

Public Document Pack CABINET

6 JANUARY 2020

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

224. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

225. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None

226. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the cabinet meeting held on 18th December 2019 be approved as a true record.

RESOLVED the chair called over the items on the agenda, all items were discussed at the meeting.

227. BOHEMIA LEISURE AND CULTURAL FACILITIES STUDY

The Director of Operational Services presented a report that updated Cabinet on the Bohemia leisure and cultural facilities options appraisal study. The report makes recommendations for the next steps in the scheme.

The study had been undertaken led by consultants Continuum. They have done a considerable amount of work and have held regular meetings with the relevant officers and lead councillors. They have consulted with a number of stakeholders including leisure and cultural sectors locally, and sport's national governing bodies, operators and local authority neighbours.

The next step is to commission detailed site and topographical surveys of the land. This would be before detailed site and building design works would commence. This would help to de-risk the project before more substantial sums are invested in detailed design work, and will make any development a more attractive proposition for investors/partners.

Councillors discussed the benefits that this would bring to the town's residents. Residents were looking forward to this development and there was a real need for access to high quality activities to improve wellbeing and health within the town. The current leisure facilities are no longer fit for purpose based on the town's needs. Repairing the facilities would actually cost more in the long term.

Councillors were pleased with the proposals but some felt that it was the wrong time to be spending the money given the Councils current financial position.

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Councillors spoke about a council that had completed a similar project which produced significant measurable positive effects for these residents including savings for other public bodies such as health services. They believe that this could negate the effects of deprivation within the town.

The proposed works aim to offset the costs. Councillors felt that spending the money for survey work was a good investment in a project that would benefit residents.

Councillor Forward proposed approval of the recommendations of the report, seconded by Councillor Batsford.

RESOLVED (7 for, 2 against)

1. To agree in principle to provide a new leisure centre and leisure water, and primary entertainment centre on the Bohemia site, significantly improving on the town's current leisure and cultural offer, with provision for adding an arts centre if capital and revenue funding can be obtained

2. £100 000 be set aside to commission detailed site and topographical surveys of the land, to inform and de-risk the next stage of the work; £35 000 to come from existing budgets, £65 000 to be a 'growth item' funded from general reserves

3. A report be brought back to cabinet in autumn 2020 reporting on the outcome of the site surveys, recommending a location for the new leisure and entertainment centre, with provision for an arts centre, which would also take into account the potential value of investing in housing elsewhere on the site. This would consider alternative models for financing the work, and include a funding/partnership/investment strategy.

Reasons for Recommendation

To ensure that the project can be taken forward in a sensible, cost-effective way.

228. TREASURY MANAGEMENT - MID-YEAR REPORT 2019-20

The Assistant Director Financial Services & Revenues (Chief Finance Officer) presented a report that advises Cabinet of the Treasury Management activities and performance during the current year. It provides the opportunity to review the Treasury Management Strategy and make appropriate recommendations to Council to take account of any issues or concerns that have arisen since approving it in February 2019.

The Assistant Director Financial Services & Revenues discussed how the Council has had good returns on the investments it has made. These have been spread to minimise risk which is standard practice. The Council has borrowed significant amount from the Public Loans Works Board (PWLB) usually for investments in commercial property. The Council are still able to borrow more but there is a limited maximum amount. Councillors will need to consider this when looking at future borrowing.

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Councillors discussed how positive investments had been. They recognised that the Council was borrowing more but wanted the recognition that this is a result of needing to replace lost government funding. The investments had worked for the Council and the income from this has helped to reduce the Council's deficit.

Commercial property that was brought several decades ago was now helping the Council's finances and it is hoped that the more recent purchases and investments would have the same effect for the future.

The Assistant Director Financial Services & Revenues added a further recommendation to the report as;

'Cabinet recommends that the report goes to Council and they agree the Mid-Year report.'

Councillor Chowney proposed approval of the recommendations of the report and the meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Lee.

RESOLVED (Unanimously)

- 1. Cabinet recommends that the report goes to Council and they agree the Mid-Year report.**

Reasons for Recommendations

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 2019). It is a requirement of the Code of Practice that the Mid-year review is considered by Cabinet and full Council.

