem, and the number of households living in temporary housing has continued to rise. This has a significant impact on the council's resources and negatively effects the quality of life of residents.

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A lack of affordable housing also undermines the ongoing regeneration of the town, including employment growth and education, as well as the health and general wellbeing of residents.

381. COMMISSION OF HOUSING STOCK CONDITION SURVEY AND REPORT

The Assistant Director, Housing and Built Environment, presented a report to inform cabinet about the need to commission a new housing stock condition survey.

The survey is a requirement under section 3 of the Housing Act 2004 and will inform future activity around enforcement, empty homes, and climate change. The survey will also support any future selective licensing scheme should the council wish to develop further schemes.

Councillor Batsford proposed approval of the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Webb.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Council agree to proceed with the commissioning of a stock condition assessment in line with the budget proposed of up to £46,000.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 6.54pm)