

CABINET

Meeting held on Tuesday, 14th March, 2023 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr D.E. Clifford, Leader of the Council
Cllr M.L. Sheehan, Deputy Leader and Operational Services Portfolio Holder
Cllr M.J. Tennant, Deputy Leader and Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder

Cllr J.B. Canty, Customer Experience, Digital and Transformation Portfolio Holder
Cllr Sue Carter, Democracy, Strategy and Partnerships Portfolio Holder
Cllr A.R. Newell, Planning and Economy Portfolio Holder
Cllr P.G. Taylor, Corporate Services Portfolio Holder

The Cabinet considered the following matters at the above-mentioned meeting. All executive decisions of the Cabinet shall become effective, subject to the call-in procedure, from **27th March, 2023**.

55. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –**

Having regard to the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors, no declarations of interest were made.

56. **MINUTES –**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 7th February, 2023 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

57. **BUSINESS RATES - RETAIL DISCOUNT AND HOSPITALITY AND LEISURE RELIEF SCHEME –**

(Cllr Paul Taylor, Corporate Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN2306, which set out a proposed local policy to enable the Council to award retail, hospitality and leisure relief from business rates to local businesses.

Members were informed that the scheme had been prepared following the Chancellor of the Exchequer's 2022 Autumn Statement and would take effect from 1st April, 2023. The scheme would provide 75% relief in respect of eligible properties, up to a limit of £110,000 per business.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the establishment of a local Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief Scheme, as set out in Report No. FIN2306, be approved.

58. **BUSINESS RATES - SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESS RATES RELIEF SCHEME–**

(Cllr Paul Taylor, Corporate Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN2307, which set out a proposed local policy to enable the Council to award supporting small business rates relief to local businesses.

Members were informed that the policy would determine the level of discretionary relief to be awarded in respect of Supporting Small Business Rates Relief for the period from 1st April, 2023 to 31st March, 2026. The scheme would ensure that, in respect of eligible properties, any increase in respect of business rates bills would be limited to a cash value of £600 per year.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the establishment of a local Supporting Small Business Rates Relief Scheme, as set out in Report No. FIN2307, be approved.

59. **ENERGY BILLS SUPPORT SCHEME ALTERNATIVE FUNDING POLICY –**

(Cllr Paul Taylor, Corporate Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN2308, which set out a proposed local policy to deliver the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding.

Members were informed that the policy would enable the Council to provide financial support to households in the Borough that were not eligible for previous funding from electricity suppliers. It was reported that the Council had been carrying out some work to identify those that paid for their energy other than directly to the energy suppliers. These included those paying through a commercial landlord, some park home residents and some housing association tenants.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the establishment of a local Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding Policy, as set out in Report No. FIN2308, be approved.

60. **PROPERTY ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY –**

(Cllr Martin Tennant, Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. PG2310, which sought approval of the overarching principles and key objectives set out in the Council's Asset Management Plan document.

Members were informed that the core principle was that all Council-owned property assets needed to be maintained at nil cost to the Council on a revenue basis, with specific exceptions where the benefit to the Council or community could be demonstrated in different ways. The Report set out the key objectives in delivering the core principle and also detailed the work that had been carried out in updating the Council's existing Asset Management Plan.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the Asset Management Plan and, in particular, the three key principle objectives that would enable the Council to govern the approach to how individual assets would be managed, as set out in Report No. PG2310, be approved; and
- (ii) the following policy changes be approved:
 - garden land to be disposed of based on a valuation rather than a standard charge of £6 per sqm, with valuation and legal costs being met by the purchaser, as set out in paragraph 3.8.a of the Report;
 - a revised approach to rent relief given to community, sporting and charitable organisations, as set out in paragraph 3.8.b of the Report;
 - a revised process and charge for licences that would provide residents with permitted access rights across Council-owned land for domestic purposes, such as access to and from their garden, as set out in paragraph 3.8.c of the Report; and
 - a change in approach to new/renewal leases for Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) assets, such that the agreed rent ensures that the Council at least breaks even to cover costs, as set out in paragraph 3.8.d of the Report.

61. **FARNBOROUGH LEISURE AND CULTURAL HUB – NEXT STEPS –**
(Cllr Martin Tennant, Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. REG2303, which set out the work undertaken since the Council received notification that its bid for funding to support the delivery of a Leisure and Cultural had been successful.

