



Strategy and Resources Meeting
Tuesday 8th February 2022
The Trinity Centre
7:00pm

Present:

Cllrs S Ward (Chairman), Cairns, Cooper, Mackey, Pocock, Raut and Wood. Cllrs Horrocks and Pears were in attendance as non-voting observers.

In Attendance:

Olive O'Sullivan – Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Mary Watkins – Finance Manager

There were no members of the public and one member of the press present.

69 Apologies for Absence

The CEO had received apologies from Cllr Parmar and apologies for lateness from Cllr Pocock.

Resolved to accept the apologies.

70 Declarations of Interest

None declared.

71 Minutes of the Previous Meetings

Resolved to confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 7th December 2021.

7:02pm – Cllr Raut entered during discussion of this item.

72 Matters Arising

The CEO reported that a new Money Market Fund had now been opened with Blackrock and an investment would be placed with them this month, in line with the Investment Strategy. The CEO also reported that the first repayment had been received from Royal Sutton Coldfield Community Town Hall Trust, in line with the loan agreement.

73 Questions from Members

Cllr Wood stated that Hill Hook Nature Reserve had been managed and maintained by a 'friends of' volunteer group for 20 years and that they no longer receive any funding from Birmingham City Council (BCC). Cllr Wood asked Committee to consider requesting asset transfer of the Nature Reserve from BCC to Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council.

Cllr Pears advised that Hill Hook Nature Reserve had submitted a Community Grant application for Amenities, Leisure and Community Services to consider at their meeting in March. The application included reference to railings that should have repaired by BCC. The CEO confirmed that she would raise the matter with BCC for a response before the next Amenities Leisure and Community Services Committee meeting.



Resolved to recommend to Full Council that the Town Council requests the asset transfer of Hill Hook Nature Reserve from Birmingham City Council to Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council.

74 Minutes of Town Centre Regeneration Partnership

Cllr Cairns requested that Jan Rowley approach the NHS contact provided in relation to partnership work going forward.

Resolved to note the minutes from the Town Centre Regeneration Partnership held 14th January 2022.

75 Update from the Human Resources Sub-Committee

The CEO reported the discussion on a new role to support the Senior Programme Delivery Manager, in the day to day tasks in relation to the Town Ranger service, work associated with Allotments and other green space improvement.

Sub Committee also considered extending the contract for a Regeneration Programme Director and resolved to recommend to Committee that this be extended for a period of 6 months.

Resolved to recommend to Full Council the establishment of a new post to support the delivery of environmental and green space improvements which could be funded from the underspend on existing vacant posts.

Resolved to recommend to Full Council that the contract with Tile Hill to provide a Regeneration Programme Director be extended for a further six months period.

76 Sutton Park Potential Governance Models

7:11pm – Cllr Pocock entered at the start of this item.

Cllr Pears welcomed the report and the options put forward to enable further discussions with Birmingham City Council. Cllr Pears said he was pleased to see a trust model included which he had advocated at the Strategy and Resources meeting in February 2021. He noted that it would be good to see an endowment from Birmingham City Council for the park and asked for confirmation if the park would have to be transferred to the Land Trust, should the Land Trust model be taken forward. The CEO advised that she would clarify this with the Land Trust.

Cllr Wood spoke against the Land Trust model, which also would include a transfer of the freehold of the park and a dowry to manage the asset.

Cllr Pocock praised the document as a constructive start to dialogue with BCC and stated that he was sure that BCC would engage with the Town Council to explore the options.

Cllr Ward confirmed that a trust model would offer more expertise and funding, which Sutton Park needs for its future.

Resolved to note the report.

Resolved to approve that negotiations continue with Birmingham City Council at officer and leadership level.

77 Allotments Update

The CEO confirmed that the survey findings had been passed to the Town Council solicitors and that they would be used as first steps towards commissioning a quantity surveyor to do the detailed



work that would inform the future capital works programme. The CEO reported the first Allotment Sub-Committee meeting would take place on the 2nd March 2022 and that the survey findings would be taken to that meeting.

Cllr Pears thanked Officers for the report and noted his disappointment that Birmingham City Council had failed in their duty to maintain the allotment sites.

