

POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD

Minutes of the Remote Meeting held on Wednesday, 7th October, 2020 at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

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

Cllr Sophia Choudhary
Cllr P.J. Cullum
Cllr Nadia Martin
Cllr T.W. Mitchell
Cllr Sophie Porter
Cllr M.J. Roberts
Cllr B.A. Thomas

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Prabesh KC.

17. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 25th August, 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

The Chairman provided an update on the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review Challenge that had been recommended at the meeting. Following discussions with the Chief Executive, a way forward had been scoped, as follows:

- The use of the equality framework for local government – focussing on elements most relevant to the motion and scope agreed in August, 2020 by the Board
- A draft scope to be shared with the Board before agreement with LGA
- The Council's new Assistant Chief Executive, Rachel Barker, to be the main point of contact with the LGA
- The review to include interviews with community groups and interested parties - work with the LGA to explore engagement options/how this work would be carried out
- Once the scope was agreed, the Peer Review would be undertaken with the aim to be completed by December 2020/Januray 2021
- The Board's recommendations following the Peer Review to be presented to the Cabinet before the end of the 2020/21 Municipal Year

It was proposed that the Board move forward on this basis to scope out the finer detail of the Review.

18. **TRANSITION AND RECOVERY PLAN ALDERSHOT**

The Board welcomed Tim Mills, Head of Economy, Planning and Strategic Housing, who reported on the Transition and Recovery Plan for Aldershot.

The Board noted that the Council's approach to Aldershot had been split into two elements:

- Support for the town to transition during the re-development works (Transition Plan)
- Longer-term strategy

However, since the Transition Plan had last been presented to the Board, COVID-19 had emerged and the Institute of Place Management, who delivered the High Street Task Force, had developed a Post COVID-19 Framework for Recovery which had four stages; crisis, pre-recovery, recovery and transformation. The Council was currently in the recovery stage.

The framework had four elements; managing social distancing and cleaning, gathering data and managing footfall, telling the story and showing kindness and reacting quickly. The Board noted that under the main framework there had been seven priorities identified by the Council:

1. Managing safety, distancing and cleaning – measures taken included zoning, signage, marshals, hotspot areas and use of planters to create flexible safe spaces/pop up performance spaces. Issues around anti-social behaviour in Aldershot were reported on and it was noted that work had been stepped up, in conjunction with the Police, to help tackle the problem.
2. Gathering data and monitoring footfall – the key aim was to collate good data through tracking businesses and monitoring footfall. A new automatic footfall tracking system was hoped to be in place by March, 2021.
3. Telling the story and communication – A new communications officer would be in post from November, 2020 to work specifically on the promotion of the town centre. Engagement with key stakeholders/businesses would continue through fortnightly newsletters.
4. Encouraging town centre use – work had been carried out on the adaptation of events and on information on using public spaces i.e. parks and accessibility.
5. Supporting businesses – a number of initiatives were in place including support and advice from the environmental health teams, business rate grants until 31st March, 2021, business support provider schemes, in particular a Building Business Resilience package, digital training and advice.
6. Attracting and monitoring external funding – it was noted that £82,000 had been received from the “Re-opening High Streets Safely Fund” and exploration of further funding options, with the Local Enterprise Partnership

(LEP), Hampshire County Council (HCC) and Department for Transport (DfT) was underway.

7. Engaging with the High Street Task Force – virtual guidance and webinars had replaced the original process at the peak of the pandemic. However, it was advised that resumption of the original processes was imminent.

In response to a query, it was noted that the Princes Hall was currently being used by local community groups in a socially distanced environment, but all large scale performances had been cancelled. It was noted that an update was expected from the central Government in November, 2020. In respect of digital performances, options were being explored, although as most shows were provided commercially, ultimately the decision would lie with the provider.

In response to a comment on the digital games hub, it was advised that the building would be ready to occupy imminently. However, some legalities had been delayed by COVID-19 and these were currently being finalised to enable the first occupier, Rocket Desk, to move in. The first floor of the building had faced some issues but procurement options were being considered for leasing the space.

