

The Executive – 5 February 2020

Minutes of the meeting of **The Executive** held on **5 February 2020** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr M J Steptoe
Vice Chairman: Cllr Mrs C E Roe

Cllr D S Efde
Cllr S P Smith
Cllr I H Ward

Cllr M J Webb
Cllr A L Williams
Cllr S E Wootton

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Scrutton - Managing Director
A Hutchings - Strategic Director
M Harwood-White - Assistant Director, Assets & Commercial
A Law - Assistant Director, Legal & Democratic
L Moss - Assistant Director, People & Communities
M Hotten - Assistant Director, Place & Environment
N Lucas - Assistant Director, Resources
D Tribe - Assistant Director, Transformation & Customer
S Worthington - Democratic Services Officer

15 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2019 were approved as a correct record, subject to noting the following amendment to Minute 205/19:-

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2019 were approved, subject to replacing the first sentence of paragraph three of Minute 184 on page 2 with: "The Portfolio Holder for Planning commended officers for their due diligence and hard work in respect of difficult legal negotiations over the past months."

16 'CONNECT' CULTURAL AND TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

The Executive received a presentation from the Managing Director on the 'Connect' Cultural and Transformation Programme in addition to the previously circulated report seeking approval of the strategic outline business case for the 'Connect' Cultural and Transformation Programme.

The Deputy Leader was pleased that the presentation had included reference to Members, in contrast to the report, which had not made mention of Members. She further commented that in the early stages of development of the Programme Members raised concerns relating to heritage and the loss of historic buildings. However, as the project has developed, she has become increasingly eager to see the project begin. She made particular reference to the successful Connect Day where she and the Leader had joined the vast majority of Council staff who were positively engaged with the project. She drew a parallel with Southend on Sea Borough Council, which had updated its Council building and made it into a more welcoming, modern space. In

addition, those Members who had visited the Council premises in Suffolk had found the building exciting and eye opening. The Connect project would result in improved access to services that would benefit officers, Members and help deal efficiently with residents' queries. She advised that a further Connect Day was planned for April and she asked that Members of the Executive be invited to attend.

The Portfolio Holder for IT and Communications further emphasised that the project was the culmination of a lot of hard work which should result in helping staff to work efficiently and help retain staff, while linking into the outcomes of the recent Peer Challenge of the Council.

In response to a question as to whether it would be possible for all Members to attend the next Connect Day, it was suggested that a Connect Day could be organised for all Members just after the staff Connect Day in April, with invitations to both events going out at the same time.

During debate Members also emphasised the importance of good IT connectivity and comfortable, flexible workspaces. The point was made that buildings were nothing without people, ie, Staff and Members. The importance of collective working and genuine consultation with officers was emphasised. It was vital that IT was developed to support the Council's vision and to further improve working practices, at the same time as multi-skilling Staff.

Resolved

- (1) That the Outline Business Case for the 'Connect' Cultural and Transformation Programme be approved.
- (2) That funding of £293,000 be agreed, as set out in the Outline Business Case, to be funded from a designated resource to be created from 2019/20 underspends.
- (3) That the Programme be designated a Gold Project and as such that the Investment Board receive regular programme updates, to be aligned with the Asset Delivery Programme Schedule. (MD)

17 QUARTER 3 2019/20 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Executive considered the report of the Assistant Director, Resources on the Financial Management and Performance Report for the third quarter of 2019/20.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance commended the excellent financial management of the Council's funds resulting in the possibility of funding further projects, as detailed in paragraph 1 of the report.

It was noted that the majority of the £571,000 underspend in 2019/20 was attributable to vacancies in staffing arising but not immediately being filled. However, it was emphasised that the Council had now recruited to a number of vacancies so it was unlikely that there would be a similar staffing underspend next year. It was further noted that there had been some slippage in the capital programme for 2019/20.

The Deputy Leader emphasised the importance of Assistant Directors submitting business cases for recruitment of staff to the Managing Director, if there were any instances where additional staff were required.

In response to a Member question relating to Audit savings, officers confirmed that the external audit fee for 2019/20 had not yet been agreed. In light of the issues in respect of the external audit performance this year there would be robust challenge to any proposed increase in external audit fees that have been agreed previously. The reduction in Internal Audit staffing costs noted in the Quarter 3 report had arisen largely due to the Chief Auditor expertise being used on an as and when basis, which resulted in lower than budgeted costs.

Responding to a Member query about today's Parliamentary debate of the Spending Review, officers confirmed that nothing had yet been confirmed to the Authority in respect of funding for future years. The Rochford District was classed as an affluent area despite there being some pockets of significant need. The balance between funding raised from the Council Tax base and distribution of business rates was a very complex area; however, given that Rochford was classed as an affluent area, it was likely that overall funding would decrease in future. The Council had nonetheless been making appropriate representations to government.

Resolved

- (1) That the Quarter 3 2019/20 revenue budget and capital position be noted, as set out in sections 3 and 4 and detailed in Appendices 1 to 4.
- (2) To approve that £293,000 of the projected underspend is allocated at year end to create a new reserve to fund Connect project costs, which are set out in a separate report to the Executive.
To
- (3) To approve that £20,000 of the projected underspend is allocated to fund a consultant to help address the current backlog of planning applications.
- (4) To approve that £60,000 of the projected underspend is allocated to fund the extension of two fixed term posts within Leisure Services in the Community Portfolio, to the end of March 2021.
- (5) To approve the substitution of £40,000 of capital budget originally earmarked for a new Financial Management System to a new

Customer Relationship Management System in 2019/20.

- (6) To note the latest position on the Council's key performance indicators, as shown in Appendix 5. (ADR)

18 LEASE OF LAND AT SPORTS GROUNDS COMPRISING 4.43 HECTARES OF LAND NORTH OF LONDON ROAD, RAYLEIGH TO RAYLEIGH TOWN SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB

The Executive considered the report of the Assistant Director, Assets & Commercial on a proposal to lease Council-owned land to Rayleigh Town Sports and Social Club for use as a sports ground and social use for a period of 28 years.

The Portfolio Holder for Enterprise advised that the proposed rental has been discounted in line with the Council's lease policy. The Portfolio Holder for Enterprise also advised the proposed rental had been increased from the current value by the rate of CPI and that rent reviews and break clauses would be included within the lease as per Council policy.

It was emphasised that the access road (edged green on the plan) will be maintained by the landowner (Sanctuary Housing) following completion of the freehold sale of this land. However, right of access would be retained for the Council and Rayleigh Town Sports and Social Club.

Officers confirmed, in response to a Member question, that they would check whether the pond on site was still in situ.

In response to a further Member query relating to a proposed club car park to be delivered via S106 monies within the land edged red, officers confirmed that this would form part of the lease and that the car park would be maintained by the club.

It was further noted, in response to a Member question about business rates for the club, that officers would advise Members outside the meeting whether the club was eligible for any reduction/discount in business rates.

Resolved

That the Council-owned land (edged red on the map annexed hereto as Appendix 1) be leased to Rayleigh Town Sports and Social Club for use as a sports ground and social use for a period of 28 years. (ADAC)

19 DISPOSAL OF LAND AT CAGEFIELD ROAD, STAMBRIDGE

The Executive considered the report of the Assistant Director, Assets & Commercial about the proposed disposal of the freehold interest of the land edged red on the attached plan (Appendix 1) via a tender process.

In response to a Member question relating to planning permission, officers confirmed that full planning permission had been obtained for the land.

Resolved

That the disposal of the freehold interest of the land edged red on the attached plan (Appendix 1) be agreed via a tender process. (ADAC)

The meeting closed at 8.27 pm.

Chairman

Date

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