

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE AND LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL

MINUTES of the meeting of the Economic Development, Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 12 December 2024 at 12.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Russell Simpson (in the Chair)

Councillors Matthew Cordy
Rajah Ghosh
Mark Jeffery
Abdul Kadir

16. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Leonie Oliver

17. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

Councillor Simpson declared that knew one of the witnesses but it was not a prejudicial conflict of interest.

18. Management of Empty PCC Commercial Properties to ensure Maximum Income Generation (AI 3)

Councillor Simpson explained that the meeting was in relation to the deep dive into the Economic Development Portfolio Properties and the high risks identified by Internal Audit to the Governance & Audit & Standards (GAS) Committee on in relation to rent reviews and regular compliance. He explained that the meeting would hear from witnesses about their experiences working with Portsmouth City Council (PCC) on current leases, previous leases and failed leases.

James Harris, Senior Local Democracy Officer, recapped, for the benefit of panel members, how the current topic was chosen and refreshed the panel on the specific narratives from the July 2023 and July 2024 Audit reports presented to GAS which had led to the review. He advised that the review was focused on larger properties that have laid dormant over a long period which fall within the Culture and Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolios, and which were within the remit of the panel.

Peter Baulf, City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer, provided advice to the panel and witnesses that, due to the risk of matters pertaining to witnesses personal circumstances being shared into the public domain, the panel would be invited to consider a resolution to move the meeting from a public session into an exempt session.

Resolution

"That, under the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985, the press and public be excluded for the consideration of item 3 on the agenda on the grounds that the discussion is likely to divulge exempt information as specified in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)). The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighing the public interest in disclosing the information.

The resolution was proposed by Councillor Simpson, seconded by Councillor Cordy and the motion was carried unanimously.

The Scrutiny Panel moved into exempt session at 12:20pm.

The meeting concluded at 1.11 pm.

Councillor Russell Simpson
Chair