Following discussions on the planters creating space for pop up performances, it was advised that the procurement of the planters had considered the risk of antisocial behavior and would not be easily moved by individuals. Consideration would also be given to locating some in the Westgate area to support the existing businesses with the temporary closure of Cineworld.

A request was made for some pre-COVID-19 comparable data on footfall figures and this would be provided to the Board.

The presentation was **NOTED**.

19. **DEPRIVATION AND SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES**

Andrew Colver, Head of Democracy and Community, and Emma Lamb, Community and Partnerships Manager, attended the meeting to give a presentation on the current position on the development of the Deprivation/Supporting Communities Strategy and Action Plan. The presentation covered the background and context, data and evidence, impacts from COVID-19 and the emerging priorities and proposals.

Mr. Colver talked through the data and evidence available to the Council, which would help inform any future work. It was noted that the Council were working with partners, such as the Clinical Commissioning Group, and gathering information from various sources including, Frimley Integrated Care Services and Public Health England to build a robust evidence base.

The Board was advised of an initial project that would be targeted in the Aldershot Park ward. The area had been considered one of the most deprived areas in the Borough and a range of issues were present, including income deprivation, poor

education and skills and health inequalities. A number of proposals had been outlined for the project, these included:

- Developing local health and physical activity opportunities and increased social interaction
- Activities to reduce social isolation and improve mental health
- Utilisation of local sporting facilities and green spaces for local residents
- Promotion of healthy lifestyles – by improving awareness of the benefits of an active lifestyle, and improving access to activities in the area
- Identifying and enabling longer term community projects – such as community gardens

It was advised that other projects would be run in other areas across the Borough where similar issues were present.

In response to a query, it was noted that data from the healthy weights audit had been used and this had been supplemented by data from the CCG for the whole Borough. Other areas had also been identified which could be picked up as Borough wide issues, including mental health, smoking and cardio vascular disease. Information was also requested on comparators between hospital admissions relating to injury from violence and crime data, this would be looked into and reported back separately.

The Board discussed the local response figures to COVID-19 and it was advised that demand was currently very low. The situation would continue to be monitored closely as the situation would evolve with the ending of the furlough scheme and a potential rise in cases.

A discussion was held regarding foodbanks and it was noted that a number of different models were being looked at for food provision, including the Trussell Trust. It was important to find the right model for Rushmoor and a report would be prepared for the Board once the review had been completed.

The Board **ENDORSED** the work and **NOTED** that the Strategy and Action Plan would be drafted by November 2020.

It was advised that the meeting would be followed by a workshop for Members of the Board to discuss in further detail the main themes to be covered in the work, wards or parts of wards where the work could be undertaken and actions to be taken that would make an immediate difference to people's lives.

20. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Board **NOTED** the current Work Programme.

The updates on the Rowhill and Southwood Management Plans, Farnborough Civic Centre, the End Violence at Work Charter and the Homelessness strategies were **NOTED**.

The meeting closed at 8.48 pm.

CLLR J.B. CANTY (CHAIRMAN)

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Remote meeting held on Thursday, 22nd October, 2020 at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr M.D. Smith (Chairman)
Cllr Veronica Graham-Green (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Gaynor Austin
Cllr T.D. Bridgeman
Cllr Sue Carter
Cllr R.M. Cooper
Cllr Christine Guinness
Cllr L. Jeffers
Cllr Mara Makunura
Cllr S.J. Masterson

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Mrs. D.B. Bedford

21. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd September, 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

22. WORK PLAN

The current work plan was agreed. Updates were given on the Highways Task and Finish Group and the car boots and markets workshop, which were both held in August, 2020.

- **Highways Task and Finish Group** – the Group had agreed to meet with the Local Area Highways Manager, unfortunately this had been delayed and a date would be circulated as soon as possible.
- **Car Boot and Markets Workshop** – since the meeting it was reported that Officers had been working with the Operational Services Portfolio Holder to seek a new approach to the provision of car boots and markets in the town centres.

