

POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD

Virtual meeting held on Wednesday, 14th July, 2021 at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr J.B. Canty (Chairman)
Cllr P.I.C. Crerar (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr P.J. Cullum (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Gaynor Austin
Cllr Jessica Auton
Cllr Sophia Choudhary
Cllr Christine Guinness - as substitute
Cllr Michael Hope
Cllr Prabesh KC
Cllr Mara Makunura
Cllr M.J. Roberts

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Sophie Porter.

8. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th June 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

9. HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - BALANCING THE BUDGET CONSULTATION - UPDATE

The Board welcomed Rachel Barker, Assistant Chief Executive, who was in attendance to report on the Council's interim response to the Hampshire County Council (HCC) consultation on Balancing the Budget.

The proposed response from the Council would include the following:

- The Council supported HCC in making a case to central government for an improved funding settlement
- Support would be given to an increase in commercial activity by the County Council
- Emphasis would be given to the current work being undertaken by the Council on its own savings programme/budget review and note that it would not necessarily be looking to fund or carry out activities previously delivered by HCC
- The suggested approach to rely on other public sector agencies to provide services would be opposed
- Suggest that early engagement should be held with district and borough councils, to ensure local circumstances and differences are understood as part of the process

- Request that a cautious approach be taken where it had been assumed that voluntary and community sector organisations would address needs in the future

The Board was then apprised of the response to service proposals within the consultation, these included:

- Countryside services and outdoor centres – the Council supported exploring further commercialisation of facilities such as Runways End, but would not wish to see costs transferred to other public sector bodies.
- Breaks for carers of disabled children – a reduction in respite care could prove to be a false economy, ultimately putting more pressure on wider related service providers
- Adult social care services – the proposal to stop all grants to voluntary organisations would be opposed by the Council at this time
- Public health – The Council would be responding to the detailed consultation on public health which was also out for consultation
- School crossing patrols – cutting this service could reduce safety and increase car use directly impacting the response to climate change
- Waste – early engagement with district and borough councils would be suggested to understand the impacts of proposed restrictions at Household Waste Recycling Centres
- Transport – it was unclear where these savings could be sought in public transport costs and further information would be required to understand this better.

Ms Barker advised on a question within the consultation regarding “local government reorganisation”, and it was noted that the Council, in line with HCC, were not in favour of such a change and were supportive of the current two tier arrangements. The Council would welcome further discussions with HCC to reduce duplication of costs and services, increase devolved decision making and funding, and pursue further enhanced and joint working opportunities. Any reviews of local government should, ideally, wait until the Levelling Up White Paper was released, and any proposals should be developed in partnership between all layers of local government to ensure the best outcomes for residents were achieved.

The Board discussed the presentation and in particular, capacity building within the voluntary sector and school crossing patrols being essential in most areas to ensure safety and encourage independence within young people. Increasing commercialisation was also discussed and where this could be implemented.

It was noted that Informal Cabinet would review the response at its meeting on 15th July, therefore, should Members have any further comments these should be shared with Ms Barker before the meeting. The response would then be finalised and submitted by the 18th July, 2021 deadline.

10. **ALDERSHOT TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY**

The Board welcomed Tim Mills, Head of Economy, Planning and Strategic Housing who was in attendance to give a presentation on the draft Interim Aldershot Town

Centre Strategy. The context to the strategy had come from various sources, these included the Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus SPD - adopted in 2016, the community consultation ran by the Aldershot Civic Society in 2020, the High Streets Task Force's reports and support and the Transition and Recovery Plan. The impacts of the pandemic and the acceleration in the demise of the high street had also had an influence.

The Interim Strategy had provided a platform to update the vision for Aldershot and thought more about communicating and developing the idea of what the town could be moving forward. Themes had been updated, based on what had been achieved since 2016 when the Aldershot Town Centre Prospectus SPD was adopted and what still needed to be achieved.

The vision for the town was proposed as a place where people felt at home and had made their homes. A town where people felt welcome and where families wanted to be. A thriving town centre that provided a range of services that were accessible to all and offered an experience to all demographics from the local community and visitors. A mix of independent and high street shops would provide employment opportunities and space to start new businesses and the Victorian and military heritage and diverse community within Aldershot, would be celebrated, maintained and developed.

Through work with the Aldershot Task Force, High Street Task Force, developers, property owners and the Civic Society, engagement with the community would be undertaken on the vision to develop a shared communications plan and ongoing campaign to tell the story of the "new Aldershot".

