

CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE & CITY DEVELOPMENT

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Culture & City Development held on Friday, 31 January 2020 at 9.00 am at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Steve Pitt (in the Chair)

Councillors Stephen Morgan
Linda Symes
Claire Udy

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

3. Guildhall Trust Capital Release

The report was introduced by Josie Dalling, Business Support Manager. Councillor Pitt added the reason for making the amendments was that the Guildhall Trust have made significant investments to the building and in discussion with the chief financial officer it was decided it was appropriate to release this money for them to expand their business.

Councillor Symes said she had no issue with releasing the money but raised concerns that in the budget papers released today there is a £1.7 million loan and there are no significant reserves in place for the Guildhall Trust and she was concerned how this would be paid back. The lack interest from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council in giving any significant money to this venue also made her concerned about the level of borrowing.

Councillor Pitt said that there is £400,000 a year invested into the building for repairs and renewals and there is significant work that needs to take place for the electrical rewiring of the building and there is money reserved for that. The money leftover will pay for replacing air conditioning in the main auditorium. Officers had identified going forward they may not need such a large sum of money. The £1.7 million identified in the budget papers is a capitalisation of some of the revenue so it would not be for the Trust to repay this. The council will not be loaning money to an organisation that does not have significant reserves.

DECISIONS:

The Cabinet Member for Culture & City Development agreed:

- (1) That the current obligation for the Guildhall Trust to secure match funding against the capital grant of £285,000 be removed.**
- (2) That a capital allocation of £207,400 be released from this capital grant already approved for the Guildhall Trust to invest in the capital items listed in this report.**

4. Hotwalls Studios Business Plan

The report was introduced by Josie Dalling, Business Development Manager.

In response to a question from Councillor Morgan she explained that officers were still working on the business model and a report would be considered at the next Culture & City Development Cabinet in March. This is a very unique site that lends itself to strong start-ups and it was important to get the model right and if it does not work this will be re-evaluated. In terms of tourism officers needed to look at the key principle of the site and had plans to meet with Tourism South East.

Councillor Symes said that the turnover of artists concerned her and there were very successful artists still inhabiting the space which meant new creative businesses cannot move in. In terms of tourism, she suggested that perhaps a trail be created to the Hotwalls from the Dockyard to enable visitors to find the studios. She said this was a wonderful opportunity but the council needed to be careful it does not stagnate. Councillor Pitt replied that he took on board the concerns about the turnover and said the priority was to identify additional creative spaces in the city and not just relying on the Hotwalls.

DECISIONS:

The Cabinet Member for Culture & City Development:

- (1) Noted the work and activities of the Hotwalls Studios developed over the previous 3 years.**
- (2) Agreed to bring a revised 6 year business plan model to the March 2020 portfolio meeting**

5. Library Free Fines and Overdues

The report was introduced by Clare Forsyth, Service Development Manager.

The Cabinet Member and opposition spokespeople were very supportive of no library fines and continuing to offer free reservations. It was noted that more books are now being returned to the library service because of this and this was making a real difference to people.

DECISIONS:

The Cabinet Member for Culture & City Development agreed:

- (1) To continue to offer free reservations of books to library members for the duration of the three year pilot period to March 2021.**
- (2) To continue not to charge overdue fines to library members for the duration of the three year pilot period to March 2021.**
- (3) To carry out a second evaluation of the pilot in autumn 2020 to make recommendations beyond the pilot period.**

6. Parks, Seafront and Events Fees and Charges

The report was introduced by Claire Looney, Partnership & Commissioning Manager.

DECISION:

The fees and charges were approved in accordance with the attached schedule (Appendix 1 - Schedule A)

7. Revenue Grants

The report was introduced by Claire Looney, Partnership & Commissioning Manager.

In response to a question, officers explained that individual targets for each organisation are devised once they know the money is likely to be awarded. The authority works with them for a period of a month to six weeks and if necessary the authority will discuss the level of detail of SLA with board trustees to understand how to meet the priorities.

Councillor Symes commented that she had concerns with the £3.5 million proposed to be allocated to the Kings Theatre as a grant and £3 million of borrowing. She felt that repayment of £85,000 a year over three years is quite a sum and was also concerned that the council had awarded them £180,000 towards a new shop which they now plan to demolish.

Councillor Pitt explained that the Council had entered a financial assessment phase with the Kings Theatre in November 2018 and there was financial due diligence for the whole of 2019. The Chief Financial Officer is comfortable with the level of the loan. The loan is £3 million and £300,000 is to settle a long standing dispute with the council over who was responsible for some repairs, the other £350,000 is match funding. There is a long way to go but they are aware of that and they are putting together a fundraising plan.

DECISION:

The Cabinet Member agreed the details of the funding levels, which will be confirmed by members at Full Council meeting in February 2020 when the council's overall revenue budget is agreed.

8. Space Chase: The Summer Reading Challenge 2019

The report was introduced by David Percival, Library and Archive Services Manager.

The Cabinet Member and opposition spokespeople thanked David and the whole of the library service for all their efforts for another successful year. The Cabinet Member advised he had spoken to Jo Bennett about the role of the play service in helping to increase participation and David Percival said he would arrange to meet with her.

DECISIONS:

The Cabinet Member for Culture & City Development:

- (1) Approved the continued delivery of Summer Reading Challenge Plus in 2020 following this year's successful pilot**
- (2) Agreed that given increasing participation year on year, the Library and Archive Service explores external funding to support the purchase of additional Summer Reading Challenge materials and books for all Portsmouth libraries.**

9. Waterfront Garden Centre

The report was introduced by Catherine Burland, Growing and Retail Co-ordinator.

The Cabinet Member and opposition spokespeople all thought this was a fantastic project and congratulated Catherine and her staff on all their hard work.

DECISION: The Cabinet Member noted the detailed working of the Waterfront Garden Centre and agreed to continue to request referrals to the service from other services within the Council.

10. Seafront Strategy

The report was introduced by Claire Looney, Partnership & Commissioning Manager.

In response to a question she advised that engagement with the public would be a key part of the strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Culture & City Development noted the report.

11. Water Safety

The report was introduced by Claire Looney, Partnership & Commissioning Manager.

The Cabinet Member for Culture & City Development noted the report

12. Developing Watersports in Portsmouth

The report was introduced by David Evans, Leisure & Sports Facilities Manager.

The Cabinet Member for Culture & City Development noted the report.

13. Monitoring of the Second Quarter 2019/20 Revenue Cash Limits and Capital Programme

The report was introduced by Sue Page, Finance Manager.

The Cabinet Member for Culture & City Development noted the report.

The meeting concluded at 9.55 am.

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Councillor Steve Pitt
Chair