

Public Document Pack CABINET

2 NOVEMBER 2015

Present: Councillors Chowney (Chair), Forward, Cartwright, Hodges, Poole, Atkins, Cooke and Davies

17. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 SEPTEMBER 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2015 be approved and signed by the chair as a correct record

RESOLVED the chair called over the items on the agenda, under rule 13.3 the recommendations set out in minute numbers 19, 20 and 24 were agreed without being called for discussion

MATTERS FOR CABINET DECISION

18. MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S ROLE IN RAISING EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT IN HASTINGS AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR THE TOWN'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN AN ACADEMISED CONTEXT

Councillor Batsford, as chair of the original Overview and Scrutiny review, presented the review team's findings at the meeting. The Director of Corporate Services and Governance then presented a management response to the review team's recommendations.

The Overview and Scrutiny review of the council's role in raising educational achievement in Hastings and educational outcomes for the town's children and young people in an academised context had been undertaken as part of the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2014/15.

Councillor Batsford explained that the review had arisen from member's longstanding interest in supporting improvements to educational performance in the town. The review had benefited from input from a variety of key stakeholders from local schools, the education futures trust and the local education authority to provide members with an overview of the current landscape in terms of educational performance. Members had also considered examples of good practice from other areas, to explore ways in which the council could support partnership working between education and non-educational partners to improve educational outcomes.

The review team had recommended the formation of a task and finish group to consider how best to support a creative local partnership between educational and non-educational partners. The Director of Corporate Services and Governance advised that the task and finish group had since met and identified an area of work in respect of the recruitment and retention of high quality staff, which was linked to the perception of Hastings as a place to live and work. Consideration had also been given to exploring funding opportunities to support a piece of work to improve the

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employability of local people. The Leader of the Council commented that the discussion at the task and finish group meeting had been encouraging and it would be necessary to monitor further outcomes as they develop.

Councillor Forward moved approval of the recommendations to the report, which was seconded by Councillor Hodges.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that: -

- 1) Cabinet thank the scrutiny review team for their report, and;**
- 2) Cabinet approve the recommendations of the scrutiny review team**

The reason for this decision was:

To acknowledge and respond to the recommendations arising from the work undertaken by the scrutiny review team.

19. EU FUNDING PROJECT APPROVAL - CLIMATE ACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS (CAN)

The Assistant Director Housing and Built Environment submitted a report which sought approval for delegated authority to be given to the Director of Operational Services and the Deputy Leader of the Council and Housing, Communications and Equalities portfolio holder to enter into a sub-partnership agreement with Amicus Horizon to support the EU funded Climate Active Neighbourhoods (CAN) project.

The CAN project aimed to enable UK partners to meet the new carbon dioxide emission reduction targets by supporting the implementation of technologies to improve energy efficiency in the home, encourage behavioural change to reduce energy consumption and build community resilience to climate change.

Locally, AmicusHorizon will work with Energise Sussex Coast and the council to reduce energy consumption and alleviate fuel poverty in public and private sector housing in Ore, Baird and Tressell. AmicusHorizon will also use the funding to eco-plant 100 properties to Energy Performance Certificate C standard. The council will also take a strategic view of engaging the local community through existing structures.

RESOLVED that delegated authority be given to the Director of Operational Services and Deputy leader of the Council, and Housing, Communications and Equalities Portfolio Holder, to sign a sub-partner agreement with Amicus Horizon to deliver the HBC associated activities and outcomes for the CAN (Climate Active Neighbourhoods) EU corporation project

The reason for this decision was:

Hastings Borough Council has led on the development of the project locally which will see a provisional total investment of approximately £845K (Euro 1.183m) to the town. The funding will be used to support various capital and revenue projects in the Ore Valley area. It will help reduce carbon emissions from properties and improve the housing conditions of residents living in both social and private dwellings. The initiative will help alleviate fuel poverty.

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Amicus Horizon is the full partner for the project in Hastings, with Energise Sussex Coast and HBC identified as local sub partners.

MATTERS FOR COUNCIL DECISION

20. TREASURY MANAGEMENT - MID YEAR REPORT 2015/16

The Assistant Director Financial Services and Revenues submitted a report to advise Cabinet of the treasury management activities and performance during the current year.

Treasury management relates to the authority's investments, cash flow, banking, money market and capital transactions. The report provided an update on the economic climate during the first nine months of 2015/16 as well as the council's current treasury position and strategies for borrowing and investment.

