

Minutes

Policy, Projects and Resources Committee Wednesday, 29th November, 2017

Attendance

Cllr Mrs McKinlay (Chair)	Cllr Keeble
Cllr Kerlake (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Kendall
Cllr Barrett	Cllr Mynott
Cllr Hossack	Cllr Parker

Apologies

Cllr Faragher

Substitute Present

Cllr Hirst

Also Present

Cllr Aspinell
Cllr Mrs Pound

Officers Present

Kim Anderson	-	Partnership, Leisure and Funding Manager
Philip Ruck	-	Chief Executive
Jean Sharp	-	Governance and Member Support Officer
Steve Summers	-	Chief Operating Officer
Daniel Toohey	-	Monitoring Officer
Jacqueline Van Mellaerts	-	Financial Services Manager

170. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Faragher. Cllr Hirst substituted for him.

171. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a true record.

172. Asset Development Programme Update

The aim of the Council's Asset Development Programme was to steer and manage development opportunities from the Council's property asset base so as to deliver improved revenue streams from the portfolio but at the same time securing the regeneration, economic development and housing objectives of the council. The report provided an update of the Asset Development Programme Project Board to date.

Further to the PP&R Committee meeting in September 2017, meetings had been arranged with interested partners during December 2017 to consult with the market.

In addition, there were three items from the Early Successes Workstream of the project that had been put forward for resolution at the Committee meeting:

- Memorial Walls
- Community Halls Management
- Early Disposals of Assets

Officers had reviewed the list of the Council's Assets to identify any that might be appropriate for early disposal and the proposed list was tabled at the meeting.

Cllr Mrs McKinlay **MOVED** and Cllr Kerslake **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report.

During the debate and in response to questions, the Committee was advised that details of the potential income from the sale of any of the assets would be sent to Members in confidence; that the sale of land to the rear of Tesco in Warley Hill would be considered at the January 2018 PPR meeting and that decisions relating to assets owned by the Assizes Trust would be made by Trustees.

Cllr Hossack requested the land at Wash Road be added to the list as he believed the Scout troop that met there might be interested in buying it.

Cllr Mrs McKinlay reminded committee members that delegated authority to the cross-party group was already in place so that decisions on the sale of some assets could be made but decisions relating to significant assets would be considered by the Committee. Progress could be tracked as Asset Development Programme Update would be a standing agenda item for future PPR meetings.

Regarding Land at End of Alfred Road included on List 1, due to previous problems experienced by residents, Cllr Barrett requested and it was agreed by the Committee that this asset be moved to list 2.

Cllr Keeble asked to be consulted regarding Land Adjacent to Tipps Cross Village Hall on List 2.

Following a full discussion a vote was taken on a show of hands and it was

RESOLVED

- 1. To note the progress of the Asset Development Programme Project Board.**
- 2. To approve the disposal of assets as identified and agreed at the Committee meeting.**

Reasons for recommendations

The next stage in the project was to consult with the market and to identify any early quick successes.

173. Memorial Walls

The report before Members focused on the delivery of a Memorial Wall in Woodman Road cemetery where, for a fee, people could place memorial plaques for their loved ones. This would also provide the opportunity to enhance an area of the cemetery currently under-utilised, but with much potential given the existing pathway which had no focal point.

A pergola was being incorporated into the design at this stage along with a round bench at the end of the path. A drawing was currently being prepared from which estimated costings could be obtained. Costs and space permitting other walls would be included in the scheme for people who wished to commemorate their pets. Car parking provision, improvements to the path and planting were also being considered subject to cost.

Approval was now being sought from the PPR committee, as landowner, to agree in-principle for the development of a Memorial wall subject to a planning pre-application meeting, planning approval and any other associated permissions that might be necessary.