The Cabinet was reminded that the demolition of the previous leisure centre had commenced in 2021 and that various options had been evaluated in relation to what combination of uses might be appropriate for the replacement facility. The Council had made a bid for £20 million of funding towards a facility that would deliver co-located leisure, library and cultural uses. The Report set out the next steps to be taken to enable acceptance of the grant funding. Also set out were the steps to be carried out to finalise the brief and design work, along with the funding required from the approved Capital Programme.

The Cabinet expressed strong support for the progression of the project to provide residents with new, modern facilities on the site.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the work undertaken to progress the development of the Leisure and Cultural Hub project, as set out in Report No. REG2303, be noted;
- (ii) the scoping of the project to include a mobility hub, skatepark and play area, in line with the approved Civic Quarter Masterplan, as set out in the Report, be noted;

- (iii) officers be authorised to enter into the necessary Memorandum of Understanding and any other grant funding agreement associated with the Levelling Up Fund;
- (iv) the allocation of up to £900,000 of funding to enable the project to proceed to the end of RIBA Stage 2 and to commence work on RIBA Stage 3, subject to outputs from RIBA 2, as set out in the Report, be approved; and
- (v) a new revenue budget of £65,000 in 2023/24, to enable the leisure operator procurement to commence, as set out in the Report, be approved.

62. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC –

RESOLVED: That, taking into account the public interest test, the public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the under mentioned items to avoid the disclosure of exempt information within the paragraph of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 indicated against the items:

Minute Nos.	Schedule 12A Para. No.	Category
63 and 64	3	Information relating to financial or business affairs

**THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WERE CONSIDERED
IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC**

63. UNION YARD, ALDERSHOT - IDENTIFICATION OF PREFERRED AFFORDABLE HOUSING PURCHASER –
(Cllr Martin Tennant, Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Exempt Report No. REG2304, which set out a proposal to dispose of a leasehold interest for the affordable housing units contained within the Union Yard scheme, subject to the finalisation of terms.

Members were reminded that the agreed scheme had comprised 100 residential units, of which eighteen had been identified as affordable units. The Council had sought Expressions of Interest in respect of the leasehold interest in the affordable housing from sixteen Registered Providers. The Exempt Report set out the details of the offers received and the process carried out in respect of the valuation of the properties concerned.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the disposal of a leasehold interest in the affordable housing element of the Union Yard development to the Registered Provider named in Exempt Report No. REG2304, at the conditional value set out in paragraph 3.5 of the Report, be approved; and
- (ii) the proceeding with a deed of variation to the S106 Agreement that would

seek to vary the affordable housing provision on site from twenty to eighteen units be approved, subject to an off-site financial contribution in lieu of the two units, whilst also agreeing a change in the unit mix to reflect a 100% Affordable Rented offer.

64. **DISPOSAL OF DEVEREUX HOUSE, NO. 69 ALBERT ROAD, FARNBOROUGH –**
(Cllr Martin Tennant, Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Exempt Report No. PG2308, which sought approval to grant an option for a new long ground lease of Devereux House, Albert Road, Farnborough, to facilitate its redevelopment.

Members were informed that options for the future use of the site had been considered since the property had been handed back to the Council in January, 2021. The Council had negotiated successfully with prospective bidders, obtaining concessions particularly around the careful treatment of the historic value of the site as a memorial. It was reported that the War Memorial Plaque had been temporarily relocated to Knellwood for the duration of the redevelopment work at Devereux House. A letter had been sent to members of the Cabinet regarding the potential for this arrangement to remain in place for the longer term. The matter was discussed at the meeting and Members agreed that this should be dealt with as set out in the Report.

The Cabinet expressed support for the proposed approach as the best solution for this important, locally listed building.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the disposal of Devereux House, by the granting of a development option with a new 199-year headlease for the sum set out in Exempt Report No. PG2308, subject to all necessary due diligence, be approved; and
- (ii) the allocation of a budget of up to the sum stated in the Exempt Report, to be funded from an option payment to facilitate the documentation of the agreement, along with the resolution of rights over the site and potentially small areas of freehold transfers, be approved.

The Meeting closed at 7.40 pm.

CLLR D.E. CLIFFORD, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
