
POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on 27 February 2017 between 7.30pm and 8.49pm.

Councillors present:

Sara Bedford (Chairman)

Phil Brading (Vice-Chairman) (Public Services)

Kemal Butt

Stephen Cox

Paula Hiscocks

Ty Harris

Alex Hayward

Matthew Bedford (Resources and Shared Services)

Chris Lloyd (Leisure, Community and Wellbeing)

Ralph Sangster

David Sansom

Alison Scarth (Health)

Roger Seabourne (Community Safety)

Martin Trevett (Planning, Transport and Strategic Schemes)

Chris Whately-Smith (sub for Cllr Giles-Medhurst)

Officers Present:

Steven Halls, Chief Executive

Geof Muggeridge, Director of Community and Environmental Services

Joanne Wagstaffe, Director of Finance

Renato Messere, Head of Economic and Sustainable Development

Alan Head, Head of Major Projects

Jude Green, Head of Revenues and Benefits

Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager

PR97/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst with Councillor Chris Whately-Smith substituting.

PR98/16 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2017 were agreed by the Committee and were signed by the Chairman.

PR99/16 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

No items.

PR100/16 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None received.

PR101/16 SERVICE PRESENTATION – ECONOMIC AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Committee received a presentation on Economic and Sustainable Development from the Head of Economic and Sustainable Development.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

PR102/16 PROPERTY INVESTMENT STRATEGY AND MECHANISMS FOR ACHIEVING ITS OBJECTIVES

This report informed Members of further details of the Council's intended involvement in Property Investment and established more detail of the strategy. Additionally and in order to facilitate such activity, it was necessary to establish a standalone trading company, referred to as TradCo, which would act for commercial purpose when the transaction was not taken into the Council's existing arrangements.

In response to Members questions, Officers advised that:

- The value of the Council's assets was reviewed on an ongoing basis;
- The Council were getting around £500,000 in income on the property they owned. The Members' Information Bulletin provided a treasury statement with details on how the Council's investments were performing.
- The Council's assets had historical values which provided different rates of return.

Councillor Matthew Bedford moved, duly seconded, the recommendations but with amendments to recommendations 2 and 3 as follows:

- 2) to be amended to: "that full details on the governance arrangements referred to at appendix B be presented to the P&R Committee in March for recommendation to Council for approval."
- 3) to be amended to: "Authorises Officers to further develop the proposals including a business case for property investment activities and TradCo; and the incorporation and governance documents for the establishment of TradCo for consideration and to seek approval in March."

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chairman the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

- 1) Agreed to the further property investment strategy details at appendix A; and
- 2) That full details on the governance arrangements referred to at appendix B be presented to the P&R Committee in March for recommendation to Council for approval; and
- 3) Authorised Officers to further develop the proposals including a business case for property investment activities and TradCo; and the incorporation and governance documents for the establishment of TradCo for consideration and to seek approval in March;

PR103/16 HOUSING JOINT VENTURE

This report sought Members' approval to enter into a joint venture (JV) with Watford Community Housing Trust (WCHT). This JV was part of the Council's property investment strategy, covered elsewhere on this P&R Committee meeting's agenda.

Members noted that a number of the financial details were still awaited.

Councillor Matthew Bedford moved, duly seconded, the recommendations with an amendment to recommendation 2.

- 2) to be amended to "Agreed to Officers developing the detail of the proposals further to include the business case for the Grapevine site and the incorporation and governance documents for RentCo and Sale LLP for consideration by the Committee and to seek onward recommendation by the Committee to Full Council for approval."

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chairman the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

- 1) Agreed in principle to the proposal to enter into the joint venture; and
- 2) Agreed to Officers developing the detail of the proposals further to include the business case for the Grapevine site and the incorporation and governance documents for RentCo and Sale LLP for consideration by the Committee and to seek onward recommendation by the Committee to Full Council for approval; and
- 3) In respect of the exemption of procurement procedures that the Policy and Resources Committee note the action taken.

PR104/16 LOCAL PLAN AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

This report sought Members' approval to produce a single Local Plan document and to approve a revised Local Development Scheme as required by Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011). Members noted that some of the dates had changed in the project plan (and a slightly updated Appendix 1 of the report had been circulated to members).

The Head of Economic and Sustainable Development reported that the report and appendices provided details on the project plan, timetables and the stages and studies which needed to be completed. The timetable provided in the last scheme that was approved in 2016 had to be amended to reflect changes in the Government definition- of s Gypsy and Travellers and for an updated needs assessment to be carried out. In addition, changes to the National Planning Policy Framework meant that the Development Management Policies also needed to be updated. In taking forward the Local Plan it was noted that there was a stronger requirement on all councils to co-operate with neighbouring Authorities.