229. TOWN DEAL

The Assistant Director, Regeneration and Culture presented a report that sets out the purpose of the Town Fund, and both the partnership and work arrangements which need to be put in place to access the Town Fund.

The report seeks both the support for the direction of travel and authority to spend up to £173,029 'capacity' funding in delivering a successful town bid. A Town Board would be set up and its membership would include partners from local businesses and the community. A Town Investment Plan would be developed and a project team would oversee the development and implementation of these plans.

Councillors were supportive of securing this funding. They saw this as an opportunity to help draw down from other funds and that it has the potential to fit in with other schemes.

Councillors were disappointed with the short length of time they have to find members for the Town Board. They would ideally like to reach out to parts of the community that don't traditionally engage with the Council such as those from deprived wards. This looks unlikely to happen but Councillors were kind to support more focussed work

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within the community. They hoped that any consultation work would focus on gathering views and engaging people from these communities.

Councillor Chowney proposed approval of the recommendations of the report, seconded by Councillor Rogers.

RESOLVED (Unanimously)

1. To delegate authority to the Director of Operational Services or his nominee in consultation with the Lead Member for Regeneration and Culture to:

- **Establish a Town Board and agree its membership with the relevant partners including with local businesses and the community.**
- **To procure services and expertise to develop a Town Investment Plan and agree the Town Deal using the £173,029 awarded by the government to support this initiative.**
- **To establish a project team to oversee the development of the plans and its implementation in conjunction with the County Council and other partners as appropriate.**

Reasons for Recommendations

1. The government recently launched the Towns Fund with the objective of driving the economic regeneration of towns such as Hastings and delivering long term economic and productivity growth. The Towns Fund will provide up to £25 million public investment by central government through the agreement of a Town Deal.
2. There is also the possibility of additional funding which may come from other sources or branches of government and private investment, to support the implementation of a Town Deal. It offers an opportunity for Hastings to address many of the remaining social and economic challenges in the town as a whole.

230. BUCKSHOLE RESERVOIR

The Assistant Director Environment and Place presented a report for cabinet to consider and agree the following:-

- The most appropriate scheme of works to improve the operation of the reservoir in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements.
- The way the project will be managed and delivered, including the appointment of specialist contractors to support the project throughout the design and construction phases.
- The budget for the project.

The Assistant Director Environment and Place discussed the needs for these works and are classed as high risk. There is a statutory requirement to modify the spillway and reduce the water level and the works need to be completed by April 2022.

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Councillors were concerned by the large amounts of money needed for this work. The funding settlement from Government does not include a budget for these works. It was recommended and agreed cross party that the LGA would be contacted to seek similar Local Authorities to write to the Environmental agency for additional funding.

Councillor Fitzgerald proposed approval of the recommendations of the report and the meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Evans.

RESOLVED (Unanimously)

- 1. Cabinet agrees that the 2 options recommended by Stillwater Associates Ltd in the reports attached at appendices 1 and 2 are the most appropriate way for the council to meet the requirements of the Reservoirs Act 1975.**
- 2. Cabinet authorises the Director of Operational Services to work with the East Sussex Procurement Hub, to procure and let a contract to deliver the two options recommended in the reports attached at appendices 1 and 2.**
- 3. Cabinet authorises the Director of Operational Services to contract with Stillwater Associates Ltd to provide the main specialist technical support to the council throughout the project, including that referred to in paragraph 18. As well as contracting with any other specialist contractors that may be required.**
- 4. Cabinet increases the capital programme budget for Buckshole Reservoir from £71,000 to £837,000 and agrees the revenue implications of an additional £62,775 p.a. as detailed in paragraphs 33 to 36.**
- 5. It was agreed cross party that the LGA would be contacted to seek similar Local Authorities to write to the Environmental agency for additional funding.**

Reasons for Recommendations

The works to the reservoir are a mandatory requirement enforced by the Environment Agency, and the council needs to approve a scheme of works to secure compliance with the current statutory guidance.

A specialist approved reservoirs contractor has provided the council with comprehensive reports evaluating the options and recommending those, which they believe, are the most appropriate.

Following discussions between the council's specialist reservoirs inspection contractor and the Environment Agency, the deadline for completing the works is provisionally April 2022.

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(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 7.26 pm)