The Board noted what was still to be done since the SPD had been adopted in 2016. It was advised that the SPD had been separated into themes, which had items outstanding, these included:

- Theme 1- Revitalised and Diverse Town Centre Offer
 - Ensuring the correct mix of commercial floor space usage
 - Masterplanning forward thinking for other areas in the town such as Windsor Way
- Theme 2 – Town Centre Living
 - Masterplanning for Princes Hall/Police Station – mixed use
 - Opportunities for quality residential conversions
- Theme 3 - Accessible and Connected Town Centre with an Improved Public Realm
 - Connectivity study to assess accessibility/parking study
 - Public Realm – “Spaces make Places” - ensuring spaces/areas are right for the town and its residents
- Theme 4 – An Improved Cultural Offer
 - Development of the Cultural Strategy
 - Re-introduction of events programme

- Theme 5 – Affirming the Town’s Heritage
 - Implementation of heritage trials
 - Shopfront improvements to emphasise Victorian heritage

The Board noted the next steps which would be followed by engagement with Informal Cabinet and public consultation around community and public realm. The Board were asked to consider the themes and to do lists and how these fitted into the Council’s priorities.

The Board discussed the presentation and the proposed Strategy and identified a number of areas that it was felt were important and should be incorporated, these included:

- Build on the strengths of the leisure offer – identify where there were gaps locally and consider opportunities in particular at the Princes Hall
- Consideration be given to how the towns diverse culture could be promoted moving forward, not just it’s heritage
- How housing developments could improve equity in jobs, income and health
- Implementation of the Strategy and mitigation of risk
- No obvious link to the Climate Change Strategy – should be at the heart of the document
- Provision of lighting – consideration to light pollution and safety/perception of safety
- Improved connectivity with the Wellesley development
- Connectivity and redevelopment of the railway station

The points raised would be considered and where appropriate, built into the Strategy as it developed. In response to a query, it was noted that the consultation period would expect to run in the autumn.

The Board **ENDORSED** the proposed Strategy and thanked Mr. Mills for his presentation.

11. **SOUTHWOOD COUNTRY PARK INTERIM MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Board welcomed Anna Lucas, Principal Planning Officer who was in attendance to present on the Southwood Country Park Interim Management Plan.

It was advised that the site was designated a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), the purpose of which was to divert people away from visiting Special Protection Areas (SPA). The site should consist of a number of criteria which could include, open areas and areas of dense scattered trees and shrubs, open water, circular walks, signposting and site information.

It was noted that the site had been developed from its original use as a golf course during phase 1 and temporary management of the site had been undertaken by the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership (BVCP). Phase 2 proposed to secure the full potential of the site, which could be achieved through a soft marketing testing

exercise and arrangements put in place for the longer-term management of the site. Once this was in place a ten year plan would be prepared.

The Interim Management Plan 2021-23 covered phase 2 of the work, management of the habitat complex and enhancements to attract different wildlife not already located on the site, maintenance and monitoring and a schedule of work. Progress on phase 2 was noted, this included work on the Southwood and Cove Brook Floodplain Improvement Project, options and designs for the proposed visitor centre and café and a pedestrian crossing which was currently subject to some technical work and confirmation from HCC regarding requirements.

The Board was apprised of the details of the habitat management plan. This included mowing regimes, creation of a wetland habitat, thinning of the canopy over the waterways, planting of copses and re-establishing historic hedgerows, health and safety work on trees and extensive restoration works on the river, stream and ditch network.

The native species found on the site were outlined, including bats, badgers, reptiles, 36 species of bird, amphibians and invertebrates. A number of invasive non-indigenous species were also present on the site and these would be dealt with appropriately.

Access and Infrastructure to the site was a key part of the Plan. Provision included parking facilities, clear signage, all weather paths, fencing and gates, picnic benches and seating, installation of a trim trail/nature trail and deconstruction of the golf course infrastructure.

The Board was advised of the timeline for the Management Plan. It was proposed that consultation on the Interim Plan would be undertaken in September, 2021, with a view to appoint a permanent SANG operator in April 2022. The ten year plan would then be developed in conjunction with the successful party.

The Board discussed the Interim Plan and raised a number of points, including:

- The Café/Visitors Centre – It was advised that this would not be included in the Plan but would be developed in parallel to it. The café would be operated on a lease basis and consideration would be given to similar offers in the local area to ensure best practice. It was felt important to make the most from the facility and offer multiple uses and ensure best value for money. Access for volunteers would also need to be considered.
- Funding – it was noted that developers' contributions would make up some of the funding to run the site but other funding would be sought and the Environment Agency had provided £45,000 towards some of the proposed developments.
- Pedestrian Crossing – it was noted that the crossing would be signal operated.

- Wheelchair access – the need to ensure access for all would be reflected in the Plan.
- Connectivity – It was noted that work was underway to connect the Southwood Country Park and Southwood Woodland. However, connectivity with sites further afield would be dealt with through the forthcoming Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan and the Green Infrastructure Strategy which were in their development stages.

The Board **ENDORSED** the Southwood Country Park Interim Management Plan and thanked Ms Lucas for her presentation. It was also noted that, should Members have any further comments or questions relating to the Plan, these should be referred to Ms Lucas or Mr. Mills.

12. **WORK PLAN**

The Board **NOTED** the current Work Plan and were advised of an in person workshop that would be taking place on September 9th, 2021, on the civic element of the Farnborough Civic Hub development.

The meeting closed at 9.21 pm.

CLLR J.B. CANTY (CHAIRMAN)
