

# CABINET

3 JANUARY 2023

Present: Councillors Barnett (Chair), Batsford, Cannan, and Rogers.

In attendance: Mary Kilner (Chief Legal Officer), Kit Wheeler (Chief Finance Officer), Simon Jones (Deputy Chief Finance Officer), Kevin Boorman (Marketing and Major Projects Manager), Andrew Palmer (Assistant Director, Housing and Built Environment).

## 490. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Councillors Evans, Roark and Willis.

## 491. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor	Minute	Interest
Cannan	495 & 497 – Housing Acquisition Proposal Part 1 & 2	Personal – Works at the Seaview project
Rogers	495 & 497 – Housing Acquisition Proposal Part 1 & 2	Personal – Board member of FSN who are acquiring temporary accommodation. Also a volunteer for homelessness charity Snowflake Trust

## 492. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

**RESOLVED** – that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 5th December 2022 be approved as a true record.

## 493. NATIONAL PORTFOLIO ORGANISATION FUNDING 2023-26

The Leader of the Council called this item first.

Councillor Carr was present and asked if there were any conditions attached to the funding, such as required opening hours?

The Marketing and Major Projects Manager presented a report to request approval of the museum's entry into Arts Council England's National Portfolio 2023-26. The Marketing and Major Projects Manager thanked the outgoing Museum Manager, Damian Etheraads, for putting this successful bid together alongside colleagues at the Museum.

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This National Portfolio funding is intended to cover the project costs required for the Museum's community work, building on the work the Museum has been doing with local communities over the past few years. The funding cannot be used to cover core costs, such as staffing or building costs. The Museum's application was designed to deliver the Museum business plan and is based on having the same core staffing complement as is currently in place.

The Museum's National Portfolio programme puts inclusivity and community involvement at the heart of its work and aims to connect people and communities with cultural activities to improve health and wellbeing and provide access to lifelong learning opportunities.

In response to Councillor Carr's question the Marketing and Major Projects Manager said that as far as he is aware there are no requirements for specific times or days to be open.

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

### **RESOLVED (unanimously):**

**To accept Arts Council's England's invitation to join the National Portfolio from April 2023 until March 2026.**

Reasons:

1. The National Portfolio provides funding for the museum to deliver three years of activity at the Museum and in the areas around the town.
2. The funding will help the Museum deliver its business plan outcomes.

### **494. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID YEAR REPORT 2022 - 23**

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer presented a report to advise the Cabinet of the Treasury Management activities and performance during the current year.

Councillor Rankin was present and commented that the report should show the true cost of borrowing, which is higher than the average interest rate included in the report. This would enable Councillors to make better decisions which it comes to borrowing.

The Chief Finance Officer responded that the minimum revenue provision (MRP) is included as part of all projects and is a key consideration in the decision-making process. Borrowing rates change and officers try to give an indicative figure as to what the borrowing costs could be.

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Councillor Carr asked what other options are available for the long-term financial sustainability of the Council should the current model of borrowing to invest in assets such as industrial units become unviable?

The Leader of the Council noted the buoyancy of local industry, with all Council owned industrial units currently occupied and more space being requested by businesses. The Chief Finance Officer said that the Council has a balanced approach to investments and officers make sure units are let for the best possible rents.

Councillor Patmore asked how the performance of assets is compared, when some may have been funded by borrowing and others through the general reserve, it is not comparing like for like. The Chief Finance Officer said the Council has a consistent approach to asset management. Having a good understanding of the asset is vital when it comes to the financial assessment.

The Leader of the Council thanked officers for the safe management of the Council's finances.

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

### **RESOLVED (unanimously):**

#### **Cabinet recommends that Full Council note the mid-year report.**

Reasons:

The Code of Practice on Treasury Management requires, as a minimum, a mid-year review of the Treasury Management Strategy and performance. This is intended to highlight any areas of concern that have arisen since the original strategy was approved (February 2022). It is a requirement of the Code of Practice that the Mid-year review is considered by Cabinet, Audit Committee and full Council.

