

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 22 JANUARY 2024

Present: Councillor Terry (Vice-Chair, in the Chair);
Councillors Emberson, Ennis, Gittings, Hoskin, Leng, McEwan,
Robinson, Rowland, Thompson and White

Apologies: Councillors Brock and Mitchell

43. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

44. MINSTER QUARTER CENTRAL – SELECTION OF DEVELOPER

The Committee considered a report setting out the outcome of a procurement exercise and programme of work to select a developer to deliver the Minster Quarter Central regeneration scheme and recommending the appointment of the highest scoring bidder. The following documents were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 – Evaluation Criteria applied to Minster Quarter Best and Final Offers
- Appendix 1a – Quality and Commercial Questionnaire
- Appendix 1b – Pricing Evaluation Summary
- Appendix 2 – High Level Risk Register
- Appendix 3 – Broader Minster Quarter – Key sites
- Appendix 4 – Minster Quarter Board and Governance Framework
- Appendix 5 – Development Site Plan
- Exempt Appendices:
 - Appendix A – Minster Quarter Central Recommendation Report from Eddisons
 - Appendix A1 – Strategic Objectives and Development Principles
 - Appendix A2 – Evaluation Score Card
 - Appendix A3 – Moderation Evaluation Schedule
 - Appendix B – Tender Evaluation Report
 - Appendix C – Minster Quarter Section 123 Report
 - Appendix D – Land and Title Matters at Minster Quarter
 - Appendix E – Land and Title Plan – Unregistered Land
 - Appendix F – Development Agreement and Lease – Summary

The report noted that, at its meeting on 11 July 2022 (Minute 13 refers), the Committee had agreed a strategic vision for Minster Quarter Central, supported by a set of minimum requirements and development principles against which bidders could be assessed and which formed the parameters within which a suitably experienced bidder could work to deliver a mixed-use regeneration scheme.

The report set out the results of final negotiations over summer 2023, which had enabled shortlisted bidders to bring forward their Best and Final Offers. These offers and the associated development schemes had been subject to detailed evaluation and scoring. An

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overview of schemes and their respective evaluations were set out in the Recommendation Report prepared by the Council's Commercial Adviser, Eddisons, which was attached at Exempt Appendix A.

The report recommended appointment of the highest scoring bidder, based on a well-designed scheme that could be further enhanced through collaboration, community engagement and pre-planning application advice. The selection was also based on a commercial offer and land value, which included an assessment for achieving a viable scheme that could secure commercial funding on the open market. It was also proposed to formally designate a nominated 'reserve' bidder, who could provide a substitute should the Development Agreement and Lease not be concluded and signed with the highest scoring bidder within six months of the Committee's decision.

The report summarised the key points of the proposed Development Agreement and Lease and set out issues, including land and title matters, that would need to be addressed in the coming months to secure and facilitate the development pathway once contracts had been exchanged.

Resolved -

- (1) That Appendices A-F, which included exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), be taken into account in consideration of the report and recommendations;**
- (2) That the following be noted:**
 - a) the conducting of the Competitive Procedure with Negotiation procurement process in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015;**
 - b) the outcome of the comprehensive assessment of Best and Final Offers from bidders set out in the restricted Appendix A and summarised in section 4 of the report;**
 - c) the key benefits and outcomes of the highest scoring bidder's scheme, summarised in Exempt Appendix A;**
 - d) the Development Agreement Summary, referred to in section 7 of the report and set out in more detail in Exempt Appendix F;**
 - e) the consultation with Civic Board at key gateways through the procurement process;**
 - f) the governance arrangements in place to guide the delivery of the programme moving forward, as set out in Appendix 4;**

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- g) that the existing open spaces on the site were to be replaced by an enhanced public realm with an offering of arts and culture and that appropriation and disposal would be required;**
- (3) That the former Civic Centre and Civic Car Parks A and B be declared as surplus to requirements;**
- (4) That Bidder B be appointed for the Minster Quarter Regeneration on the basis that they could best deliver against the Council's required key outcomes and that their bid represented best consideration within S123 of the Local Government Act 1972;**
- (5) That Bidder A be recommended as reserve bidder, should the Council be unable to complete the Development Agreement within reasonable timescales with Bidder B, in which circumstance a report would be submitted to the Committee to confirm the appointment;**
- (6) That the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Procurement and Contracts, Assistant Director of Assets and Property Management, Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services, Assistant Director of Culture, Director of Finance, Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Leader, be authorised to:**
- (a) Make required arrangements and complete necessary documentation to notify the award of the contract to Bidder B;**
- (b) Designate Bidder A as recommended reserve;**
- (c) Take any steps to finalise and enter into the Development Agreement, the leases, any ancillary documents, and any required agreements with Bidder B, including but not limited to, negotiation and finalisation of all legal documentation and terms for proceeding; or, required to give effect to the above;**
- (d) Subject to satisfactory conclusion of the Development Agreement and the relevant conditions being satisfied, dispose of land in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972;**
- (e) Make stopping up orders as necessary to support delivery of the Minster Quarter Central programme;**
- (f) Take necessary steps and carry out the required statutory advertisements for appropriation and disposal of the open spaces on the site and consider any objections received on the understanding that a further report would be submitted to the Committee for decision; and**

