



Policy and Resources Committee

Minutes

Tuesday, 12 July 2022 at 18:00

PRESENT:-

Councillor Smith (in the Chair); Councillors Candon, P Carpenter, Flaxman-Taylor, Hammond, Grant, Jeal, Myers, Wainwright, B Walker, Wells, Williamson & T Wright.

Also in attendance :

Ms S Oxtoby (Chief Executive Officer), Ms C Whatling (Monitoring Officer), Ms K Sly (Finance Director), Mr I Robertson (Major Projects and Development Director); Mrs M Lee (Head of Customer Service); Mr S Brabben (Revenues Manager), Mr S Hubbard (Strategic Planning Manager), Mr L Webster (Executive Officer, Equinox), Mrs S Wintle (Corporate Services Manager) Mr J Wedon (Senior Performance & Data Protection Officer) & Mr D Zimmerling (IT Support)

Councillor Plant (Chairman of Equinox Enterprises Ltd & Equinox Property Holdings).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jeal declared a personal interest in item 11 and advised he would not be taking part in the discussion or voting on this matter.

Councillor Wainwright declared a personal interest in the item 14 as he was a Member of the Development Control Committee although it was advised that he could partake in the discussion and voting on this matter.

Councillor T Wright declared a personal interest in the item 14 as he was a Member of the Development Control Committee although it was advised that he could partake in the discussion and voting on this matter.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 24 May 2022 were confirmed.

4 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received and noted the contents of the Forward Plan.

5 2021-22 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN END OF YEAR UPDATE REPORT

Members received and considered the Senior Performance and Data Protection Officer's report which provided Members with an end of year update on the projects and activities detailed within the Council's 2021/22 Annual Action Plan.

Councillor Wainwright commented that whilst he welcomed the funding opportunity of £20m from the HM Treasury Green Book Package Bid and agreed that it would be great for the Council if successful he advised that this would be dependant on lots of things and he felt that this funding would not be received anytime soon. He also made reference to the increase in food bank usage and commented that people who had never used foodbanks were now in a position of having to rely on them.

Councillor Candon commented that he felt the End of year update was an excellent example of the work that was being completed in the Borough and showed the progress which had been made since the pandemic.

A question was raised with regard to EU Procurement law and whether the Council's Procurement Strategy was bound by these terms, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Council were not bound by EU Procurement Law.

RESOLVED :

That the Committee approve the 2021/22 Annual Action Plan End of Year Update report.

6 HERITAGE ACTION ZONE - GREAT YARMOUTH SHOPFRONT DESIGN GUIDE

Members received and considered the Strategic Planning Manager's report which asked Members to consider the adoption of the Great Yarmouth Shopfront Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document.

RESOLVED :

That the Committee agree to adopt the Great Yarmouth Shopfront Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document.

7 TOWN DEAL INTERVENTION 2 - STRATEGIC REGENERATION OF NORTH QUAY IN GREAT YARMOUTH

Members received and considered the Director of Planning and Growth's report which provided Members with an update of the progress in achieving the strategic development of North Quay in Great Yarmouth, including next steps for land acquisition and the potential development of the site.

RESOLVED :

That Committee

(1) Note the latest position in project development, including: a Levelling Up Fund bid submission; Town Deal funding success; completion of Soft Market Testing; adoption of a North Quay Supplementary Planning Document; completion of a suite of supporting technical studies; and the latest position on land acquisition.

(2) Approve in principle the use of compulsory purchase powers for the acquisition of land and rights required for the re-development of the land on the North Quay site identified in appendix 1 ("the Order Land") and to note that the making of any Compulsory Purchase Order ("CPO") will be subject to the Council being satisfied in all respects that the criteria set out in paragraph 9.10 have been met. Such a CPO may take place as a whole or in phases.

8 ANNUAL DEBT REPORT

Members received and considered the Revenue and Benefits Service Manager's report which detailed the Council's collection performance and debt management arrangements for 2021/22.

