

# CABINET

4 MARCH 2024

Present: Councillors Hilton (Chair), Barnett, Roark and Willis

In attendance: Jane Hartnell (Chief Executive), Victoria Conheady (Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Place), Kit Wheeler (Chief Finance Officer), and Danny Saxby (Democratic Services Officer). Councillors Collins, Sinden, Foster, Beaney, Williams, and Patmore.

In attendance remotely: Mary Kilner (Chief Legal Officer), Keith Duly (Leisure Development Manager), and Sam Phyll (Senior Programmes Manager).

## 43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Councillor Haffenden.

## 44. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor	Item	Interest
Hilton	49 – Climate Change Progress Update	Personal – Volunteer director of a community energy co-operative, Energise South

## 45. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

**RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> February be approved as a true record.**

## 46. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (30 MINUTES)

A member of the public asked how young people can feed into the climate strategy through public forums and assemblies? Councillor Hilton replied that she would welcome opportunities for a climate change working group or citizens assembly, but that requires resources to facilitate and deliver the recommendations. Councillor Hilton suggested a series of themed conversations throughout the town on subjects such as climate change and fuel poverty.

Councillor Foster asked for an update on the landslip at Old Roar Ghyll. Councillor Hilton replied that she had visited residents and it is a distressing situation. A public meeting was held last week, and a follow up meeting is due to take place. The council's insurance company has appointed a surveyor who has visited the site and the council is waiting for an update. Councillor Hilton thanked Councillor Foster for his work keeping local residents informed of the situation.

Councillor Beaney asked for an update on the maintenance of beach huts at West Marina. Councillor Hilton replied that some locks have been replaced, with

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redecorating remaining outstanding. Officers have been responding to recent landslips but the remaining work has been identified.

Councillor Collins asked if the beach hut tenants could be allowed to undertake maintenance themselves in return for the costs being docked from their rent. Councillor Hilton replied that there may need to be consistency in some areas of maintenance, and this is why it is undertaken by the council. Councillor Willis said he would welcome a more shared approach to maintenance of the beach huts. Councillor Barnett added that he has asked for the beach huts to be included in the asset management plan.

Councillor Collins asked if the council, or any of its associations, or persons, had discussions with any property developers, real estate agents or funding organisations regarding land conditions, property development or any other talks in connection with the land and buildings at 111, 113, and 115 West Hill Road, and if so, if any funds were generated by these negotiations to stabilise the cliff face at Caves Road? Councillor Hilton replied that she would respond in writing.

A member of the public asked the how the council can erect fences around the Roman Bath at Summerfields without listed building consent. Councillor Hilton said that she would discuss the issue with Councillor Haffenden and provide a written response.

A member of the public asked if the sale of St Mary in the Castle would improve the budget position. Councillor Hilton replied that it had been agreed in principle to sell St Mary in the Castle but there isn't currently a clear route to either selling or leasing.

### **47. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT**

The Chief Finance Officer presented a report to provide a summary of the financial outturn position for services at the end of January 2024.

There is not much change from the previous report, which is to be expected at this time of year and is also a sign that the financial position is stabilising. There is still an overspend position, but this has decreased.

Whilst no financial change has occurred since the last report, the Housing savings figure listed in Appendix 3 has moved from amber to red in recognition of the reprofiling of the savings as part of budget discussions.

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

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

**To note the contents of the report, and the actions within the conclusion and management action section.**

Reasons:

To assist the Council in understanding the financial position and particularly areas of over and under spend. Early indications of emerging overspends can allow

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management action to be targeted to those areas. This monitoring assists in identifying areas for review in the production of the 2024/25 budget and the impact of the 2023/24 outturn on the reserves position.

## **48. UPDATE ON VARIOUS KEY GOVERNMENT EXTERNAL INITIATIVES.**

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Place presented a report to provide the Cabinet with updates on key government funding initiatives.

The report updates Cabinet on 7 confirmed external funding initiatives currently being managed or being developed by the council. In summary total value of the initiatives is approximately £70.7 million with the timeline for delivery varying from a deadline of March 2025 to March 2026, and 2034 for the Long-Term Plan. Approximately 90% of the funding is capital and there are many partners involved in delivery of the projects. The council will be the accountable body for delivery.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised the cabinet that recommendation 3 would need to be amended so that 'Homelessness Prevention Grant' is removed and replaced with 'Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme' following the announcement of the funding.

In addition, Hastings has been selected by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to receive £20 million of funding to regenerate the town. The funding is release over a ten-year period and the council will be creating a Hastings Board to focus on the key themes of the fund. Work is underway to determine the terms of reference and membership of the Hastings Board. The Town Deal Board will continue as is and remain separate.

Councillor Beaney asked how the chair and vice-chair of the Hastings Board were selected. The Deputy Chief Executive replied that the council has worked with government and the local MP to identify candidates.

