

POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES - 10 APRIL 2017

Present: Councillor Lovelock (Chair)

Councillors Duveen, Eden, Gavin, Gittings, Hopper, Hoskin, Jones, Page, Skeats, Terry and White.

Apologies: Councillors Davies and Stevens.

105. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved -

That pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of items 106-110 below as it was likely that there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

106. HOUSING BENEFITS/COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - RISK-BASED VERIFICATION POLICY CONTINUATION/REVIEW

The Managing Director submitted a report setting out the Council's current risk based verification (RBV) policy and process for dealing with evidence requirements in support of claims for both Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. The Council had adopted a risk based verification process for evidence requirements in 2012, and the report sought approval for the continuation of this approach. The Risk Based Verification Policy 2017/18 was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The Committee noted that the policy should be examined by the Audit & Governance Committee, in line with government guidance on good practice.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Risk Based Verification policy be noted and approved for continued use in 2017/18;
- (2) That the policy be periodically reviewed by the Audit & Governance Committee.

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 7).

107. LAND AT ROSE KILN LANE

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out a proposal to establish a new Marina and enabling development on land adjacent to Rose Kiln Lane, shown on Plan A attached to the report. The proposal from H2O was attached to the report at Appendix A and the proposed layout and design of the marina was attached at Plan B. The report sought authority to enter into a Development Agreement with H2O.

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Resolved -

That a development agreement be entered into with H2O, on the terms outlined in Appendix A and sections 4.5 - 4.8 of the report.

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 3).

108. ABATTOIRS ROAD

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out the outcome of a marketing exercise to grant a 25 year lease, with break options, of a site at Abattoirs Road, shown on a plan attached to the report.

Resolved -

That, subject to NCP obtaining planning consent, a 25 year lease of the site at Abattoirs Road, with break clauses, be granted to NCP to provide car parking, on the terms outlined in paragraph 4.2 of the report.

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 3).

109. PROPERTY IN CENTRAL READING

This item was deferred.

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 3).

110. ARTHUR HILL POOL - COMMUNITY RIGHT TO CHALLENGE EXPRESSION OF INTEREST - CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

The Monitoring Officer and Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on an Expression of Interest to provide swimming services at Arthur Hill Pool, made under the Community Right to Challenge provisions of the Localism Act 2011. The information in the Expression of Interest from Arthur Hill - Save Our Swimming CIC had been designated by that organisation as commercially confidential, and the submission document and officers' evaluation of the submission were therefore reported to the Committee in closed session prior to consideration of the main report.

The Submission from Arthur Hill - Save Our Swimming CIC was attached to the report at Appendix E, and the evaluation of the submission was attached at Appendix F.

Resolved -

That the information in the report and Appendices be noted and taken into consideration when making a decision on the expression of interest to provide swimming services at Arthur Hill Pool (Item 113 below refers).

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 3).

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(Councillor White declared an interest in this item, on the grounds that he was a member of the Arthur Hill - Save Our Swimming CIC, although not involved in the organisation's decision-making. He remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and decision.)

111. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

112. QUESTIONS

Questions on the following matters were submitted by members of the public:

	Questioner	Subject	Reply
1.	Linda Fort	Use of Household Waste Recycling Centre	Councillor Terry
2.	Sam Swinerd	Leisure Activities for Young People	Councillor Gavin

Questions on the following matters were submitted by councillors:

	Questioner	Subject	Reply
1.	Councillor Hopper	Changes In Legislation For Off-Payroll Workers	Councillor Lovelock
2.	Councillor White	Ofsted Concerns About Reading's Children's Services	Councillor Gavin

(NB - The full text of the questions and responses was made available on the Reading Borough Council website).

113. ARTHUR HILL POOL - COMMUNITY RIGHT TO CHALLENGE - CONSIDERATION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST - NEWTOWN GLOBE GROUP

Further to Minute 27 of the meeting of full Council held on 18 October 2016, the Monitoring Officer and Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out, for consideration and determination, a 'Community Right to Challenge' Expression of Interest to provide swimming services from Arthur Hill Pool. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix A - Community Right to Challenge: the Council's Framework (updated August 2015);
- Appendix B - Statutory Guidance - Community Right to Challenge (DCLG - 2012);
- Appendix C - Initial Expression of interest - Letter from Newtown Globe Group, 14 October 2016;
- Appendix D - Arthur Hill Swimming Pool - Community Right to Challenge Information Request, issued January 2017.

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Two further appendices - the submission from Arthur Hill - Save Our Swimming CIC - 6 March 2017, and an evaluation of the submission, had been circulated with a report considered in private session (see Minute 110 above).