The council complied with the requirements of the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice for Treasury Management and carried out a mid-year review each year, to provide members with an opportunity to make recommendations to Full Council to address any issues which may have arisen since the original strategy was approved in February 2015.

Continued low interest rates created challenges in achieving the 0.7% return on investments, estimated in the budget. However, savings from the timing of new borrowing meant that the overall budget predictions for 2015/16 were still achievable.

RESOLVED that: -

- 1) Cabinet recommends to Council that the strategy remains unaltered, and;**
- 2) The report be accepted and it be noted that the investments made are in compliance with the investment strategy and the latest advice provided from the council's treasury management advisers**

The reason for this decision was:

The Code of Practice on Treasury Management requires, as a minimum a mid-year review of Treasury Management Strategy and performance. This is intended to highlight any areas of concern that have arisen since the original strategy was approved (February 2015). It is a requirement of the code of practice that the mid-year review is considered by Cabinet and Full Council.

21. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

The Revenues and Benefits Service Manager presented a report which proposed changes to the council tax support scheme for Hastings, with effect for 2016/17.

All East Sussex local authorities had worked together to develop a county wide approach to council tax support, the original scheme has remain unchanged since it

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was first adopted in 2013. However, given the continued financial pressures facing the authorities, it was agreed that the present scheme should be reviewed.

Options to amend the present scheme included requiring people to pay a minimum amount of their council tax, a reduction in the capital limit from £16,000 to £6,000 or the assumption of a minimum level of income for anyone who has been self-employed for at least 12 months. Pensioners are still protected under the new scheme, so changes will only apply to working age customers. The potential options had been subject to a public consultation.

Following the public consultation, the four remaining East Sussex authorities intended to amend their support schemes by requiring householders to pay a minimum amount of their council tax. However, given the high levels of deprivation in the town, it was considered that this would not be an appropriate scheme for Hastings. Instead, the report recommended that the Council Tax Support Scheme for Hastings in 2016/17 assumed a minimum level of income for anyone who has been self-employed for at least 12 months. Also appended to the report was a draft exception hardship policy, which was intended to mitigate the impact of the changes to the scheme on vulnerable residents.

Cabinet agreed that it would not be appropriate to proceed with applying a requirement for people to pay a minimum amount of their council tax or amending the capital limit, but requested further time to consider how the assumed minimum level of incomes for anyone who has been self-employed for more than 12 months might be applied to ensure that the changes did not adversely affect vulnerable groups, before the recommendations were considered at the December meeting of Full Council.

Councillor Chowney amended the recommendations of the report, as set out in the resolution below, seconded by Councillor Cartwright, to allow Cabinet members more time to submit their comments on the draft scheme to the Assistant Director of Financial Services and Revenues.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that:

- 1) Cabinet agreed not to proceed with amending the council tax support scheme to include a requirement for householders to pay a minimum amount of their council tax**
- 2) the capital limit should remain at £16,000 and not be reduced to £6,000**
- 3) Cabinet members should submit their comments on the proposed draft scheme, including the proposed amendment to assume a minimum level of income for people who have been self-employed for longer than 12 months, to the Assistant Director Financial Services and Revenues by Friday, 13 November 2015, and;**
- 4) Delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director Financial Services and Revenues, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree any revisions to the draft Hastings Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2015/16 and proposed Exceptional Hardship Policy, before the documents are submitted to Full Council for approval at its meeting on 16 December 2015**

The reason for this decision was:

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The local authority is required to approve a scheme for the provision of council tax support in respect of 2016/17, by 31 January 2016.

MATTERS FOR CABINET DECISION

22. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Assistant Director Financial Services and Revenues presented a report on the medium term financial strategy. The council forecasted its financial position over the medium term to ensure its resources were aligned with its priorities and objectives and to assist with the budget setting process for future years.

The report gave an overview of the council's income and expenditure, since the budget for 2015/16 was set in February. The Assistant Director for Financial Services and Revenues commented that further significant budget reductions were expected in the years ahead; he also acknowledged further uncertainty regarding business rate appeals, the social lettings agency, licensing, development control income and an outstanding claim in respect of the pier closure. Consequently, it was essential that the council continued to explore options for income generation and to optimise the efficiency of its services. Potential re-occurring savings identified in the medium term financial strategy would be investigated as part of the budget setting process for 2016/17.

It was currently anticipated that there would be a saving against the original budget for 2015/16 as a result of savings made during the year, primarily from the review of the council's senior management structure, which may result in the call on the transition reserve being less than previously expected.

