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BUSINESS AND HOUSING POLICY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 22 June 2021

Attendance:

Councillors

Weir (Chairperson)

Bronk
Fern
Isaacs

Lumby
Radcliffe
Scott

[Full audio recording and video recording](#)

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Craske

1. **APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS**

Apologies for the meeting were noted as above.

2. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Lumby declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect of agenda items which may have a Hampshire County Council involvement due to his role as a County Councillor.

Councillor Tod also made a personal statement that he was a County Councillor but he was not a voting member of the Committee and attended the meeting in his role as Cabinet Member.

Councillor Scott declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of agenda item 9 - HRA Welfare Fund and Preventing Homelessness Grant Spending Plan(s) BHP019, due to his being a Council tenant. However, as there was no material conflict of interest, he remained in the room and spoke under the dispensation granted on behalf of the Monitoring Officer to participate in all matters related to the Housing Revenue Account.

3. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRPERSON FOR THE 2021/22 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Fern be appointed Vice Chairperson for the 2021/22 Municipal Year.

4. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 9 FEBRUARY 2021**

The Chairperson reported that updates had been circulated to members of the committee on the distribution of grants under the COVID-19 scheme and the membership of partnership groups in the City which were referred to in the Minutes of the previous meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 February 2021 be approved and adopted.

5. **TO NOTE THE DATE AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THIS COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED:

That the dates and times of future meetings of the committee be noted.

6. **TO NOTE THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2021/22**

RESOLVED:

That subject to a revised and updated report on the Green Economic Development Strategy being brought to the September 2021 meeting and preliminary papers on the New Homes Plan and the Housing Strategy also being brought to the September 2021 meeting in advance of their further consideration at the meeting in March 2022 meeting, the Work Programme for 2021/22 be noted.

7. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting TACT representative Mr D Light.

The Chairperson informed the meeting that as part of the Housing for Younger People Task and Finish Group there would be an online Next Generation event to be held on 14 July 2021.

8. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No members of the public were present to make representations.

9. **HRA WELFARE FUND AND PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS GRANT SPENDING PLAN(S) BHP019**

The Corporate Head of Housing introduced the Report.

In reply to a question from David Light TACT, Corporate Head of Housing gave details of the funding and staffing requirements to make extra provision for tenants with mental health needs.

The Committee were supportive of there being flexibility in transferring funding between the various initiatives proposed in the report to provide the most effective response to housing needs, including the use of reserves if required. For example, it was noted that the Welfare Fund was targeted at Council tenants but it could be used to assist other individuals in need if required. The Strategic Director replied that such options were most probably covered by existing financial procedure rules and would be taken into consideration when taking the final report to Cabinet.

The Chairperson made reference to the work being undertaken on a Digital economy for Winchester and the measures of support that was given to tenants when venturing into new digital areas and whether the impact was measured and lessons learned. The Strategic Director explained that assistance was provided to individuals by the Tenancy Support Team.

The Chairperson concluded that an item be included in the 2022/23 Work Programme for an interim report to be received on the progress of the two year programme.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed spending plans of the HRA Welfare fund and the Homelessness Prevention Grant be supported.

10. **GREEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY BHP017**

The Service Lead – Economy and Tourism and Graham Fowler, David Marlow and Sam Nair from Urban Foresight, the Council's consultants, gave a presentation entitled the Winchester Green Economic Strategy – Emerging Vision.

Members asked questions and raised various comments which were addressed by the relevant officers.

Questions included how transient groups such as students were engaged with to form the strategy and how those living in the most deprived areas of the district would not be further disadvantaged in the transition to zero carbon, for example in having homes that were energy efficient to solve fuel poverty.

In reply to questions on 20 Minute Communities and how transportation issues could be addressed, Mr Marlow stated that tackling inward and outward commuting, providing home working or serviced working and also live/work

space were important factors. Also, the strategy was required to work across boundaries as infrastructure such as roads and water straddled boundaries.

In respect of references in the presentation to ambition and decision making, Mr Fowler stated that the Council also had a position of leadership and could make a statement to influence others, for example in being a signpost for investors, in setting the direction for travel for changes at Whiteley, and for office schemes such as Station Approach.

It was also stated by Committee members that the strategy should be for the whole district rather than Winchester town and should include the markets towns, including for example in providing faster broadband to the new Sun Lane development in Alresford. Mr Fowler explained that there were many projects that were ongoing in the district and that the strategy would recognise this.

In summary, Councillor Tod welcomed the comments from the Committee and the good practice examples of implementation that were expressed which would be taken forward.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted and the points raised by the Committee be taken into consideration in the strategy.

11. HIGH STREET PRIORITY PLAN BHP018

The Corporate Head of Economy and Community gave a presentation on the Winchester District High Street Priority Plan by way of introduction to the Report.

Members were supportive of initiatives to generate activity and events to bring people back into the office and to fill empty shops. Specific reference was made to the former Debenhams building in the High Street, Winchester. Options for its future use were discussed including the possibilities of an indoor food market for local producers and a festival space.

The Corporate Head of Economy and Community added that the Economic Development Team were working closely with the Estates Team at the Council to engage with the landlord on the former Debenhams site's future use. In addition, the future of markets generally was under review as part of the Covid and High Street recovery.

In conclusion, it was agreed that the Winchester Town Forum informal group that was considering the High Street should also be asked to also consider the role of markets as a task and finish project and the former Debenhams store could be part of this work.

Members also discussed the role of advertising and branding in promoting the districts' high streets, observing that Whiteley shopping centre had regional television advertisements and that online advertising such as Google had potential. Officers explained that the Council had a Campaigns and Promotions Plan and the outline detail of this was shared with the Committee.

During debate, the Committee were agreed that the Priority Plan should include rural towns and the wider district rather than focus on Winchester High Street. While it was acknowledged that this work was already being undertaken, it needed to be better reflected in the Plan.

The Chairperson and Councillor Tod thanked the Committee for their contributions and all involved for their hard work in this area.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and that the Chairperson and Councillor Tod discuss with officers and the Chair of the Winchester Town Forum the proposal that the Winchester Town Forum informal group considering the High Street should also be asked to also consider the role of the markets as a task and finish project including the contribution the former Debenhams store might make.

12. UPDATE ON A DIGITAL WINCHESTER

The Service Lead – Economy and Tourism reported that in response to the call for evidence, which was advertised on the Council's web pages and through press releases encouraging written submissions, 120 replies had been received. It was now intended to hold a virtual debate in early September 2021 and to report back preliminary findings to the September meeting of the Policy Committee

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 9.15 pm

Chairperson

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