Councillor Jeal asked if there was anything that could be done to assist with the waiting times for residents being able to get appointments through CAB and DIAL as these were currently taking longer than usual. The Head of Customer Services advised that the Early Help Hub were working with CAB and DIAL although confirmed there was currently a longer wait time than hoped.

RESOLVED :

That Committee note and approve the annual report giving details of the Council's write-offs in accordance with the Council's Recovery Guidelines and performance in relation to revenues collection

9 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - PERMISSION TO CONSULT ON 2023 SCHEME

Members received and considered the Head Of Customer Services Report which

sought permission to consult on Great Yarmouth Borough Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2023.

RESOLVED :

That Committee grant permission to consult on retaining the current scheme for 2023 as set out in section 4.1 of the Head of Customer Service's report.

10 WAR PENSIONS INCOME DISCRETIONARY DISREGARD

Members received and considered the Head of Customer Service's report which sought the Committee's approval to recommend to Council approval to continue to award 25% discretionary income disregard in respect of persons in receipt of a War Pension or War Widow(er) Pension in the administration and calculation of entitlement to Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support.

RESOLVED :

That Committee endorse the recommendation to continue to apply a 25% income disregard in relation to War Pensions and War Widow(er) Pensions income in the administration and calculation of entitlement to Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support.

11 UPDATED BUSINESS RATES DISCRETIONARY DISREGARD

Councillor Jeal hereby advised that he would take no part in the discussion or voting on this item.

Members received and considered the Revenue and Benefits Service Manager's report which provided an update on the Discretionary Business Rates Relief Guidelines.

RESOLVED :

That Committee approve the updated guidelines for granting Discretionary Rate Relief.

12 GENERAL FUND OUTTURN 2021-22

Members received and considered the Finance Director's report which presented to Members the outturn position for the 2021/22 financial year for the revenue and capital position for the general fund.

The Finance Director advised that the position as reported would be used to produce the statutory accounts for the year which would be subject to external audit later in the year.

It was advised that unlike capital budgets, revenue budget underspends are not automatically rolled forward at the end of the financial year unless they relate to grants received ahead of being drawn down or if they reflect a one off

budget.

When the budget for the 2021/22 financial year was approved it assumed a planned use of general reserves of £111,000, the outturn position as reported reflects a use of general reserves of £185,000, a variance of £74,000. This is after allowing for the roll forward of a number of service underspends in the year.

Members were advised that the report also included the outturn position on the general fund capital programme in the year along with an update to the 2022/23 capital programme which was included at Appendix E in the report.

As part of approving the capital programme for 2022/23, it was requested that members approve an amendment to the capital programme as reported in respect of the Future High Street Fund intervention in respect of the conge. The programme currently assumed this intervention is fully funded by the future high street fund grant, however early work has highlighted that a contribution of £220,000 is required for the project which will be funded from borrowing.

The report also includes the updated reserves statement which showed the balance in the general fund reserve within the recommended balance of £3.5m.

Councillor Williamson sort clarification on the accounting line entitled Corporate costs and asked what this included, it was advised that this area covered items such as Council subscriptions and external audit fees. It was suggested that a more detailed breakdown be sent round to Members following the meeting.

Action : A detailed breakdown of Corporate Costs be sent to the Committee following the meeting.

RESOLVED :

That the Committee recommend to Council the following to include the Finance Director's amendment to the Capital Programme :-

- 1) The outturn position for the general fund for 2021/22 as included in the report and appendices;
- 2) The transfers to and from reserves as detailed within the report and Appendix A along with an updated reserves statement (Appendix D);
- 3) The financing of the 2021/22 capital programme as detailed within the report and

appendices;

4) The updated capital programme for 2022/23 as included in the report (section 4) and Appendix E2.

13 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY AND SERVICE UPDATE

Members received and considered the Monitoring Officer's report which provided Members with an update on changes to the Council's procurement approach and to seek approval of the Procurement Strategy for 2022-25.

