

POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES - 25 SEPTEMBER 2017

Present: Councillor Lovelock (Chair)

Councillors Duveen, Eden, Ennis, Gavin, Hacker, Hopper, Hoskin, Jones, Page, Skeats, Stevens, Terry and White.

23. 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 24-26 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.

24. LAND AT AMETHYST LANE

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out the outcome of a marketing exercise to dispose of the freehold of land at Amethyst Lane, as shown on a plan attached to the report, and seeking approval for its disposal.

An addendum was tabled at the meeting giving an update on the marketing of the site, and seeking delegated authority to agree its disposal.

Resolved -

That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director of Finance, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Leader of the Council and the Chair of Audit & Governance Committee, be authorised to agree the disposal of the site at Amethyst Lane for best value.

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 3).

25. LAND AT NORTH STREET

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval for the proposed disposal of the Council's vacant site at North Street, as shown on a plan attached to the report, to the owners of the former Coopers BMW site at Napier Road for Market Value.

The report explained that the land at North Street would be used as an affordable housing surrogate site in connection with the Thames Quarter development which had been approved by Planning Applications Committee on 6 September 2017 (Minute 24(3) refers), subject to the completion of a Planning Section 106 legal agreement. The report also sought approval for the site being transferred back to the Council as the nominated affordable housing provider under the proposed Section 106 for

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nominal consideration.

Resolved -

- (1) That the disposal of the land at North Street for market value, as set out in the report, be approved;
- (2) That the acquisition of the land at North Street for a nominal sum, to be used by the Council to provide affordable housing as set out in the report, be approved.

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 3).

26. PROPERTY ACQUISITION STRATEGY - PROPERTY IN SOUTH READING

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing an update on the Council's Property Acquisition Strategy, the current availability of purchasing opportunities offered to the Council and to seek authority to acquire two investment properties in South Reading.

An update report was tabled at the meeting which set out the latest position with regards to the proposed purchase of the properties, and amended the recommendation accordingly.

Resolved -

- (1) That it be noted that a non-binding offer for the freehold interest in the proposed investment properties had been submitted;
- (2) That, subject to a satisfactory and comprehensive appraisal from an appropriate external organisation to ensure due diligence, the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Leader of the Council and Chair of Audit and Governance Committee, be authorised to make offers up to the amount specified in the report, and if successful, to purchase the properties;
- (3) That further work being undertaken to develop the Strategic Investment Portfolio and progress the investment opportunities currently available in the market place be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

(Exempt information as defined in paragraph 3).

27. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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28. PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Peter Burt	Demountable Pool at Rivermead	Cllr Hacker
2.	Peter Burt	Contract for Provision of Leisure Services	Cllr Hacker
3.	Billie Reynolds	Response to Budget Savings proposals	Cllr Lovelock

Questions on the following matters were submitted by Councillors:

	<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
1.	Cllr White	Fly-tipping on the increase in Reading?	Cllr Terry
2.	Cllr White	Reconsider Aspire's bid to buy the Central Club Building	Cllr Lovelock

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

29. CONSULTATION ON GYPSY AND TRAVELLER PROVISION

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report considering the issue of provision for gypsy and traveller accommodation within Reading and seeking approval for a consultation.

The report explained that a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment had identified accommodation needs including for 10-17 permanent pitches and for 5 transit pitches for gypsies and travellers, and consideration had been given to whether this could be met within Reading. An assessment of potential Council-owned sites had been carried out and the potential for private sites to come forward had also been investigated. A site had been identified at Cow Lane/Richfield Avenue which could potentially meet transit needs, and it was therefore proposed that a consultation on this site and the overall approach be carried out prior to finalising the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan, which would need to set out how the issue should be addressed.

The report noted that the provision of a transit caravan site would meet part of the identified need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the Borough and that there were considerable other potential benefits. An available transit site would potentially reduce the amount of unauthorised encampments and associated costs of enforcement and clean-up, and would potentially allow the police to make better use of powers to require travellers to leave land and to seize vehicles if they did not.

Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was an Equality Impact Assessment of the proposal, and at Appendix 2 the proposed Gypsy and Traveller Provision Consultation

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Document.