#### **495. HOUSING ACQUISITION PROPOSAL (PART 1)**

The Assistant Director, Housing and Built Environment, presented a report to outline proposals to acquire a portfolio of up to fifty additional homes as a means of providing more suitable and cost-effective temporary accommodation solutions for homeless households in Hastings.

Councillor Carr asked if the budgeted maintenance costs were too low and if there was an appropriate amount set aside for cyclical repairs and contingency.

Councillor Hilton asked how the Council intends to link this scheme to a wider housing strategy for the town. There is now an opportunity to have a public discussion on the wider housing issues and develop a new strategy.

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Councillor Rankin asked why the Council hadn't considered this approach earlier? However, Councillor Rankin commented that he was concerned the Council won't be able to act quickly enough to deliver.

The Assistant Director said that the supply side is expected to improve in the next three years, with new affordable rented accommodation coming on stream. In the interim the Council has a problem accommodating people in financially sustainable accommodation. The scheme will form part of a wider housing strategy which will be set out at a later date. The scheme will produce savings over the longer term and leave the Council with housing assets.

Maintenance costs are averaged out and based on industry standards. The Council is not anticipating buying properties which require a lot of renovation.

The target of 50 properties is based on discussions with a local housing provider and their assessment of what supply will be.

It was confirmed that Homes England are supportive of the project but they will need to see proposals around specific properties before they agree to any funding.

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

### **RESOLVED (unanimously):**

**That Cabinet recommends that Full Council approves:**

- 1. an acquisition programme to acquire up to 50 homes for temporary accommodation use;**
- 2. that a capital budget for £11,865,400 is established to meet the cost of the acquisitions with revenue costs met by the Temporary Accommodation budget; and**
- 3. that delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director, Housing & Built Environment, and the Chief Finance Officer, to complete the acquisitions, including any associated procurement.**

Reasons:

1. The Council urgently needs to find more suitable placements for many of the homeless households who the council are required to accommodate whilst arranging access to longer term and more settled accommodation.

2 A programme of acquiring up to 50 homes will provide a better solution for those owed such a duty by the council and will also have a significant positive impact upon the council's temporary accommodation costs.

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3. In addition to the revenue cost savings to be achieved, the Council will be obtaining capital housing assets with no outstanding debt on the properties at the end of a 40-year loan period.

### **496. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

#### **RESOLVED:**

**That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the items of business listed below because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of “exempt” information as defined in the paragraphs of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 referred to in the relevant report.**

Councillor Batsford left the meeting.

### **497. HOUSING ACQUISITION PROPOSAL (PART 2)**

The Assistant Director, Housing and Built Environment, presented a report to outline proposals to acquire a portfolio of up to fifty additional homes as a means of providing more suitable and cost-effective temporary accommodation solutions for homeless households in Hastings.

Councillor Barnett thanked the housing and finance teams for their work on the report.

Councillor Cannan proposed approval of the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Rogers.

#### **RESOLVED (unanimously):**

**That Cabinet recommends that Full Council approves:**

- 1. an acquisition programme to acquire up to 50 homes for temporary accommodation use;**
- 2. that a capital budget for £11,865,400 is established to meet the cost of the acquisitions with revenue costs met by the Temporary Accommodation budget; and**
- 3. that delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director, Housing & Built Environment, and the Chief Finance Officer, to complete the acquisitions, including any associated procurement.**

Reasons:

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1. The Council urgently needs to find more suitable placements for many of the homeless households who the council are required to accommodate whilst arranging access to longer term and more settled accommodation.
- 2 A programme of acquiring up to 50 homes will provide a better solution for those owed such a duty by the council and will also have a significant positive impact upon the council's temporary accommodation costs.
3. In addition to the revenue cost savings to be achieved, the Council will be obtaining capital housing assets with no outstanding debt on the properties at the end of a 40-year loan period.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.32pm)