Cllr Mrs McKinlay **MOVED** and Cllr Kerslake **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report and following a full discussion which included reference to careful consideration of building materials for the wall with regard to future maintenance and the use of plastics and fibreglass for plaques so that they would not be stolen, a vote was taken on a show of hands and it was

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY

- 1. That approval be given in-principle for the development of a Memorial Wall in Woodman Road Cemetery.**

2. That a report be made to the P, P&R Committee in January 2018 seeking final agreement in regards to the following:

- (i) Design and cost within existing capital resources for cemeteries.**
- (ii) Suitable level of fee and terms and an appropriate agreement and conditions for the plaque.**

Reasons for Recommendation

This scheme will enhance the appearance and attractiveness of Woodman Road cemetery. People will have a peaceful place to sit and reflect upon their loved ones in a pleasant environment.

174. Leisure Strategy - Community Halls

Members were reminded that, as part of the development of the Council's Leisure Strategy, a Value for Money Review and options appraisal was undertaken in 2016 and the report and recommendations were circulated to all Members. The Council's six community halls were included in this piece of work and were also included as part of the early successes programme workstream within the Asset Development Programme.

Officers had undertaken a review of the current arrangements for the Community Halls and had identified four possible courses of action.

- a) Do Nothing, keep the status quo;
- b) Re-negotiate a new Halls Management Agreement and new leases for the community halls with Brentwood Leisure Trust /Brentwood Leisure Trading;
- c) Explore the direct management of the community halls by Brentwood Borough Council;
- d) and explore the possibility of other 3rd party providers managing the community halls.

The report before Members outlined the process to date with a preferred recommendation.

At this stage the preferred option gave the opportunity for negotiations to take place that were in the best interests of the Council and Brentwood Leisure Trust.

Cllr Kerslake declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of being a trustee of Brentwood Leisure Trust and left the meeting taking no part in the discussion.

Cllr Mrs McKinlay **MOVED** and Cllr Hirst **SECONDED** a slightly amended version of the recommendation in the report.

Cllr Kendall **MOVED** and Cllr Mynott **SECONDED** an **AMENDMENT** to the **MOTION** and following a discussion a vote was taken on a show of hands and the **AMENDMENT** was **LOST**.

Returning to the original motion and following a full discussion a vote was taken on a show of hands and it was

RESOLVED to

Delegate the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of Policy, Projects and Resources Committee to investigate, negotiate and subject to viability agree a new Service Level Agreement and new leases with Brentwood Leisure Trust.

Reasons for Recommendation

As part of the Council's due diligence in delivering a successful Leisure Strategy, Members and officers need to have a complete picture of the current associated costs, risk profiles of the Borough's Leisure facilities and identify opportunities for income generation.

Comments received from Sport England as part of the Local Development Plan consultation, stated that a Leisure Strategy is required that assesses Council owned sports and leisure facilities in order that the Council can continue to work with partners to ensure that appropriate provision is made for the residents of Brentwood. The strategy should not only consider how the Council can provide services, but also how other partners can.

The preferred option incorporates the implementation of the internal audit recommendations in respect of more robust contract management and monitoring.

175. Corporate Sundry Debt Management , Recovery and Write-Off Policy

Members were reminded that the Council's current Debt Recovery Policy incorporating all debts was established in 2003. This policy contained only minimal detail on Sundry Debt recovery processes which were now outdated.

A new, separate and comprehensive sundry debt recovery policy had been written to cover all aspects of corporate sundry debts, which included good practice, accounting arrangements, recovery processes and the procedure to follow when considering debts for write off.

Cllr Mrs McKinlay **MOVED** and Cllr Kerslake **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report and following a full discussion a vote was taken on a show of hands and it was

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY

1. That the Committee agrees to remove Section 6 (Sundry Debts) from the existing Debt Recovery Policy 2003.
2. That the Committee agrees to the adoption of a new, separate corporate sundry debt management, recovery and write off policy as per Appendix A of this report.

Reasons for Recommendation

The existing debt recovery policy does not reflect current working practices and provides insufficient detail of sundry debt policy and processes.

Combining the sundry debt recovery management and write off policy into one document makes both policies easier to follow and review.

176. Council Tax Support Scheme - 2018/19

This year the Council would like to consider only minor changes to ensure that Brentwood's Local Council Tax Support scheme remained in line with the changes made by Central Government for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.

