

UPDATE FROM THE LEADER ON THE WORK OF THE EXECUTIVE

Members, the meeting has already received the minutes of meetings of the Executive since our last Full Council meeting on 15 February 2022. I am happy to provide an update, for information purposes, on business dealt with by the Executive since then.

At its meeting on 24 March the Executive:

- Agreed that consideration of environmental and community/social value issues be included in the Disposal Framework, community groups should not be disadvantaged in their ability to bid for assets during disposal of Council assets and that consideration of risk and use of risk assessments be included in the Disposal Framework.
- Agreed to enter into a new Deed of Variation with Sanctuary Housing Association.
- Agreed to award the Advice Services Contract 2022-24 to Citizens Advice South Essex.
- Approved the undertaking of a public consultation on the draft sustainability strategy, to establish the Rochford Environmental Business Alliance and the Rochford Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (both to work in consultation with the Carbon Neutral Working Group) and the allocation of £20,000 from General Balances to provide support for consultation and engagement on the strategy.
- Agreed the draft Annual Review, subject to any further minor and typographical amendments required by the Executive, and that the final version of the Annual Review document should be completed by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader.
- Set aside a special sum of £25,000 to support the work aiding the Ukrainian people here in Rochford, with an immediate donation of £5000 being made to our community partner, the Community Hub at the Megacentre, Rayleigh, to assist with their work. £20,000 to also be set aside from this sum, whilst the Council examine plans to provide a financial support scheme for local households who take in families, the aim being to provide a top up of £100 per household for a 3-month period.

At its meeting on 13 June the Executive:

- Approved the draft Economic Development Strategy and agreed that delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director, Place & Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Climate & Economy, to make any necessary minor

amendments to the draft Strategy in advance of publication. It was also noted that:

- the appropriate sums within the £63k set aside within the Economic Development reserve would be spent as agreed with the Portfolio Holder for Climate & Economy and that clear SMART, measurable KPIs would be reported to the Executive quarterly.
 - the procurement of marketing and promotion should be local and with local schools and businesses where possible and in accordance with the Council's financial and procurement rules.
 - businesses should be encouraged to use Google Business as well as Rochford Local.
 - the Council should work with Brentwood Borough Council to develop skills and capacity around economic development to deliver the Strategy.
 - the Council should consider innovative ways to regenerate the High Street and in particular whether we can learn lessons from another council which can be applied in the District.
- Agreed that a Local Plan Transport Assessment be commissioned using an allocation of up to £200,000 from the dedicated LDF reserve and that the Assistant Director, Place & Environment, in liaison with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning, be delegated authority to oversee the delivery of the Local Plan Transport Assessment and report on its progress to the Executive.

At its meeting on 13 July the Executive:

- Resolved that the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and the incoming Director for Strategic Planning be asked to examine consultative options in respect of the Local Plan Transport Assessment and that the Local Plan Transport Assessment be considered by the Planning Policy Committee.
- Agreed additional revenue budget of £18,750 in 2022/23 to be funded from general balances, to fund compliance and essential maintenance works required to re-open the Freight House.
- Agreed to vary the Conditional Sale Contract 1 (CSC1) of the Asset Delivery Programme, in relation to 57 South Street in order that planning permission for this site need not be achieved ahead of the stop/go decision for CSC1.
- Noted legal advice regarding the Conditional Sale Contract 2 (CSC2) of the ADP, relating to the Mill Arts & Events Centre and 57 South Street.
- Terminated CSC2 of the ADP resulting in the Mill Arts & Events Centre site being removed from the ADP. In addition, to vary CSC1 and Overarching Development Agreement to remove any obligations in relation to the Mill Arts & Events Centre site.

- Agreed to draw down the amount set out in the Exempt Appendix from the Hard/Soft Infrastructure reserve for the payment of the pre-construction abortive costs to GP Partnerships as a result of CSC2 being terminated.
- Agreed option 3 regarding the future of the Mill Arts & Events Centre, subject to Full Council approval of the required additional capital programme budget, namely: to reopen the Mill Arts & Events Centre and to seek expressions of interest from community groups to operate the building in the longer term. Under this option additional project budget of £18,866 is requested to be drawn down from the Hard/Soft Infrastructure reserve to support the required process and enable CSC1 work to be completed.
- Delegated authority to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Assets & Leisure, to vary the contract with Fusion Lifestyle to enable the Mill Arts & Events Centre to be reopened in September 2022.
- Agreed to fund additional revenue expenditure of up to £130,000 from General Fund balances, to cover operating costs in 2022/23 relating to the re-opening of the Mill Arts & Events Centre for an initial period of 6 months pending the outcome of a community engagement programme to seek a new community operating partner.
- Agreed to instigate a community engagement process seeking expressions of interest from potential community partners to operate the Mill Arts & Events Centre.
- Delegated authority to the Strategic Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Assets & Leisure to negotiate the Heads of Terms following the outcome of the Expression of Interest process.
- Agreed that a report be submitted to the Executive in the Autumn setting out the outcome of the Expression of Interest process, and the costs to operate the building in the longer term.
- Noted the progress of the #OneTeam Transformation Programme, approved the draft s113 Agreement, agreed that the proposed exit strategy should include reference to the voluntary termination and the impact of local government reorganisation, taking into account any guidance at the time, and authorised the Joint Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Leader of BBC, to approve the final terms of the draft s113 Agreement and to enter into all necessary and appropriate contracts and agreements to implement the s113 arrangements.
- Delegated authority to the Strategic Director for Resources, Environment & Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate & Economy to prepare and submit an Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

- Noted the provisional outturn position against the 2021/22 revenue budget; that the Council's 2021/22 Statement of Accounts were still being prepared and would be subject to audit by external auditors EY; the detailed breakdown of each Portfolio's provisional outturn & the in-year reserve movements; the projected earmarked reserves closing balance at 31 March 2022; the COVID-19 grants position including ring fenced amounts to be carried forward into 2022/23 and the provisional outturn position against the 2021/22 capital budget;
- Approved £944,747 of revenue carry forwards, comprised of £410,488 of grant budgets and £534,258 of general budgets; the transfer of £544,851 general underspend to reserves (Non-Portfolio Specific Expenditure); the transfer to the Business Rate Smoothing reserves of £1,672,930 (Non-Service Specific Expenditure) and £509,399 of capital project carry forwards for those schemes deemed outstanding at the end of 2021/22 into 2022/23 for completion.

Portfolio Holder decisions have been taken that have:

- Approved the timetable of meetings for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.
- Agreed that the unspent reserve of up to £13,755.18 set aside for the Beagle Event be made available to fund activities associated with the re-location, conservation and promotion of the HMS Beagle anchor working with Paglesham Parish Council to create a permanent monument in the village.

This decision was subsequently called-in by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Health is currently reconsidering the decision and the amount of funding to be made available to Paglesham Parish Council and whether funding should be redistributed to other projects around the District.

- Agreed that a response be formally submitted to Maldon District Council's Local Plan 2021+ Issues and Options consultation within the consultation window.
- Accepted the nomination of the Mill Hall, Rayleigh as an asset of community value and agreed for the building to be entered onto the Council's list of Assets of Community Value.