

CABINET

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday, 21 February 2023 at 12.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE (in the Chair)

Councillors Suzy Horton
Chris Attwell
Kimberly Barrett
Darren Sanders
Jason Fazackarley
Lee Hunt
Steve Pitt
Matthew Winnington

4. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Lynne Stagg. David Williams, Chief Executive, and Sarah Daly, Director of Children's Services, had also sent their apologies.

5. Declarations of Interests (AI 2)

Councillor Vernon-Jackson declared an interest in agenda item 6 (Portico Shipping Limited - 2023/24 Budget and 2024/25 to 2025/26 Forecast) in that he is a director of the company. He would leave the meeting for this item.

6. Previous Decision Meetings - 22 November 2022, 13 December 2022 and 17 January 2023 (AI 3)

DECISION - The record of decisions from the meetings held on 22 November 2022, 13 December 2022 and 17 January 2023 were approved as a correct record.

7. Portsmouth City Council Budget and Council Tax 2023/24 and Medium Term Budget Forecast 2024/25 to 2026/27 (AI 4)

Chris Ward, Director of Finance & Resources (S151 Officer), introduced the report. He informed members that the Scrutiny Management Panel had considered the report at a meeting on Friday 17 February and had not been minded to make recommendations.

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson, commented that he had three area of concern, the first being that there were failures at government level to support local councils in relation to social services which put more pressure on the NHS. Secondly, the council had invested in the now unused port border crossing which had been built to government specification, resulting in a funding gap of £6m. The city will invest the first £3m in an air quality improvement project now while the council waits for a £20m government grant as this will allow ferries and cruise ships to turn their engines off while in port.

Councillor Lee Hunt endorsed these comments adding that the money spent on the border crossing could have been put to better use to support residents in the city.

Councillor Matthew Winnington noted that cuts have affected all councils. Council leaders speaking at a recent conference agreed that sustainable funding for adult and children's social care is needed across the county. He thanked the Director of Finance and Resources and his teams across the council for their hard work in delivering the budget.

DECISIONS:

Cabinet recommended to Council that the recommendations set out in section 3 of the report be approved.

8. Exclusion of Press and Public (AI 5)

The confidentiality of the exempt appendices in agenda items 6 (Portico Shipping Limited – 2023/24 Budget & 2024/25 to 2025/2026 Forecast) and 7 (Recycling Infrastructure Update) was maintained as there was no direct reference to the exempt appendices.

It was agreed to alter the order of business to hear agenda item 9 - Portico Shipping Limited - 2023/24 Budget and 2024/25 to 2025/26 Forecast at the end of the meeting.

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson left the meeting for Item 9 - Portico Shipping Limited - 2023/24 Budget and 2024/25 to 2025/26 Forecast.

Councillor Suzy Horton took the Chair for this item.

9. Portico Shipping Limited - 2023/24 Budget and 2024/25 to 2025/26 Forecast (AI 6)

Mike Sellers, Port Director and Mark Webb, Finance Manager (Port) introduced the report. Mike Sellers explained that this was a shareholder report and that following the approval of revised Articles of Association which were approved amended last year, Portico must submit a Business Plan for approval by the council as shareholder. The Business Plan is also subject to scrutiny by the Company Advisory Group Chaired by Councillor Pitt. The company will be subject to an independent review process to assess whether the loan facility initially agreed by Cabinet in 2019 will continue to be a worthwhile investment beyond the next 12 months.

Councillor Steve Pitt commented that that the independent review will assess whether Portico is delivering the best return for the council. He thanked those councillors taking part in the cross-party Company Advisory Group meetings and encouraged others to do so. There would, he added, be an update on the independent review later in year.

DECISIONS - that the Cabinet:

- 1) Approved the Company's annual Business Plan, as set out in Appendix A of the report.**
- 2) Noted the likely call-down of up to £1.8 million from the £15 million loan approved within the Council's existing Capital Programme in the Financial Year 2023/2024, as set out in exempt Appendix 3.**
- 3) Noted that the Council will carry out an independent assessment of the future business plan of the Company in comparison to reasonable alternatives to ensure that ongoing Council support provides the best financial return to the Council. This should be carried out and reported back to Cabinet ahead of the 2024/25 budget before any further Revenue or Capital Budgets are approved.**

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson took the Chair for the following items.

