

DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 23 July 2024 at 2 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Steve Pitt (in the Chair)

Suzy Horton
Dave Ashmore
Chris Attwell
Kimberly Barrett
Peter Candlish
Lee Hunt
Hugh Mason
Darren Sanders
Matthew Winnington

55. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

There were no apologies for absence.

56. Declarations of Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

57. Record of previous decision meeting - 25 June 2024 (AI 3)

The record of the previous decision meeting held on 25 June 2024 was agreed as a correct record.

58. Exclusion of Press and Public

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

DECISION

The confidentiality of Appendix 3 only, relating to commercial matters, was upheld.

59. Performance Report on Property Investment Fund (AI 4)

Tom Southall, Assistant Director, Property & Investment, introduced the report, noting that the £10m gap between the investment fund's original value and the amount invested would be used for renewal, repair and update of buildings. Going by benchmark comparisons, whilst there was a reduction in capital value, the portfolio had outperformed the property market to show the strengths of the investments. Last year the rental income was £9.5m and the total for the last few years was over £64m, a considerable amount of money. It was hoped the two assets due for renewal would return an income in excess of £1m.

Councillor Pitt noted that although elements of the property portfolio were commercially sensitive, overall performance indicators were very strong. The investment strategy's strict criteria were paying dividends. It was prudent not to have invested in properties such as shopping centres. An update on when the two refurbished properties were performing as expected would be useful.

The Cabinet noted the report.

60. Member Champions Annual Report (AI 5)

James Harris, Senior Local Democracy Officer, introduced the report.

Councillor Pitt noted that two Member Champion posts had been deleted this municipal year. The Heritage post would be subsumed by the imminent Heritage Strategy which would cover how the council looked after its assets from now on. The Third Sector & City of Service role sat across portfolios.

Councillor Attwell thanked all the Champions for championing their areas of interest and wished them well. Councillor Pitt explained the Champions' role was promotion and advocacy; they did not have areas of responsibility. Heritage would be championed by people who owned the strategy, in other words, there would be 42 Heritage Champions, not just one.

The Cabinet noted the report.

61. Look Up Festival 2024 (Permission to use PCC assets) (AI 6)

Andrew Malbon, Principal Architect, introduced the report. Over the last decade or so Housing had incorporated street art into educational settings. Last year's festival had over 200 artworks. Although most feedback was positive some was negative so engagement had been improved to fully consult with residents, for example, through better phrased newsletters, events such as Somersfest on 27 July and open days in libraries and the community. James Hill, Director of Housing, Building & Neighbourhood Services, explained the report had come to the Cabinet as the assets were spread across several portfolios. Based on the success of last year's event Housing had sought permission to use assets in other Directorates with the opportunity for the festival organiser (Articulate Sage) to work with other organisations in Portsmouth.

Members felt the festival influenced Portsmouth creatively and thanked all the artists "from the hill to the sea" for their work. Local artists working in schools gave children respect in themselves and pride in their city. Increased resident engagement was welcomed as it meant the initiative was more likely to succeed. It was good to have art even if some of it was disliked and as it was street art it was transient. Despite some unpopularity about the art at the Alderman Lacey Library it had not been defaced. It was a good use of council assets and the art would be seen when entering and travelling through the city. The council was working with organisations like Network Rail and could do this more, especially where properties were connected with council owned buildings. Portsmouth's thriving art community had come to the fore. Bright and good public art benefitted health and wellbeing, as well as increasing pride so it made a difference. Members were pleased to see art on council estates and were delighted it had been successful and the initiative extended.

Councillor Pitt saw the festival as part of much wider work over the last few years and gave examples of how the council's support and relatively modest investment resulted in significant external funding. The council paid £50,000

to launch Portsmouth Creates and received £0.3m from the Arts Council in grants as it had contributed £30,000 to the matchfunding pot. Last year backing the Battle of Southsea leveraged in over £150,000 from the National Heritage Lottery Fund. Another £150,000 was leveraged in for Downtown Pompey's LGBTQ+ work. Arts Council funding enabled the 2023 Look Up Festival to run community workshops and diversionary anti-social behaviour activities. Altogether there was over £1.3m investment as all the administration were in support. Everyone should be extremely proud of what they did as a city. The Arts Council now saw Portsmouth as an exciting place to watch. Last week their Regional Director saw Pete Codling's artwork at Fratton Park. There was much goodwill for Cathy Hakes' (Head of Museums) wonderful work. Articulate Sage and My Dog Sighs, who ran the 2023 Look Up Festival, reported positive feedback. Residents were inspired by seeing female artists at work. One commented that Portsmouth was less tired and more like a metropolitan city.

DECISIONS

The Cabinet

- 1. Approved the use of the consultation process established in 2023 for the inclusion of the walls across a number of PCC assets identified in Appendix 1 for inclusion in the 2024 Look Up Portsmouth Festival.**
- 2. Noted that PCC Directorate teams who operate the assets proposed for inclusion have been consulted and subject to Cabinet approval, Adult Social Care, and Culture and Leisure have agreed, Environment and Transport agreed with the principle and requested more details.**

62. Treasury Management Outturn Report 2023-2024 (AI 7)

Chris Ward, Director of Finance & Resources, introduced the report. Treasury Management was the day to day management of cash activities by short-term investments and short-term and longer-term borrowing. Last year all activity remained within the indicators and limits set by the council.

Councillor Pitt noted the enormous part the finance team played in supporting services. Although difficult decisions had to be made, the council could implement budget savings without being in the situation other local authorities were. Members agreed the council had strong financial control so was in a better position to invest in services and projects such as community wardens, CCTV, parks, the D Day Landing Craft Tank or Charles Dickens' bicentenary. It also enabled spare money to encourage outside investment. Members noted interest bearing deposits had an average return of over 5% and costs were below the £1.3m revised budget which spoke volumes about the care with which finances were managed by the finance team. They thanked Mr Ward and the Chief Executive and requested their thanks were recorded for how well managed the council was.

Last week Councillor Pitt had met Matthew Sheldon, the new Chief Executive Officer of the National Museum of the Royal Navy. The National Lottery Heritage Fund had greenlit £0.5m to house the Royal Marines Museum in the Historic Dockyard; members looked forward to it opening in 2026.

DECISIONS

The Cabinet

- 1. Noted the actual prudential and treasury management indicators based on the unaudited accounts, as shown in Appendix B, (an explanation of the prudential and treasury management indicators is contained in Appendix C).**
- 2. Recommended that Full Council note the content of the report.**

The meeting concluded at 2.37 pm.

Councillor Steve Pitt
Leader of the Council