People of pension age continued to be protected from any changes in Local Council Tax Support; therefore any scheme had to be devised for people of working age only.

The Brentwood Borough Council scheme continued to be prepared within the framework of an Essex-wide scheme with local variations. For the last three years Brentwood's scheme had remained virtually unchanged.

Cllr Mrs McKinlay **MOVED** and Cllr Kerslake **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report and following a discussion a vote was taken on a show of hands and it was

RESOLVED

To approve Brentwood's Council Tax Support Scheme with minor changes to reflect changes in legislation made by Central Government in both Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.

Reasons for Recommendation

To agree and adopt the proposed Council Tax Support scheme for 2018/19 prior to 31 January 2018.

177. 2017/18 Medium Term Financial Plan Mid Year Review

The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) set out the key financial management principles and budget assumptions. It was then used as the framework for the detailed budget setting process to ensure that the Council's resources were managed effectively in order to meet its statutory responsibilities and deliver the priorities of the Council over the medium term.

Cllr Mrs McKinlay **MOVED** and Cllr Kerslake **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report and following a full discussion during which Cllr Mrs McKinlay agreed the proposal that the Committee should receive quarterly or 6-monthly updates on progress with the Town Hall remodelling, a vote was taken on a show of hands and it was

RESOLVED to

1. **Agree the Revised General Fund Position as shown in Table 6.**
2. **Agree the current Capital Programme position as shown in Table 7.**
3. **Agree the current HRA position as shown in Table 9.**

Reasons for Recommendation

Effective financial management underpins all of the priorities for the Council and will enable the Council to operate within a sustainable budget environment.

178. Urgent Business

The Chair, Cllr Mrs McKinlay, advised that further to the call for an Extraordinary Council meeting which was to take place on 13 December 2017, she had included this item of urgent business to provide relevant information to ensure the discussion at that meeting focused on concerns over sufficient resources being in place for the successful delivery of the Local Development Plan (LDP), the stated purpose of the Extraordinary Council meeting.

Members were aware that a letter had been received from the Secretary of State requesting information on the Council's programme and timeline in relation to submission of the LDP and Cllr Mrs McKinlay had responded with relevant information. She had undertaken to meet with representatives from government and had begun this process with the MP. She expected to receive a response to her letter to the Secretary of State which would subsequently require additional information to be provided.

Cllr Mrs McKinlay advised that she had fully discussed the available resources with the Chief Executive and relevant Officers and had been repeatedly assured that the necessary resources in terms of officers, finances, legal input and software were in place to enable the LDP to be delivered in accordance with the proposed timeline. Essex County Council would provide highways impact and planning information and funding and expertise would be received from central government in relation to proposals for Dunton Hills Garden Village regarding which there was positive engagement with neighbouring authorities. A document had been tabled at the meeting which set out an overview of resource currently in place and this would be circulated to all Members.

Cllr Mrs McKinlay reiterated that preparation for the 6-week consultation to gather further evidence which would begin in mid-January 2018 was being undertaken. Methods of consultation were being considered and all Members would be involved in deciding how best to ensure all residents were given the opportunity to submit their opinion. Comments and concerns from the consultation would be digested and issues mitigated through provision of evidence before progressing to Regulation 19 – the final sharing of the Plan before submission to Government.

Cllr Mrs McKinlay advised a briefing document would be circulated to all Members which would include information provided at this meeting and she **MOVED** and Cllr Kerlake **SECONDED** and following a debate it was

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY

that the document be taken forward to facilitate the discussion at the Extraordinary Council meeting.

Cllr Kendall requested that responses to the following questions be provided:

1. What specific evidence was needed to deliver the LDP?
2. Who was providing that evidence?
3. What was the timescale for providing this evidence?
4. Regarding the changes to the listed numbers of houses at individual sites, who decided to make the changes, who decided on the final figures and what evidence was used to make the changes?
5. How can residents object to proposals if they have not seen the new evidence?
6. If residents have already objected to proposals will their response be carried forward or will they need to send in a new comment?

The meeting ended at 9.00pm