

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 9 January 2024 at 2 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Steve Pitt (in the Chair)

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

1. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Councillors Horton and Winnington gave apologies for arriving at 2.17 pm as they had been at launch event for health and social care apprenticeships.

2. Declarations of Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Record of previous decision meetings - 28 November and 4 December 2023 (AI 3)

The records of the previous decision meetings held on 28 November and 4 December 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Local Development Scheme (LDS) update (AI 4)

Lucy Howard, Head of Planning Policy, introduced the report

Members noted the timetable was very tight but this was a necessity as the Local Plan was being prepared against a rapidly changing set of government requirements. It was imperative the council moved fast to avoid the problems other councils had. No doubt Government policy would change again, for example, the amount of housing required, but thanks to the Planning Policy team's hard work over the last few years the council was in a robust place. It was hoped that the team's engagement with key stakeholders, including with all members of the council, had addressed any concerns and the LDS would be approved at Full Council on 19 March.

Ms Howard confirmed that the LDS would start to have weight with effect from 19 March if Full Council approved it and would continue to gain weight as it moved through the process.

Councillor Pitt thanked Ms Howard, Ian Maguire (Assistant Director for Planning & Economic Growth) and their team, and Councillors Mason and Hunt, the current and previous portfolio holders respectively.

DECISION

The Cabinet resolved as the Local Planning Authority that the updated Local Development Scheme set out in Appendix 1 of this report is approved and to have effect from 10 January 2024.

- 5. Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel Review into Reducing use of pesticides on council land - Response report (AI 5)**
Colette Hill, Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods), introduced the report. On behalf of the Directorates involved she requested a note of thanks be recorded for Claire Watkins, Business Manager, Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services, who had co-ordinated the responses and drafting of the report. Members noted that in line with recommendation 6 an annual progress report would come to the Cabinet and Full Council with effect from November 2024.

Councillor Pitt said the review was an important piece of work and thanked all officers involved, including Claire Watkins who had carried out a considerable amount of work on it.

DECISIONS

The Cabinet

- 1. Thanked the Panel for its work in undertaking the review and the resulting report, which further supports the Council's policy to continue to work towards minimising pesticide use on council owned land;**
 - 2. Noted the recommendations as set out in Appendix B to this report, together with the officer responses to the recommendations.**
- 6. Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership - Forward Plan (AI 6)**
Peter Shelley, Transport Development Manager, introduced the report and gave a presentation.

Councillor Graham Heaney gave a deputation. Deputations are not minuted but can be viewed on the council's website

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In response to Councillor Heaney's deputation, Mr Shelley explained that the key words were enhanced partnership. The council had invited both bus companies (First and Stagecoach) to say which route enhancements were likely to be the most commercial. The council wanted the routes to be sustainable and to continue after the BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan) funding finished. Some journeys early in the day were covering their costs but it was harder for some services to be more sustainable. It was hoped to have a critical mass so that services were sustainable overall.

Members thought the report was very positive and gave some of the best news on buses in 20 years. It ensured Portsmouth residents had better bus services so they could get into the habit of taking the bus rather than the car. It was a long-term plan to encourage people to use buses. Extra journeys would help people with early starts or late finishes. Wide provision of real-time

information was helpful as not knowing if buses would arrive was a deterrent to using them. Members noted some buses ran on Christmas Day, which was not the case in London. They congratulated the Transport team with the bus operators for securing £48m of government funding when other areas were cutting services. They hoped Stagecoach would follow what First was doing, for example, tap on tap off ticketing, and that the next government would be equally generous.

Mr Shelley would send Councillor Sanders details of the timetable for the 13, 14 and 18 services but he thought they ran up to about 10 pm. He explained the government had set the framework but ideas came from residents, members of the council and bus companies. Portsmouth was seen as a showcase for bus service improvements.

Councillor Sanders noted that major shopping and entertainment areas as well as QA Hospital were now accessible by bus for 24/7 (routes 2 and 23). Baffins residents had requested evening journeys from the area and these would now be provided. It was a true revolution and one of the biggest investments in bus services in the country and Portsmouth should be proud. He asked if the government would continue to cap fares as it was an incentive to use buses. Members welcomed the initiative as it would help facilitate a 24-hour economy.

Councillor Pitt said the Forward Plan was incredibly exciting. Portsmouth was the showcase for improved bus services and provided an opportunity to introduce modal shift. It was interconnected with other policies such as improving air quality.