The report provided details on the potential risks to the Council with regard to any challenges on the existing plan. The risks to the Council could diminish by

making progress on a revised Plan as quickly as possible and by using extra resources to reduce the length of time to produce the Plan. Using additional resources as set out in the report might shorten the process overall but the precise savings in time would be dependent on several factors outside our control, including the availability of suitably experienced and skilled staffing resources and as such could not be guaranteed

Councillor Matthew Bedford moved, duly seconded, an amendment to recommendation 3 that details should be reported directly to the Committee and not through budget monitoring with the recommendation amended to state:

- Consider allocating additional resources in the form of a temporary staffing resource as set out in paragraph 5.8 of this report when appropriate, and that this be taken forward in 2017/18 should a specific opportunity be identified.

In response to Members questions, the Head of Economic and Sustainable Development advised that the budget had been increased in 2015/16 back to its historic level from previous years to be able to deliver and produce the plan. Changes were being made to Government legislation all the time and needed to be taken into account in preparing the Plan.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chairman the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

1. Approved the preparation of a single Local Plan; and
2. Approve the revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) as set out in Appendix 1 to come into effect from 28 February 2017; and
3. Consider allocating additional resources in the form of a temporary staffing resource as set out in paragraph 5.8 of this report when appropriate, and that this be taken forward in 2017/18 should a specific opportunity be identified.

PR105/16 LOCAL PLAN MEMBER WORKING GROUP

Members received the recommendation of the Local Plan Member Working Group.

The Chairman of the Committee moved, duly seconded, the recommendation.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chairman the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Local Development Document (GTTS LDD) is now progressed through the review of the Local Plan.

PR106/16 EXEMPTION FROM PROCUREMENT PROCEDURE RULES

To advise Members that a partial exemption to the Procurement process was approved by the Director of Community and Environmental Services and the Head of Property Services under the Limited Market exemption and the Exceptional Circumstances exemption as permitted by the Council's Constitution

Members raised the following points:

Would it be possible to view the company website?

Were any brochures available on the company and could they be placed in the Members' room?

Had due diligence been completed as there had been no tendering exercise?

The Council were reducing its costs but were they confident on the quality of the modular homes?

The Head of Major Projects advised:

- The website for the company was available to view.
- Officers were in contact regularly with the company and would obtain some brochures for Members' to view.
- The planning application for the site would be registered in the next few days.
- The procurement process was an ongoing exercise.
- Officers would ensure they were satisfied with the quality of the modular homes as they went through each stage.
- At the planning application stage comparisons could be made against other known manufactures.
- Details on the procurement process could be circulated to Members but some information was commercially confidential.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

PR107/16 DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF APPEAL – BURY LAKE YOUNG MARINERS

All businesses were required to pay National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR), however organisations that are registered as Charities or Community Amateur Sport Clubs (CASC) automatically receive 80% mandatory rate relief. The Council can award up to an additional 20% 'top up' to the mandatory relief or in cases of not for profit organisations up to 100% discretionary rate relief.

There is no automatic right for Charities or CASC organisations to receive the 20% discretionary rate relief organisations must meet the criteria set out in our policy.

Councillor Matthew Bedford advised that the Committee had held a long debate on the appeal at the December meeting and further paperwork had now been provided. He moved, duly seconded, to not uphold the appeal.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chairman the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

To not uphold the appeal.

PR108/16 WORK PROGRAMME

To agree the Committee's work programme.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

PR109/16 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

If the Committee wishes to consider the remaining item in private, it will be appropriate for a resolution to be passed in the following terms:-

“that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined under paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act. It has been decided by the Council that in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.”

(Note: If other confidential business is approved under item 3, it will also be necessary to specify the class of exempt or confidential information in the additional items.)

PR110/16 PROPERTY INVESTMENT STRATEGY AND MECHANISMS FOR ACHIEVING ITS OBJECTIVES

To consider the appendices to the report at item 6 on the agenda.

RESOLVED:

1. Members considered the appendices to the Property Investment Strategy and Mechanisms for Achieving its Objectives report; and
2. That public access to the two appendices is denied until the issues are resolved.

PR111/16 HOUSING JOINT VENTURE

To consider the appendix to the report at item 7 on the agenda.

RESOLVED:

1. Members considered the appendices to the Housing Joint Venture report.
2. That public access to the appendices is denied until the issues are resolved.

CHAIRMAN