10. Recycling Infrastructure Update (AI 7)

David Emmett, Head of Waste Management Services, introduced the report adding that the new materials recovery facility (MRF) will enable kerbside recycling services including glass.

Councillor Kimberley Barrett commented that this work was needed to comply with the requirements for consistency in kerbside recycling services set out in the Environment Act 2021. Residents also want kerbside collection for recyclable materials, and this was the next step in the process. Portsmouth was ahead of many other authorities in relation to food recycling which was proving successful, and she thanked officers for their work to deliver these improvements.

Councillor Lee Hunt offered his congratulations to the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment, adding that considerable progress had been made in a short time. He encouraged use of the new plastic collection bins and welcomed kerbside collection of glass.

DECISIONS:

- 1) That Cabinet approved the requirement for a new Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) at Chickenhall Lane in Eastleigh and the associated necessary works to the WTS network, as outlined in this report subject to approval by the Director of Finance and Resources to incur expenditure in line with the sum in the approved capital programme. It is additionally subject to continued support for the scheme from tripartite disposal authority partners HCC and SCC, and Hampshire district authorities.**
- 2) That approval was given to procure, spend and enter into the necessary contractual arrangements, in consultation with the City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer, to implement the proposed development of the new MRF and associated works to the WTS**

network as set out in this report to be funded from prudential borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board.

- 3) That authority to make the arrangements to implement the scheme, including minor variations to the design or contract, be delegated to the Director of Housing, Buildings and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Director of Finance and Resources as appropriate.**

11. Draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (AI 8)

Claire Watkins, Business Development and Projects Manager and Adrian Rozier, Parks Development Manager, were present to introduce the report. Claire Watkins noted that in recent years there have been changes to national and regional and local policy and increasing emphasis on wellbeing and concern about the environment. The consultation process will include reaching out to national, regional and local organisations together with neighbouring authorities.

Members thanked officers and the Parks team and noted that the strategy had been in development for some time. Councillor Steve Pitt commented that the usage of parks and open spaces remained high, had not returned to pre-Covid levels and that it was important to have a plan to protect these spaces into the future.

Councillor Matthew Winnington noted it was important to make the best use of open spaces and parks for health and wellbeing including in relation to neurodiversity and dementia.

Councillor Lee Hunt noted that although the city does not have as many open spaces as other cities, it benefits from a huge number of volunteers who work to support places such as Hilsea Lines. He also commented that some areas such as Pilgrims Way and Stamshaw Park have already seen work to decrease mowing with a resultant increase in wildflowers and species diversity. This strategy would not operate in isolation but would link together with others.

DECISIONS:

- 1) That approval be given for the wider distribution of the draft Parks and Open Spaces strategy for consultation.**
- 2) The strategy will be reviewed following receipt of any responses and brought back to Cabinet at a future date for adoption.**

12. Milton Common Local Nature Reserve Mitigation and Management Framework (AI 9)

Ian Maguire, Assistant Director Planning and Economic Development, and Ben Edmonds, Planning Officer, were present to introduce the report. Ian Maguire informed members that the new framework updates and will supersede the Milton Common Local Nature Reserve Restoration and Management Framework, which was adopted by the City Council in 2015. The updated Framework, reflects changes that have occurred since 2015, including the sea defence work. Evidence relating to usage and habitat provision has been

updated as has relevant changes to legislation and guidance. Overall, the proposed management framework now seeks a total contribution of £4.2m from developers in the area, up from £3.4m under the current 2015 Framework.

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson commented that Milton Common was land reclaimed from the sea and used to be a rubbish tip. Now it is a thriving nature area under the care of people like Donna, one of the city's rangers. Councillor Lee Hunt endorsed these comments adding that it was important to note that the new framework would bring £1m additional funding to the area.

DECISIONS - That Cabinet approved and adopted the update to the Milton Common Local Nature Reserve Mitigation and Management Framework subject to any comments from Natural England being addressed.