The report noted that full Council had resolved to close Arthur Hill Pool (the pool) permanently from 19 December 2016 and to declare the site surplus to requirements and to dispose of it, with the sum equivalent to the capital receipt arising from the disposal being invested in a proposed new replacement swimming facility at Palmer Park. The report to Council had set out the financial and structural challenges of operating the pool, which had operated at an annual revenue loss of £120k pa, and which had been the subject of emergency shut-downs in 2013 and 2016. Spending of around £700k would have been required to upgrade the facilities to enable the continued operation of swimming in the pool.

The anticipated Council decision to close the pool had triggered an expression of interest (Eoi) to provide swimming services from Arthur Hill, submitted by the Newtown Globe Group on 14 October 2016, under the provisions of Section 81 of the Localism Act 2011 (the Community Right to Challenge). A Community Interest Company (Arthur Hill Save Our Swimming CIC) had subsequently been set up to take forward the Eoi, and the CIC had submitted their case to support the Eoi on 6 March 2017.

The report presented the Eoi to the Committee for consideration and determination and explained that the Committee could take one of three decisions: to accept, modify or reject the Eoi. If the Committee accepted the Eoi, the Council would have to carry out a procurement exercise for the services to be provided from Arthur Hill, in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, in which the Arthur Hill Save Our Swimming Pool CIC could take part. The report listed the grounds on which, under the relevant regulations, the EOI could be rejected.

At the invitation of the Chair, Peter Burt and Gerard Stewart, representing the Arthur Hill Save Our Swimming CIC, presented the Expression of Interest and submission to the Committee, and answered questions.

At the meeting it was proposed by Councillor White that:

- (1) the Policy Committee resolve to invite a modified expression of interest application from the Save Arthur Hill Community Interest Company taking into account the Council's evaluation; and a further report on the modified application be submitted to the next Policy Committee on 12 June 2017;
- (2) Policy Committee further resolve to instruct officers to support the Save Arthur Hill community interest company, as far as possible, in ensuring that the Expression of Interest documentation meets the Council's requirements.

The proposal was put to the vote and was not agreed.

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At the meeting it was proposed by Councillor Gittings that the Expression of Interest be rejected on the grounds that, based on the information in the Expression of Interest, the Arthur Hill - Save Our Swimming CIC was not suitable to provide or assist in providing swimming services from Arthur Hill Pool.

Resolved -

That the Expression of Interest be rejected, on the grounds that, based on the information in the Expression of Interest, the Arthur Hill - Save Our Swimming CIC was not suitable to provide or assist in providing swimming services from Arthur Hill Pool.

(Councillor White declared an interest in this item, on the grounds that he was a member of the Arthur Hill - Save Our Swimming CIC, although not involved in the organisation's decision-making. He remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion and decision.)

114. COMMUNITY HUBS SPEND APPROVAL

Further to Minute 22 of the meeting held on 18 July 2016, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking spend approval for Community Hub projects at Battle Library, Southcote Community Centre and South Reading Youth and Community Centre, and also seeking approval for the subsequent disposal of Whitley Library and Southcote Library.

The report explained that the proposals for a new library service offer, which the Committee had endorsed at its meeting on 18 July 2016, had been further developed and spend approval was now sought prior to works taking place. The report summarised proposals for the three community hubs as follows:

Battle Library - services would be maintained with reduced opening hours, extending the current building and developing the site as a community hub, enabling access for community groups to part of the building outside opening hours. The scheme cost was currently estimated at up to £500,000, and £400,000 of funding had been approved from Section 106 grant for the Battle area.

Southcote library - the library would be relocated to Southcote Community Centre within an extended community hub offering a Children's Centre and community activities including adult learning. It was planned to extend the Centre and make internal alterations to enable the relocation of the library and improve the functionality of the centre. These would include provision of a sound insulated space for quiet study, a new kitchenette in the hall and the development of a safe space for children to play and to grow plants. The scheme cost was currently estimated at up to £550,000.

Whitley Library - the library would be relocated to SRYCC, with works to improve and optimise use of the building. As well as relocating the library the proposed design would preserve meeting spaces and revenue income from lettings, retain sufficient storage, and rationalise entrances and improve the 'flow' of the building. Subject to

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the outcome of the Council's review of Children's Centres, it was proposed that the current Youth Centre be modified to enable the Children's Centre to operate from this space during the day, in order to make better use of the currently under-utilised Youth Centre, increase the visibility of the Children's Centre and provide increased, better quality space including a new dedicated outdoor play area. The scheme cost was currently estimated at up to £750,000.