Councillor Williamson sought clarity over the reason behind a shared procurement service and it was advised that it was hoped that this would provide for a more robust procurement process.

RESOLVED :

That Committee :-

(1) Approve and adopt the Procurement Strategy

(2) Note the new arrangements for the Council's procurement provision via a shared service based at Breckland District Council, and the introduction of revised contract and procurement documentation.

14 GREAT YARMOUTH BEACH HUTS

Members received and considered the Head of Property and Asset Management's report which asked Members to consider the approval and release of Capital funding of £450,000 from the approved 2022/23 Budget to enable the development of Beach Huts at North Drive, Great Yarmouth.

Councillor Jeal requested that a letter be sent to Mr Mick Castle to inform him of the development proposals.

Councillor Wells asked whether the development needed to be more ambitious for the area, he further commented that in his opinion the phased approach for these type of developments did not work well.

Councillor T Wright commented that he felt these were a positive move for Great Yarmouth although raised some concern as to the huts encroaching on the promenade.

Some concern was raised with regard to the design so it was agreed that delegation be given to the Great Yarmouth Seafront Masterplan Members Working Group to see and discuss the final designs of the proposed Beach Huts.

Councillor P Carpenter asked if any snagging issues had been reported from the installation of the huts at Gorleston and whether lessons would be learnt from those to ensure the same did not happen with the ones proposed.

Councillor Jeal raised some concern with regard to the loss of the wall and the

potential for sand to blow directly into the line of the huts.

RESOLVED :

That Committee

(1) Approve release of capital funding for the Development of Beach Huts and on-site amenity block with Authority delegated to the Major Projects and Development Director and Head of Property and Asset Management to approve plot sales

(2) Delegate to the Great Yarmouth Seafront Masterplan members Working Group to see sight of the final proposed designs for the beach huts

15 LEVELLING UP FUND PROGRAMME : GY RIVERSIDE GATEWAY

Members received and considered the Head of Inward Investment and Finance Director's report which provided a summary of the current position in respect of the emerging Levelling Up Fund bid for up to £20 million to extend, amplify and build upon capital projects already developed through the Borough's Town Deal programme.

It was reported that in order to lever in Levelling up funding, there is an expectation that bids would be accompanied by a minimum 10% local contribution to overall costs.

Members were advised that the report was recommending that £2.2m be included in the capital programme as a matched funding contribution to the wider levelling up bid. It was proposed that this would be funded from borrowing with the revenue implications mitigated by the anticipated revenue stream including business rates income.

RESOLVED :

That Committee :-

(1) Review the Report's content

(2) Recommend to Council approval of the underwriting/co-investment of £2.2 million (to be included in the capital programme)– representing 10% local contribution to overall costs – on the basis of future return-on-investment in order to meet Government expectations and maximise the competitiveness of the bid.

16 EQUINOX ENTERPRISES LTD - FINANCING

Members received and considered the Finance Director's report which asked Members to approve the release of the financing from the Council to Equinox Enterprises Limited to facilitate the delivery of phase 2.

The report recommended a financing facility of up to £10m to be available for the company, to fulfil the new build housing development of Eastwood Phase 2. At the same time the report recommended an update to the investment strategy as previously approved in February this year to reflect the increase in the loan facility to the Equinox.

RESOLVED :

That Committee:

(1) Recommend to Council approval of the financing for Equinox Enterprises Ltd of up to £10m (from a £7.5m revenue loan facility and £2.5m equity/share capital). The equity share capital £2.5m will need be added to the capital programme following this approval to be funded by borrowing.

(2) Recommend to Council that the Investment Strategy 2022/23 (updated July 2022) at Appendix A be approved (updated in line with the financing requirements approval for this report).

(3) Delegate the drawdown of the financing facility to the S151 Officer.

17 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business discussed at the meeting.

18 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

RESOLVED :

"That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12(A) of the said Act."