Resolved -

- (1) That the progress on assessing and providing for the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers be noted;
- (2) That community involvement on the Gypsy and Traveller Provision Consultation document, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report, be authorised.

31. READING GREEN PARK STATION - DESIGN & BUILD

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out the latest position regarding proposals for Reading Green Park Station, and seeking authority to enter into agreements with Balfour Beatty, Network Rail and Great Western Railway (GWR) to progress the detailed design and construction of the station and multi-modal interchange.

The report explained that design work currently being undertaken by Network Rail and Balfour Beatty would ensure that the fundamental aspects of the station and interchange design were fixed and formally approved by Network Rail. This included the location and dimensions of the platforms, footbridge, station entrance and passenger building. To progress the scheme beyond the concept design, it was recommended that officers be authorised to appoint Balfour Beatty through the Scape procurement framework to undertake the detailed design and build contract for the next stages of the development. Detailed design of the multi-modal interchange and car park had been undertaken by the Council's engineering term consultants, and a number of minor amendments to the consented scheme were currently being discussed with the planning authority. The report sought authority to carry out a competitive procurement process and appoint a contractor to undertake the initial phases of interchange construction.

In order to progress development of the station in accordance with the latest railway standards, the Council was required to enter into an Asset Protection Agreement with Network Rail, to ensure that Network Rail could oversee and approve designs for the station as they were progressed from concept to detailed design, ensuring that the final design was fully signed-off by Network Rail prior to any works being undertaken. The Council was also required to enter into a separate agreement with Network Rail, the NSF2 Asset Purchase Agreement, to cover the additional £2.3m funding and passenger facilities provided for under the New Stations Fund 2 - specifically a station building and longer platforms. The report sought authority for officers to enter into these Agreements with Network Rail.

In addition the report recommended that the Council enter into a Cooperation Agreement with GWR as the current franchise holder on the line, which would help to ensure that the station was developed in accordance with GWR's requirements to

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serve and manage the station facility when it opened. Input from GWR into the design process would help avoid any delays as the designs developed. An indicative programme for delivery of the station by May 2019 had been agreed with the Department for Transport, Network Rail and GWR.

Resolved -

- (1) That scheme and spend approval be given for the Reading Green Park Station scheme;
- (2) That the Head of Transportation & Streetcare, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Head of Finance, be authorised to enter into a Delivery Agreement with Balfour Beatty to undertake the detailed design and build for Green Park Station through the Scape procurement framework;
- (3) That the Head of Transportation & Streetcare, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Head of Finance, be authorised to enter into a contract for the implementation of the station interchange;
- (4) That the Head of Transportation & Streetcare, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Head of Finance, be authorised to enter into an Asset Protection Agreement with Network Rail to progress the scheme and that the Council's named representative within the Agreement be Cris Butler, Head of Transportation & Streetcare;
- (5) That the award of £2.3m from the New Stations Fund 2 (NSF2) for Green Park Station from the Department for Transport be welcomed, and that the Head of Transportation & Streetcare, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Head of Finance, be authorised to enter into the NSF2 Asset Purchase Agreement with Network Rail;
- (6) That the Head of Transportation & Streetcare, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Head of Finance, be authorised to enter into a Cooperation Agreement with Great Western Railway to progress the scheme in partnership with the train operator.

32. CONTRACT AWARD - COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SERVICES (DIAL-A-RIDE)

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking approval for the award of a contract for the provision of Community Transport Services.

The report explained that Council's Community Transport services were currently provided through a variety of arrangements, including existing agreements for Dial-a-ride services, as well as services operated internally by the Council. A procurement process had been undertaken to source a single operator, and the tender received from Readibus had been found to be fully compliant with the Council's requirements. The procurement included the outsourcing of the in-house Adult Social Care Transport Service and its staff, and the Council was currently working with these employees to ensure a smooth transition to the incoming employer.

Resolved -

That a contract be awarded to Readibus Limited for the provision of Community Transport Services for an initial period of 30 months, with the option to extend by a further 36 months, subject to performance.

33. NATIONAL CYCLE NETWORK 422 - PHASE 2

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report outlining progress in delivering Phase 1 of the new National Cycle Network route along the Bath Road between Greenwood Road and Berkeley Avenue, and seeking scheme and spend approval for the improvements developed as part of the Phase 2 programme, from Berkeley Avenue to London Road.