Cllr Cooper reported that the allotments were in a dire state and that some sites even had their water turned off during winter months, making toilets unusable. He raised concerns around access to allotments and that he would like to see access roads transferred over to the Town Council along with the allotments. The CEO advised that there would be significant complications transferring parts of the Highway with the allotments and that the Town Council solicitors were taking a pragmatic view to the transfer and seeking access rights so the transfer could progress more quickly.

Cllr Wood acknowledged the poor state of the allotments and stated that the Sub-Committee would look at a plan of improvements to bring all sites in order as they had not had any investment for years.

Cllr Mackey noted that there are more parishes across Birmingham that are looking to form Councils and that this could be beneficial in the long term, as the more Town or Parish Councils there are, the more consistent the negotiations with BCC could be, helping to unlock jams in the transfer process.

Cllr Pocock agreed that experience would make devolution for all areas better. Cllr Horrocks noted that there are already several good examples across the Country of successful cross party working where lessons could be learnt.

Resolved to note the report

78 Vesey Gardens Asset Transfer Update

The CEO reported that at a Cabinet Meeting in March 2021, BCC approved transfer of Vesey Gardens including the undercroft.

Consequently, a structural survey was commissioned, and legal advice sought on the potential implications of the Town Council taking ownership of and responsibility for the undercroft.

The Structural Appraisal reported identified that the structure is in reasonable condition and remains stable and secure. Minor works were recommended in the short term to address early deterioration, but with these works completed and inspections thereafter every five years, it was expected that the undercroft would remain in a good condition for many more years.

Cllr Cooper asked if some repairs to the wall would be undertaken by the Town Council and if this would be maintained by Birmingham City Council (BCC) afterwards. The CEO confirmed that wall surrounding the closed churchyard would not be transferred and would remain the responsibility of BCC.

Cllr Pocock stated that he was not in support of the asset transfer of Vesey Gardens and that it would be a better idea for it to remain with BCC with a joint management agreement in place. Cllr Wood responded that BCC had not maintained Vesey Gardens and the transfer would give an opportunity for the Town Council to invest and make it a real treasure for the town. Cllr Cairns said that work at Vesey Gardens would be the start of the regeneration of the heritage area of the town and that a joint management agreement would just mean the Town Council paying BCC to carry out repairs to an area that they should already be doing.



Resolved to approve that the transfer proceed on the basis that the undercroft is included in the transfer, together with the stone cladding and steps along the boundary wall, and the small area of land at the northern boundary.

79 Performance to Date

Cllr Pocock asked if there would be a proposal to Committee to consider earmarking more of the general reserves.

Cllr Ward confirmed that Committee reviews the level of reserves on an ongoing basis and that the general reserves were at a prudent level for the Council.

Resolved to approve the movement in Earmarked Reserves as detailed in the report.

80 Precept 2022/23

The CEO state that the draft Council Tax Database noted by the Committee had now been confirmed that there is an increase in the number of Band D Equivalent properties. This increase is due to the calculation taking account of the anticipated collection rate being higher than the previous year. The CEO confirmed that this is a technical calculation with the formula applied across the whole Birmingham area.

Resolved to note the confirmed Sutton Coldfield Council Tax Database figure and to note the precept levy for 2022/23 of £1,843,024.

Resolved to approve that the Budget Contingency 2022/23 budget be increased by £4,746.

81 Mayors Challenge and Civic Event Report

Cllr Ward recorded his thanks to Natalia Gorman for the report and Cllr Wood stated that it has been an honour and a privilege to be Mayor, meeting so many people who give their time freely for the good of the community.

Resolved to note the report.

82 Investment Strategy 2022/23

The CEO reported that the Treasury Management Code now includes borrowing and highlighted changes to the rules on borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb). One of the key changes is that the PWLB will not support borrowing to purchase an investment asset primarily for yield but would support borrowing for capital expenditure relating to public service delivery, housing and regeneration within the Council's area.

Resolved to recommend the Investment Strategy 2022/23 to Full Council for approval ([Attached](#)).

83 Document Review

Resolved to recommend the Health and Safety Policy and Statement of Internal Control to Full Council for approval.

84 Draft Closedown Timetable

Resolved to note the timetable.

85 Bank Reconciliations

Resolved to note the bank reconciliations for November and December 2022.



86 Date of the Next Meeting

Resolved that the next meeting would be scheduled for the 13th April 2022 at the Trinity Centre.

The meeting ended as 8:09pm

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