

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel (to be confirmed at the next meeting)

Date: Tuesday, 3 March 2020

Venue: Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs S M Bayford (Chairman)

Councillor N J Walker (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: M J Ford, JP, I Bastable, J G Kelly and Mrs L E Clubley
(deputising for Mrs C L A Hockley)

Also Present: Councillor S D Martin, Executive Member for Streetscene (Item 7)



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Davies and Mrs Hockley.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel held on 14 January 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chairman's announcements made at this meeting.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSURES OF ADVICE OR DIRECTION

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

5. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations made at this meeting.

6. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S COMMERCIAL PROPERTY PORTFOLIO

The Panel considered a report and received a presentation (attached to these minutes) from the Head of Property which reviewed the Council's Commercial Property Investment Portfolio.

Members asked a number of questions in relation to how inherent risks with commercial property are managed and kept under review. The Head of property and Deputy Chief Executive Officer responded to Member questions and highlighted that the measures for managing the portfolio and mitigating the risks are in accordance with the adopted Commercial Property Investment Acquisition Strategy.

The Panel also asked a number of questions in relation to the balance of risk and return, associated with investment properties. The Head of Property explained that the performance of the portfolio was in line with the risk appetite as set out in the adopted Strategy, and that whilst property investment does carry a higher risk, the Council continually monitors investments and has plans in place should performance deteriorate.

RESOLVED that the Head of Property be thanked for his informative presentation and report.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Planning and Regeneration on an update to the work that the Council is undertaking in respect of Climate Change and Carbon Reduction.

The Panel was informed that, at the Executive meeting on 2 March 2020, the recommendation in the report was amended to include the following wording to the terms of reference:

Acting as the Member Champion on climate change matters, Councillor Martin will be the recipient of any information proposals arising from elected Members for carbon reduction planning or other climate change work. Councillor Martin will present any such proposals to the Working Group to allow these to be investigated and considered in more detail, in order to determine whether they should form part of any formal climate change proposals presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel and the Executive for consideration and decision.

And, that the Members' Newsletter will include updates on the progress of the Climate Change Working Group and that this will be added to the Terms of Reference.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Martin, Executive Member for Streetscene, addressed the Panel on this item. He provided an update to members on the progress made by the Working Group to date and stressed that the priority for the Council is to tackle its own carbon footprint first before looking to influence changes across the borough with residents. He explained that it was important that the Council has a good understanding of the issues and the ways in which to tackle them before it can start to advise residents on steps that they should be taking. He explained that this is an evolving process that will change over time as the Working Group gains a better understanding of the challenges ahead.

The Climate Change Officer addressed the Panel to set out the work that the Working Group will be undertaking over the next 12 months. She explained that the first priority will be to calculate the Council's carbon footprint, which will inform the measures needed in the Carbon Reduction Plan. She was asked regarding timescales for this work and informed the Panel that the carbon footprint calculation should be completed by the Summer, enabling the Carbon Reduction Plan to be developed by the end of the year.

Councillor Walker suggested that the Working Group be tasked with trying to influence Central Government with regard to Planning Policy to encourage the development of more carbon efficient homes. Councillor Bastable enquired as to whether the Council could strengthen the requirement via the Council's current Draft Local Plan and in line with the current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Panel asked Officers to consider if this would be feasible. Councillor Martin agreed to feed back the suggestion from the Panel, to the Climate Change Working Group to consider the scope for further investigation.

RESOLVED that the Panel thank the Climate Change Officer and Executive Member for Streetscene be thanked for their informative update.

8. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

The Panel considered the Executive items of business which fall under the remit of the Policy and Resources Portfolio, including Executive Member decisions and Officer delegated decisions, that have taken place since the last meeting of the Panel on 23 October 2020.

The Panel considered the decisions shown at items 8 (1) to 8 (12) of the agenda.

RESOLVED that the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel considered the following items of Executive Business.

(1) Beach Hut Site Rent Review

Councillor Ford enquired as to whether the comparisons that were made with the beach hut rents in Hayling Island was a fair comparison to those in Fareham. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer addressed the Panel as explained that comparisons were made other areas in addition to that of Hayling Island to ensure that a broad picture was established. He also informed the Panel that the Executive resolved at its meeting to move to a fixed percentage increase, rather than relying on comparable beach hut sites.

(2) Secure Access to the Western Side of the Solent Airport and provide further car parking for children's play area

Councillor Bastable enquired in respect of the provision of car parking as to whether, in light of the Council's climate change work, if any thought has been given to the provision of electric vehicle charging points for this site. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer addressed the Panel and informed them that issue electric vehicle charging points has been discussed at the Climate Change Working Group and is likely to be investigated as part of the Council's Carbon Reduction Plan.

(3) Construction of Economic Hangars at Solent Airport Daedalus

Councillor Bastable enquired if the Council had considered the suitability of the power supply for these hangars, to meet the demand of high power consuming businesses. Deputy Chief Executive Officer confirmed that this had been looked into, and that the Executive had recently approved additional funding to upgrade the capacity of the power supply at Faraday Business Park.

(4) Finance Strategy, Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2020/21

No comments were received.

(5) Fees and Charges 2020/21

No comments were received.

(6) Capital Programme and Capital Strategy 2020/21

Councillor Ford asked if the additional borrowing identified within the decision is within acceptable borrowing limits. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer confirmed that the Council is indeed borrowing within the approved limits as set out in the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy. He also confirmed to the Panel that the Council's performance is scrutinised and monitored by the Audit and Governance Committee and the Executive.

(7) Finance Strategy, Capital Programme, Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2020/21

No comments were received.

(8) Housing Revenue Account Budget and Capital Plans 2020/21

No comments were received.

(9) Insurance Services Tender

No comments were received.

(10) Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21

No comments were received.

(11) Adoption of BT Telephone Box in Sarisbury Green

Councillor Kelly enquired as to whether the Community Grants budget was the appropriate funding stream to be used for the ongoing maintenance of the phone box. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer explained to the Panel that whilst the Community Grant fund is normally used for funding one off projects, the Executive has the discretion to approve alternative uses for the fund. He reassured the Panel that the whilst it has been agreed that up to £500 could be used annually for the maintenance of the telephone box, money will only be drawn if it is needed for repairs.

(12) Review of the Council's Pre-Application Planning Advice Service and Charges

There were no comments received.

9. SCRUTINY PRIORITIES

Members were given the opportunity to put forward any suggestions for items that they wished for the Panel to consider for a future meeting.

RESOLVED that no additional items be added to the scrutiny priorities plan at this time.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm
and ended at 7.17 pm).