Councillor Hilton proposed an amendment to the recommendations, to amend paragraph 10 of the covering report so that it reads as follows:

*The government has provided £50,000 capacity funding to cover the upfront costs for setting up a new Town Board by 1 April 2024. The Hastings Board **will be** focused on the key thematic areas of the fund. Work is underway to review the terms of reference and membership of the Hastings Board.*

Councillor Hilton proposed approval of the recommendations, subject to the amendments above, seconded by Councillor Barnett.

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

- 1. Hastings Borough Council act as the accountable body for the Levelling Up Partnership programme and the Long-Term Plan for Towns programmes.**
- 2. Authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Section 151 Officer, in agreement with the**

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government office to make proper arrangements for the delivery of the programmes and expenditure of government funding as follows:

- a. To manage the Levelling Up Partnership programme, maximising use of the capacity funding (£90k for 2023/2025) provided by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)
  - b. Make payments to relevant organisations to deliver the Levelling Up Partnership projects as determined by DLUHC.
  - c. Make arrangements for the Long-Term Plan for Towns capacity funding (£50k for 23/24 and £200k for 2024/2025) provided by DLUHC to establish the 'new' Town Board and develop the Long-Term Town Investment Plan in accordance with guidance.
  - d. Make arrangements for the allocation of payments for delivery of the Long-Term Town Plan projects as agreed by the new Hastings Board.
3. Authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Section 151 Officer to deliver a Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme, maximising use of the (potential) capacity funding (£1.9million) for 2024-28 and (potential) capital funding of £3.5 million for the same period.
4. Progress with delivery of the Town Deal Programme and UK Shared Prosperity Fund Programme be noted.
5. The Sport England's Swimming Pool Support Fund offer be accepted, and the new capital investment to be installed by the March 2025 deadline.
6. Following a successful expression of interest (EOI), officers proceed to work with local people and a consortium to scope and develop a full application to the PlayZone programme (targeted at enhancing and modernising our multi-use games areas) and explore with partners options to secure the 25% match funding required for the application. The PlayZone programme prioritises engaging with groups with the greatest inequalities in physical activity, including women and girls.
7. Amend paragraph 10 of the covering report to read "The government has provided £50,000 capacity funding to cover the upfront costs for setting up a new Town Board by 1 April 2024. The Hastings Board will be focused on the key thematic areas of the fund. Work is underway to review the terms of reference and membership of the Hastings Board."

Reasons:

1. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has allocated two significant funding streams to Hastings. The Council is the accountable body for the two programmes and arrangements therefore need to put in place for the proper management, governance, delivery, and monitoring of the programmes, as well as the distribution of the funds, in line with DLUHC guidance.

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2. The timelines for delivery and ensuring all the new programme arrangements are in place are challenging, hence the need to bring forward a combined report.
3. The Swimming Pool Support Fund has approved funding which is specific to capital investment in Summerfields Leisure Centre.

### **49. CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Senior Programmes Manager presented a report to update the cabinet on progress against the updated Strategy and Action Plan, and to inform Councillors of the new ways of monitoring performance. The report provides an overview of the climate actions that have taken place between November 2022 and November 2023.

Councillor Hilton proposed approval of the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Roark.

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

- 1. To acknowledge the progress made against the actions of the climate emergency action plan since the last report to Cabinet in November 2022.**
- 2. To acknowledge the new monitoring of performance.**
- 3. To acknowledge the need for Service Area and wider partners collaborative working.**

Reasons:

1. To recognise the achievements to date since the update to the action plan in November 2022.
2. This report covers the period November 2022 to November 2023.

### **ENERGY PROCUREMENT - GAS CONTRACT 2024**

The Senior Programmes Manager presented a report to acknowledge the procurement route for the gas supplied to the council's owned and operated buildings from 1st October 2024 and to provide delegated authority to the Chief Finance Officer to carry out the procurement tender and sign the contracts with the preferred supplier.

Officers will also investigate the potential of entering a green gas contract if this is a financially viable option.

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

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

- 1. Acknowledge the change from the Laser Framework to eEnergy.**
- 2. Acknowledge the option to include Green Gas in the tender.**

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### **3. To delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Lead Member, to finalise the agreements.**

Reasons:

1. The Council's Constitution, Part 9 Financial Rules Section 3, requires Cabinet approval for expenditure exceeding £200,000.
2. The Council's gas contract with the Laser purchasing group ends on 30th September 2024. A decision needs to be made about procurement options by March 2024 to ensure a new supplier can secure the Council's energy needs from the energy market, six months in advance of the new supplier commencing.
3. The council changed to eEnergy from Laser for the electricity procurement in October 2023 for a period to September 2026.
4. In line with the councils Net Zero target of 2030, as part of the tender process officers will include an option for tendering green gas alongside traditional gas to check competitiveness and procure green gas if it is a financially viable option.
5. Delegated Authority is required as the tendering process happens within a single day and therefore there is no timeframe to delay the decision.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.35pm)