

CABINET

21 MAY 2018

Present: Councillors Chowney (Chair), Forward, Batsford, Fitzgerald, Rogers, S Beaney, Lee and Patmore

There were no apologies for absence.

80. HASTINGS COUNTRY PARK VISITOR CENTRE

Murray Davidson, Environment and Natural Resources Manager presented a report on the Hastings Country Park Visitor Centre. This report was to update Cabinet on the project to build a new visitor centre in the Hastings Country Park.

He stated that the commitment for a visitor centre on the Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve has been a key commitment for the council since 2014. The new construction would be a straw bale one, the first of its kind in the borough.

The council has been working in partnership with Groundwork South to project manage and deliver this. It was noted that this project was twice tendered unsuccessfully.

The council successfully secured EU Interreg funding, and an additional Interreg grant aid to meet the cost of the build, as well as negotiating a final cost submission from a consortium of specialist straw bale builders.

The paper sought approval to enter into a contract with the principle contractor acting on behalf of the consortium. It also sought approval to allocate additional funds to match the increased EU grant aid from Interreg.

Councillors pointed out that the procurement process took longer than expected, due to a lack of success in the tendering stage of the scheme.

A question was raised in regards to Groundworks' administration of the centre. Mike Hepworth, Assistant Director, Environment and Place replied that there is a legal agreement for them to operate the visitor centre for ten years at no cost to the council.

Councillor Fitzgerald proposed approval of the motion, seconded by Councillor Batsford.

RESOLVED (by 6 votes for, to 2 votes against) to:

- 1. Delegate authority to the Director of Operational Services and Assistant Director Financial Services and Revenues in consultation with the Lead Member for Environment, Safety and Equalities to award the contract to build the visitor centre at Hastings Country Park to Hannent Construction Limited as principal contractor of the consortium, and any variations that may arise.**

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2. **To approve an increase in the Capital Expenditure budget from £504,000 to £771,000. The Council's contribution increasing by £117,000 as match funding for the additional £176,000 grant from Interreg NEW Up-straw programme.**
3. **To delegate authority to the Director of Operational Services and Assistant Director Financial Services & Revenues in consultation with the Lead Member for Environment, Safety and equalities responsibility for any administrative requirements relating from the EU funding body.**

The reason for this decision was:

Since the start of this challenging project in 2014 when the original budget and procurement process were approved, there have been 2 unsuccessful rounds of procurement facilitated by the East Sussex Procurement Hub, and we have successfully negotiated substantial additional EU grant funding.

As a result we have had to extend the project timeline. Cabinet approval is now required to increase the budget and authorise a different method of appointing contractors to build the centre.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 6.13 pm)