DECISIONS

The Cabinet

- 1. Noted the progress of the Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership and Scheme;**
 - 2. Approved the Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership Forward Plan;**
 - 3. Delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Transport to make minor amendments to the plan.**
- 7. Bathing Water Quality update (for information only) (AI 7)**
Richard Lee, Assistant Director, Regulatory Services, introduced the report. He emphasised that the Environment Agency, not the council, were responsible for quality and classification of water as they were the regulator. The council was responsible for providing signage at the start of the bathing season. The downgrading of Southsea East from Sufficient to Poor did not mean the beach would close but that people would be advised against bathing. Regulatory Services would provide an update leading into the bathing season. He confirmed that the Southsea East sampling point was between the Pyramids and South Parade Pier and the Eastney one was east of the Pier.

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With regard to Councillor Heaney's suggestion that the council seek advice from other organisations such as the University, Councillor Pitt emphasised that it was not in the council's gift as the Environment Agency were the lead partner who could do so though Mr Lee could pass on the suggestion. The council was already going above and beyond its responsibilities by carrying out additional testing.

In response to Councillor Heaney's queries, Mr Lee said the information in paragraph 7.3 was correct as it was based on percentiles but he would check it and amend any errors; likewise with the location of the sampling points. There were knowns and unknowns when it came to finding the sources of contamination. As part of partnership working Southern Water were proactively identifying defects and repairing them. The council were assisting them with access to buildings such as Southsea Castle which was an old building with an old drainage system; however, this had been checked and was not a problem. The council was constantly expanding its knowledge of the issue. There were no sewer outfalls here but Southern Water had mapping software to see how releases impacted Southsea beach. Obvious causes had been investigated and now less obvious ones were being investigated.

Councillor Pitt thanked Mr Lee for the update. The council was monitoring the situation extremely closely as water quality was a very important priority for residents and tourists alike.

In discussion, members noted it was a longstanding problem and there was quite a lot of speculation about possible causes. However, it was nothing to do with seagulls, work on the sea defences or the old pumping station in Burgoyne Road. It was complex and multifaceted and the council would support the Environment Agency and Southern Water to do more to find the sources of e-coli contamination. Members noted that the council did not have the resources to lead but the Environment Agency did and after years of careful budgeting the council could help them as part of a team effort. The impact of up to 17,000 new homes should be taken into account.

Members were unhappy that Southern Water were giving money to shareholders but investment in infrastructure had been piecemeal. The Eastern Road had been closed three times recently due to heavy rainfall and there was speculation that the sewer had not been replaced since it was built 85 years ago. Residents were proud of Eastney beach and did not like to see it downgraded from Excellent to Good. Money from bill payers should not be given to shareholders nor should streets be flooded or communities put at risk because of poor infrastructure.

Councillor Pitt suggested the cause of contamination was probably a pipe or an outfall of Southern or Portsmouth Water. He had had a rodent infestation in his house and although Southern Water came out three times it took an independent drainage survey to discover that uncapped drains were letting in rats. He was meeting the Chief Executive of Southern Water soon and would

raise the issues discussed today, including the payment of £30,000 to the council to place alerts on the seafront. He thanked Mr Lee and the Regulatory Services team for their work.

DECISION

The Cabinet noted the report.

8. Exclusion of Press and Public (AI 8)

Members agreed to remain in open session but not refer to the exempt information.

DECISION

The confidentiality of Appendices B and C only, relating to commercial matters, was upheld.

9. Land swap at Flathouse Road, Portsmouth (AI 9)

Anne Cains, Head of Acquisition & Disposal, introduced the report.

Members agreed the land swap was sensible in view of the long-term future of the Port.

DECISIONS

The Cabinet

- 1. Delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Regeneration and City Solicitor to finalise negotiations, prepare and complete all necessary documentation in order to undertake 2.2 below subject to the S151 Officer approval of the Business Justification Case.**
- 2. Agreed that the Freehold of the land (registered title HP468782) known as 42 Flathouse Road identified on the plan edged yellow at Appendix A, be acquired by the City Council for the consideration detailed in the confidential Appendix B.**
- 3. Agreed that the Freehold of the land (registered title HP385570) known as (part of) The Lorry Park, Flathouse Road, edged red at Appendix A, be transferred to the vendor of HP468782 (above) as part of the exchange.**

The meeting concluded at 3 pm.

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Councillor Steve Pitt
Leader of the Council