The report explained that the programme for Phase 2 included widened cycle lanes on Berkeley Avenue between Bath Road and Coley Avenue that would be converted to mandatory cycle lanes; entry treatments at junctions including raised tables, imprinting or tighter geometry; improved crossing facilities at Yield Hall Place and London Street, including dedicated cycle facilities; localised footway resurfacing and widening, supported by the installation of shared-use tiles; decluttering and the relocation of street furniture to maximise the effective width of the footway, and directional and regulatory signs including official NCN branding. Detailed designs of the proposals were attached to the report at Appendix 1.

Resolved -

- (1) That the progress in delivering the National Cycle Network (NCN) 422 scheme be noted;**
- (2) That scheme and spend approval be given for Phase 2 of the scheme.**

34. JOINT BERKSHIRE LOCAL HIGHWAY AUTHORITY BRIDGE MAINTENANCE

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CHALLENGE FUND BID 2017

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report setting out for approval a proposed Joint Berkshire Local Authority Bridge Maintenance bid to the Department for Transport's Local Highways Maintenance Challenge Fund. Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was a list of the proposed schemes in Berkshire.

The report noted that Reading had an ageing bridge stock and that this joint bid between the Berkshire local authorities (LAs) would provide much-needed capital funding for some of the backlog of highway structures maintenance. The Reading schemes included in the bid were for bearing replacements on six IDR bridges, one culvert strengthening scheme and three bridge strengthening schemes totalling £3.8M, with a £950k local contribution funded by the Department for Transport LTP Carriageway & Bridges Capital Grant Award. It had been agreed by the Berkshire LAs that they would target a 25% contribution towards each scheme, to provide the best chance of securing funding based on previous awards.

Resolved -

That the Joint Berkshire Local Authority Bridge Maintenance Challenge Fund Bid 2017 be approved.

35. REVALUATION DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS RATES RELIEF SCHEME TO IMPLEMENT NATIONAL BUDGET MEASURES

The Director of Finance and Head of Customer Services submitted a report setting out for approval a proposed local revaluation Discretionary Relief Scheme and a revised version of the Council's existing Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme.

The report gave an update on the Chancellor's Spring Budget 2017 changes in relation to Business Rates Relief, and explained how these would be implemented in the proposed local Discretionary Relief Scheme. The qualifying criteria and exclusions for the scheme were set out in the report, alongside an analysis that showed that there were likely to be around 150 potentially eligible properties. The report also gave information on implementation of the New Business Rate Relief Scheme for Pubs.

Amended versions of Appendix A - Revaluation Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Guidance, and Appendix B - Standard Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Guidance were circulated to the Committee and an additional recommendation, to agree the necessary officer delegation, was tabled at the meeting.

Resolved -

- (1) That the proposed Revaluation Local Discretionary Relief Scheme, as set out in the report and Appendix A (as amended), be approved;**

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- (2) That the proposed changes to the Council's existing Discretionary Relief Scheme, as set out in the report and Appendix B (as amended), be approved;
- (3) That the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Chair of Audit & Governance Committee, be authorised to determine, based on applications received, the level of cap that was affordable within the allocation the Council had received from the Government, as set out in Appendix A to the report.

36. BUDGET MONITORING 2017/18

The Director of Finance submitted a report setting out the projected Council revenue budget outturn position for 2017/18 based on actual, committed and projected expenditure for the Council as at the end of July 2017. The report also included information on the capital programme and the Housing Revenue Account.

The report stated that it was projected that the revenue budget would be overspent by around £1.8m at the year end, and that this amount could be contained within the contingency of £2.3m set aside to manage unexpected pressures and savings shortfalls. However, there were concerns to be noted including the total level of negative variances, the fact that some of the positive variances and mitigations were not ongoing, and that the contingency was already significantly committed at this early stage of the year. Each service area was seeking further proposals for reducing the pressure on the 2017/18 budget through a range of interventions.

Resolved -

That it be noted that, based on the position at the end of July 2017, revenue budget monitoring forecast an overspend of around £1.781m as at the year end.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and closed at 7.48pm).