

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday 4 December 2023 at 10 am at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Steve Pitt (in the Chair)

Suzy Horton
Dave Ashmore
Lee Hunt
Hugh Mason
Darren Sanders
Gerald Vernon-Jackson
Matthew Winnington

104. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kimberly Barrett and Ian Holder.

105. Declarations of Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

106. Tipner West and Horsea Island East Regeneration (AI 3)

James Fitzgerald, Assistant Director of Finance, introduced the report, explaining that it represented briefings with all groups held over the last few weeks and reflected the most recent discussions. Three main outstanding issues needed to be resolved before moving to the Masterplan stage:

- Viability - one recommendation was to engage again with the government to explore additional funding opportunities
- Engagement with stakeholders
- Imperative reasons of over-riding public interest which could only be completed when the full scope of the project was agreed

Matters related to the two land use options would be progressed and a report brought back to a future Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Pitt explained the Habitats Regulatory Assessment (HRA) process required the council to have explored all options in line with the principles and overarching objectives agreed by Full Council. More certainty and work was needed to see which option minimised costs to the council.

In response to a question from Councillor Sanders, Mr Fitzgerald said the "do nothing" option was agreed as not going forward. The flood defences could cost in the region of £36m and the council had also to date spent £23.7m of the City Deal grant. If a viable scheme could not ultimately be delivered government could ask for the £23.7m to be repaid; in other words, the "do nothing" option could risk up to £60m of expenditure.

Councillor Pitt noted that although the £23.7m represented a risk, the world had changed considerably in the last ten years, particularly around

environmental issues. Councillor Hunt pointed out that everyone was excited by the City Deal which then became bogged down in a quagmire of Covid, the cost of living crisis and rising construction costs. For Stamshaw, Tipner and Hilsea residents it was important to build the flood defences as the existing ones were in a shoddy state. Everywhere else in the city was being protected. Even the greenest people needed to understand it was important to progress; otherwise the sea would destroy what everyone was fighting for. The council wanted 10% biodiversity net gain from the project. He would like faster progress and said Councillor Pitt had done a good job in getting the other groups to see the consequences of delay. He also noted the council was building houses in the area. He was astonished that no opposition members were present so assumed they agreed with Councillor Pitt.

Councillor Mason agreed the state of the sea defences was parlous and work should progress. If it was not paid for with this development, funding would have to come from elsewhere. He noted that paragraph 4.10 should state "apprise" central government of the current position, not "appraise."

In response to questions from Councillor Mason, Mr Fitzgerald said that from the financial point of view, the construction of anything on Horsea Island East would have a significant cost due to the requirement to build a bridge link in order for it to be linked to the development at Tipner. Officers were trying to keep up momentum to avoid abortive costs where possible of surveys passing their expiry date. He would follow up the government's recent guidance on biodiversity net gain.

Councillor Winnington said that at the National Children and Adult Services Conference last week many councils were having to make savings to social care budgets as their finances were in a parlous state. Therefore, the council should progress systematically and sensibly with the project to ensure it did not have to pay back City Deal funding. Other councils had made poor, rash decisions which were coming home to roost and had to cut or stop services, which meant future negative consequences with more on-costs and massive pressures on essential and non-essential services.

Councillor Pitt read out sections 4.8.2 and 8.7 to ensure they were put on public record. No option had no impact but both were bound by a tight regulatory process where the overall benefit was enshrined in law and could not proceed if it caused harm. There would be compensation for any harm caused to natural resources.

Councillor Pitt thanked Mr Fitzgerald for presenting the report at short notice as the Assistant Director, Regeneration, had had to give apologies.

DECISIONS

The Cabinet

- 1. Noted the work to date and the on-going work required by the project team to address the remaining key matters (set out in section 4.8) in order to complete the development of the Tipner West and Horsea Island Masterplan.**

- 2. Requested the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance & Resources in consultation with the Leader, to engage with Central Government to discuss the City Deal outputs and the opportunities for further funding to close the viability gap(s) as detailed in section 4.10 of this report.**
- 3. Delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Regeneration to progress with matters that are common to both land use options (Appendix A) in the development of the Tipner West and Horsea Island Masterplan using £7.7m funds previously approved by the City Council on 11 October 2022. This will include but is not limited to the following activities: on-going site-assembly; any necessary updating and commissioning of technical research including on-site, intrusive ground investigations and survey work; and progressing public engagement and consultation.**
- 4. Noted the intention for the project team to present to a future meeting of the Cabinet for approval to develop a full masterplan for Tipner West and Horsea Island following the conclusion of 2.2 and 2.3 above.**
- 5. Noted the revised project programme as detailed in Appendix C.**
- 6. Referred the report to Full Council to note.**

The meeting concluded at 10.22 am.

Councillor Steve Pitt
Leader of the Council