13. Coastal Schemes Achievements (AI 10)

Tristan Samuels, Director of Regeneration and Guy Mason, Coastal Team Leader, were present to introduce the report. Guy Mason informed members that the Southsea and the North Portsea Island Coastal Schemes are being delivered as sustainable construction projects with zero waste. Other benefits include working with and supporting natural habitats as well as producing surprising historic finds. The Scheme will cover 4.5km of Portsmouth coastline and Long Curtain Moat (Frontage 1) opened earlier in the month. Guy Mason confirmed that the project will protect 14,000 homes, 1,200 businesses and heritage sites such as Southsea Castle from flooding for the next 100 years. The work has received good reviews so far and is expected to complete in 2028 with £0.25 billion funding confirmed and further funding being sought to cover inflation and other costs. The project has received national recognition for its eco initiatives such as the concrete tide pools and eco wall which are being introduced.

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson offered his congratulations on the completion of Long Curtain Moat which has been well received though he believed more dog bins were needed.

Councillor Steve Pitt commented that he had visited Long Curtain Moat with other Councillors and the Lord Mayor on the day it opened, and it was stunning. Award winning experts in their field were involved in the project and there was an extensive communications programme in place to explain what was happening each step of the way. The next stage would include enhancement work to make the seafront as fun and attractive as possible as well as protect homes and business. He noted that dog owners do not need dog bins, any bin may be used for dog waste. Councillor Pitt commented that it was appropriate that the formal opening would be held by the Lord Mayor in the next few weeks, as it was Councillor Hugh Mason who has worked tirelessly for many years to secure this project notwithstanding unhelpful remarks about it by some, including the MP for Portsmouth South.

Members thanked officers, Councillor Hugh Mason and Councillor Steve Pitt for their work on the project.

Councillor Lee Hunt endorsed Councillor Pitt's comments and noted the significant investment in the project and the protection it would provide to homes and businesses in Southsea.

Councillor Matthew Winnington commented that the archaeological finds it had revealed had been fascinating, noted that engagement had been excellent from the beginning and that active travel would also benefit.

Councillor Kimberley Barrett added that the project showed clear ambition going forward regarding climate change and environment. Innovations such as the rock pools and eco wall are already being inhabited and have been recognised nationally and internationally.

Guy Mason confirmed that molluscs have started inhabiting the rock pools and that seed rocks at Southsea Castle would speed up the colonisation of the new structure and provide feeding matter for birds.

The Cabinet noted the report.

14. UK Shared Prosperity Fund (AI 11)

Jane Lamer, Head of Economic Development and Skills, introduced the report, informing members that it was a key strategy to the levelling up agenda. Portsmouth received an allocation of £1.4m over 3 years, significantly less than anticipated based on previous European Social Fund (ESF) delivery and the Community Renewal Fund (CEF) pilot which was a trial for UKSPF. Confirmation of £172k was received in December 2022 and will be allocated to support three priorities - Community and People, Local Business and People & Skills.

In response to members questions, it was confirmed that Portsmouth's allocation under the CRF pilot, which the UKSPF replaces, was £1.7 over nine months. The UKSPF is £1.4m over three years.

Councillor Steve Pitt noted that the funding is rear loaded, with most being allocated to year three. He commented that the ESF had provided funding to help get people back into work, empowering people and make better lives. The UKSPF falls short of that. Councillor Jason Fazackarley advocated patience.

The Cabinet noted the report.

15. Parking Strategy (AI 12)

Felicity Tidbury, Assistant Director Regeneration, and Hayley Chivers, Transport Planning Manager, were present to introduce the report. Hayley Chivers informed members that the report set out the key areas for consideration in the new parking strategy and timescales. She noted that key to this would be balancing car usage and alternative modes of transport and that the work would take place alongside the Parking Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and the emerging Local Plan.

Councillor Matthew Winnington thanked officers and endorsed the report on behalf of Councillor Lynne Stagg, Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportation. Councillor Winnington noted that car ownership in the city continued to rise, and this was not sustainable. The city was already congested, this had an adverse impact on air quality and alternative forms of transport needed to be considered.

Councillor Lee Hunt agreed that parking was a significant issue in the city as many streets are not made for so many cars. He added that 17,000 new homes could bring an additional 20,000 cars to the city and that more buses and better mass transport was needed.

The Cabinet noted the report.

The meeting concluded at 1.10pm.

Signed
Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE
Leader of the Council