- (g) Apply for and accept any third-party funding to help support the delivery of Minster Quarter Central subject to the funding conditions being acceptable.**

45. TACKLING INEQUALITY STRATEGY UPDATE

Further to Minute 48 of the meeting held on 23 January 2023 the Committee received a report giving an update on progress of implementing the Tackling Inequality Strategy. Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was a Tackling Inequality Strategy Action Plan Update and at Appendix 2 a map showing Local Community Assets within Whitley & Church Wards.

The report noted that the Tackling Inequality Strategy 2023 – 2026 outlined how the Council could go beyond its existing activities and strategies to achieve a more consistent quality of life for residents in all areas of the Borough. The key focus of the strategy was to support residents to become more resilient, building on a foundation of educational attainment, strong skills and practical knowledge that enabled them to realise their potential through accessing suitable employment opportunities. Within the first year of the new strategy, the Council had worked with Brighter Futures for Children, New Directions College, and the Reading Economic Destination Agency (REDA) to deliver a broad range of activities to support Reading residents with the skills and learning to improve their financial resilience.

The report explained that the Strategy was being delivered through a targeted place-based approach to address the underlying determinants of deprivation within the Borough that adversely affected Education, Skills, and Training. This place-based work had commenced in Church and Whitley wards, identifying a broad range of opportunities to improve residents' individual and collective quality of life. To enable the maximum benefit from the resources committed to the programme it was proposed to request to reprofile the expected spend on the allocated budget, in order to extend the delivery of the pilots into 2025/26 within the existing approved resources.

Resolved –

That the progress in delivering the Tackling Inequality Strategy objectives and the intention to extend the two Place Based pilot projects and request to reprofile the budget as part of year end processes be noted.

46. BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN LTD – APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR

The Committee, acting in its capacity as sole member of Brighter Futures for Children Limited (BFfC), considered a report on the appointment of a Director to the BFfC Board.

The report noted that, at the meeting held on 20 February 2023 (Minute 56 refers), the Council had appointed Mike Graham, Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, as the Council-Nominated Director of BFfC. It had been expected that this arrangement would last until the Council had appointed a new Executive Director of Adult Health and Care Services. Since that time, the Council had restructured and created the Directorate of

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Communities and Adult Social Care. The expanded role and responsibilities of the new Executive Director meant that it was inappropriate to appoint the post holder to the Board of BFfC at this time.

The report explained that the Council had therefore, with the agreement of the BFfC Board, approached the former Executive Director of Adult Health and Care Services, Seona Douglas, to resume her role as the Council-Nominated Director which she had been previously appointed to from 2018-2022. The Committee were asked to approve the appointment and waive the requirement in the Articles of Association that the Council-Nominated Director be an officer of the Council.

The report also set out the current composition of the Board and noted that Calvin Pike would retire as a Non-Executive Director on 25 January 2024.

Resolved –

- (1) That Seona Douglas be appointed as the Council-Nominated Director for Brighter Futures for Children Limited from 1 January 2024 to 1 January 2025;**
- (2) That the Chief Executive be delegated to finalise the terms and conditions of appointment;**
- (3) That the requirement in the Articles of Association that the Council-Nominated Director be an officer of the Council be waived;**
- (4) That the retirement of Calvin Pike as Director be noted.**

47. 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 item 48 below as it was likely that there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

48. HOMES FOR READING

The Committee, acting in its capacity as shareholder of Homes for Reading Limited, received a report seeking approval to consult on the proposed closure of Homes for Reading and for the company's properties to be transferred to the Housing Revenue Account. Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was a review of Homes for Reading carried out by external advisers and at Appendices 2-4 draft correspondence and consultation documents.

The report explained the reasons for the proposed closure and that it would be carried out on a phased basis as existing tenancies concluded, with the properties to be relet at sub-

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market levels. This would allow for the orderly transfer of properties to the Council, repayment of the outstanding debt and a managed winding-up of the Company.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Board and Tenants of Homes for Reading Ltd be consulted on the possible closure of the Company and a transfer of the properties into the Housing Revenue Account;**
- (2) That the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, be authorised to respond to all consultation responses and to finalise the decision on behalf of the Council if there were no significant points raised which did not need, in the view of the Director, to be reported to the Committee for final decision;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to implement the closure of the Company and a transfer of the properties into the Housing Revenue Account if finalised by the Director of Finance (under resolution 2 above).**

(Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3.)

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.15 pm)