The report sought spend approval for the estimated cost of these three Community Hubs projects, plus a 10% contingency of £200k. Funding would be delivered through a combination of the Capital Programme, external grant funding, Section 106 funding and capital receipts from the disposal of Whitley Library and Southcote Library (see below). The report also set out the proposed procurement approach and sought approval to enter into contracts with the successful bidders.

The report also noted that, following the proposed relocation of the Southcote and Whitley library functions into the community hub facilities, the existing library sites would become surplus to requirements in accordance with the Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan. It was proposed that the properties be advertised on the open market seeking best offers for the existing buildings and also for potential redevelopment of the sites, and at the same time be advertised through Reading Voluntary Action in accordance with the Community Lettings Policy. The results of the marketing exercise would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee seeking a decision on disposal of the properties.

Resolved -

- (1) That the current position regarding the Community Hubs Programme be noted, and spend approval of up to £2m be granted, subject to the proposed developments gaining necessary Planning permissions and Listed Building Consent as appropriate, to deliver:
 - a) an extension to Battle Library for up to £500,000;
 - b) an extension and improvement works to Southcote Community Centre for up to £550,000;
 - c) improvement works to South Reading Youth and Community Centre for up to £750,000;
 - d) an overall programme contingency of £200,000.
- (2) That the procurement proposals be noted and, subject to the proposed developments gaining Planning permissions and Listed Building Consent, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Neighbourhoods, the Head of Finance and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, be authorised to enter into contracts with the winning bidder for each scheme;

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- (3) That the disposal of the Whitley and Southcote Library sites on the open market and through the Community Letting Policy process be agreed, and that the results of the marketing exercise be reported back to a future meeting of Policy Committee for decision.

115. PUBLIC HEALTH BUDGET 2017/18

Further to Minute 64 of the meeting held on 5 December 2016, the Director of Adult Care and Health Services submitted a report on progress to meet the reductions in Public Health grant funding for 2017/18. The report also set out detail of the Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) undertaken as part of the exercise to reduce spending in line with the 2.5% grant reduction.

Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was a breakdown of the services impacted by the grant reduction and the progress made to deliver, and attached to the report at Appendix 2 were the completed EIA's for services impacted by the required reduction in spend.

Resolved -

- (1) That the findings of the EIAs, which had been carried out and the decisions by officers not to undertake EIAs where it was deemed unnecessary be endorsed;
- (2) That, having taken into account the findings of the EIAs, attached at Appendix 2 to the report, the work undertaken to implement the savings to meet the Public Health grant funding reduction, as agreed by Policy Committee at its meeting on 5 December 2016 (Minute 64 refers) and summarised in the report, be endorsed.

116. PROGRESS OF THE REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY

Further to Minute 58 of the meeting of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education (ACE) Committee held on 20 March 2017, the Director of Children's, Education and Early Help Services submitted a report giving an update on the status of the new Adopt Thames Valley Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) and seeking approval for the Council's financial contributions.

The report explained that the final funding formula had been agreed in late March 2017 by the Adopt Thames Valley Board and Local Authority contributions were currently being fixed against the formula. The 'go live' date was November 2017 although this was at risk if Local Authorities failed to confirm financial commitment during April 2017. The staffing structure and governance arrangements for the RAA had already been agreed and reported to the ACE Committee.

It was reported at the meeting that the Council's financial contributions had now been calculated as £487k for 2017/18 and £430k for 2018/19, and these were approved by the Committee.

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Resolved -

That the Council continue to participate in the Adopt Thames Valley Regional Adoption Agency and that financial contributions of £487k for 2017/18 and £430k for 2018/19 be approved.

117. CONTRACT AWARD - CORPORATE RESPONSIVE REPAIRS

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval for the award of a contract for the delivery of responsive building repairs to corporate buildings and schools, following a competitive tendering exercise.

The report explained that a procurement was underway to rationalise the number of contracts/agreements for responsive repairs, planned maintenance and servicing for the Council's corporate buildings and schools, in order to obtain competitive rates and reduce contract administration costs. A tender programme to procure the services of a contractor to undertake day-to-day responsive repairs to corporate properties and schools had been completed and approval was sought to award the contract. The contract would cover over 220 corporate properties / schools / assets and include an emergency call-out service 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. No volume of expenditure was guaranteed under the contract, as annual expenditure would depend on the actual level of maintenance and repair works required. The annual value of work carried out under this contract was approximately £325,000.

Resolved -

That a contract be awarded to Bellrock Property and Facilities Management for the delivery of responsive repairs to corporate buildings and schools for an initial period of five years, with an option to extend for two further consecutive years in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 8.40pm).