In response to a query on the Educational Improvement Task and Finish Group, it was noted that discussions were continuing with Hampshire County Council. Understandably, the current focus was on getting the schools back to normal after the lockdown closures but it was intended to invite the County Executive Member for Education and Skills to a meeting of the Task and Finish Group in the New Year.

23. 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 undermentioned 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
24	3	Information relating to financial or business affairs

24. COMMERCIAL PROPERTY INVESTMENT

The Committee welcomed Paul Brooks, Executive Head of Regeneration and Property, Helen Bristow, Property and Estates Manager and Chris Hornung, Managing Director Lambert Smith Hampton Investment Management (LSHIM), who attended the meeting to give a presentation on the Council's commercial property investment portfolio. The presentation covered the management arrangements, the quarterly performance report and the impacts of COVID-19.

Ms. Bristow, gave an overview of the management arrangements. It was noted that between 2016 - 2018 the Council's property investment portfolio had increased in value to £105 million and it had been decided that more expertise was required to help manage the existing portfolio and develop it further. In November, 2019, LSHIM had signed a three year contract with the Council to manage the portfolio. It was advised that LSHIM worked closely with the Council's Estates Team and the Property Investment Advisory Group (PIAG) to manage two portfolios, the "Investment Portfolio", including all new acquisitions and the "Legacy Portfolio" which included properties which had been owned by the Council for some time and had an amalgamated annual income of around £40,000.

It was noted that monthly meetings were held with LSHIM to discuss asset management, the action plan, individual cases/events and managing agent updates and monitoring. Quarterly reports were also provided to the PIAG, which covered rental data, portfolio data updates and market and sector advice. This way of working encouraged collaboration, with mutually agreed objectives and understanding of the Council's requirements that worked well for both parties. The benefits of working with LSHIM were considered to include:

- A market wide and cross sector analysis of the existing portfolio
- A sifting process of opportunities and recommendations for future investment purchases
- A review process of the existing portfolio with options for change/disposal
- Access to specialists and a sounding board on specific projects
- Advice on regeneration projects, particularly the Civic Hub development

The Committee was advised of the working arrangements and purpose of the PIAG. The purpose of the non-decision making group was to review any potential opportunities for acquisitions, raise any queries or concerns and discuss the merits of proposals before the opportunity was submitted to the Cabinet for agreement and any offers were made. In addition, the PIAG also reviewed the running of the portfolio and could make recommendations as part of that review process. It also reviewed the risk and use of the property reserve held by the Council and acted as a consultee on acquisitions and disposals.

Mr. Brooks then gave an overview of the Council's Property Investment Strategy, the key objectives of which were:

- A low risk profile
- A £170 million proportionate level of investment
- An ensured net income of 0.8% (after borrowing)
- A balanced investment portfolio across different property types

Mr. Hornung, then gave an overview of the quarterly report, this included an executive summary which detailed key areas, including:

- Sector portfolio split, maximum limits had been set at – retail 25%, office space 35%, industrial 35% and alternative (living sector) 15%
- Acquisition and disposal information – none in the current quarter
- Asset management arrangements by property
- Performance and objectives
- Financial summary by property

In response to a query regarding future procurement, Mr. Hornung advised on the importance of ensuring the balance of the portfolio matched the limits set. Currently the portfolio was over weighted in retail, so future opportunities would be focused on industrial/office spaces which were currently performing well. Should there be any doubt over the viability of an opportunity the team would look elsewhere.

Measures for dealing with tenants/businesses struggling due to the COVID-19 pandemic were discussed. It was noted that the situation would be monitored closely with the management agents and options considered to fill the space should the property become empty. Should a property need to be disposed of, it was noted that all opportunities would be maximised to gain the best deal available.

The Committee discussed the financial aspects of the portfolio and understood that it was important to have a realistic budget to continue growing the portfolio without overspending. Commercial property investment had been part of the Council's wider savings programme by securing significant income and it was imperative that it was a balanced and proportionate part of it.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Hornung, Mr. Brooks and Ms. Bristow for their presentation.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm.

CLLR M.D. SMITH (CHAIRMAN)