Councillor Chowney moved approval of the recommendations to the report, which was seconded by Councillor Cartwright.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that Cabinet approved the Medium Term Financial Strategy

The reason for this decision was:

The council matched its available resources to its priorities across the medium term.

The report provides the opportunity to assess the council's resources to assist the review of corporate priorities given the continued reductions in funding and the need to continually ensure limited resources are properly aligned to targets.

23. FORMER BATHING POOL SITE AT WEST MARINA

The Assistant Director Financial Services and Revenues presented a report which sought Cabinet approval to market the former bathing pool site at West Marina.

The former bathing pool site has been vacant for the past 30 years, and has been a long-standing objective for the council to regenerate the site as part of broader plans to make this area an even more desirable place to live and visit, which would help make the local economy more sustainable.

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In 2014, the council had commissioned consultants to bring forward proposals for the development of the site. The site had also been allocated for a mixed residential and commercial use in the Development Management Plan. The findings of the consultant's report indicated that there was a good opportunity to begin marketing the site, provided due diligence and site surveys were carried out on the site beforehand to assist potential purchasers with forming their bids.

Given the significance of the former bathing pool site to the local community, it was important that the council retained control of how the site was developed and the timescale to bring forward proposals and complete the works. At this early stage, it was also necessary to keep an open mind on potential uses for the site, however, a full public consultation would be undertaken once a development proposal had been brought forward.

Councillor Chowney moved approval of the recommendations to the report, which was seconded by Councillor Poole.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that:

- 1) Cabinet agrees to add the site to the Land and Property Disposal Programme for disposal in 2017/18, and;**
- 2) Cabinet agrees to agents being appointed to market the site**

The reason for this decision was:

This is the last large vacant waterfront site in Hastings and it has long been an objective for the council to see it regenerated. The site is not included in the disposal programme, and would ultimately be disposed of in part or potentially as a whole. The timescale for any disposal is not yet clear but estimated to commence in 2017/18.

The report is simply looking for authority to market the site. Any disposal, and method of disposal i.e. in whole or in part, would ultimately be made by Cabinet.

24. HASTINGS AND ROTHER COMMUNITY LED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

The Assistant Director for Regeneration and Culture submitted a report to brief members on a funding opportunity through the UK Community Led Local Development (CLLD) programme. The report also sought Cabinet approval to proceed with a multi-stage CLLD application process, for a project to target the most disadvantaged areas in Hastings and Bexhill.

The report provided background information to the CLLD programme, which provided an opportunity to secure funding to support deprived communities in accessing jobs, skills development and entrepreneurial activity. A working group of local authority, health and voluntary sector partners across Hastings and Rother had been formed to develop a bid and identify areas for targeted interventions which could be supported by CLLD funding.

The working group had identified the thematic areas of communities, skills and opportunities, cultural regeneration, digital by choice and brokerage of opportunities for further consideration.

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It was currently anticipated that preliminary expressions of interest would be assessed in January 2016, with the completion of funding agreements for the development phase in February 2016. Later stage bids are expected in autumn 2016 and if approved the programme is anticipated to start April 2017, to run for 5 years.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) **Authority be delegated to the Director of Operational Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Regeneration, to:
Agree final submission of stage 1 and stage 2 CLLD applications
Enter into negotiations and agreements with funding bodies and delivery partners**
- 2) **The council serves as accountable body for the CLLD programme across the Hastings and Rother area, and;**
- 3) **Up to £20,000 of council staff resources be committed as in-kind matched funding to enable draw-down of CLLD grant to support the development of a second stage bid**

The reason for this decision was:

The CLLD programme provides an opportunity to secure funding for measures to link people in deprived communities to jobs, skills development and entrepreneurial activity. There is a very short timescale in which to submit a preliminary application which must include commitments that would then form part of later stage bids.

Based on the 2010 IMD results (on which CLLD is based) Hastings is the 20th most deprived town in the UK. Across Bexhill and Hastings, 24 wards are within the 20% most deprived in the UK. However there are areas of opportunity and business growth and CLLD funding could help ensure that people in the most deprived communities are linked to these opportunities.

25. MINUTES OF THE CHARITY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2015

The minutes of the Charity Committee meeting held on 28 September 2015 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Charity Committee meeting held on 28 September 2015 be received

26. MINUTES OF THE MUSEUMS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2015

The minutes of the Museums Committee meeting held on 14 September 2015 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Museums Committee meeting held on 14 September 2015 be received

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(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 7.30 pm)