Strategy and Resources Meeting
Tuesday 20th June 2023
The Trinity Centre
7:00pm

Present:

Cllrs Ward (Chairman), Cooper, Parkin, Pears, Puri and Raut.

In Attendance:

Olive O'Sullivan – Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Mary Watkins – Head of Finance.

There was one member of the public present.

1 Election of Deputy Chairman

Resolved to appoint Councillor Parkin as Deputy Chairman of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

2 Apologies for Absence

The CEO reported apologies from Cllrs Cairns and Mackey.

Resolved to accept the apologies received.

3 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

4 Minutes of the Previous Meetings

Resolved to confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 18th April 2023.

5 Matters Arising

No matters arising.

6 Questions from Members

Cllr Cooper asked for updates on Sutton Park and the lack of Birmingham City Council (BCC) response, Active Travel, Devolution Deal and Allotments.

Cllr Ward reported that he had received an unsatisfactory response from Cllr Mahmood at BCC on Sutton Park and has written back to Cllr Mahmood to ask him to elaborate on the comments in his letter and invited him to meet as a matter of urgency to understand why and how he has reached the position he has around the future governance of Sutton Park. Cllr Pears reported that he had asked a question to Cllr Mahmood at BCC Full Council meeting the previous Tuesday, and that he had also received an unsatisfactory response. Cllr Parkin noted his disappointment that Cllr Mahmood had challenged that Sutton Park was in a state of neglect.

Cllr Ward remarked that the Leaders' meeting scheduled with the previous leader of BCC had been cancelled and he is awaiting details of when that will be rescheduled with Cllr Cotton.

The CEO advised that a meeting would be convened to discuss the list prioritised by Councillors on the Active Travel Working Group. Cllr Parkin said that some of the schemes could be progressed by BCC Councillors within their budget of £20,000 or through other BCC budgets. He also noted that feasibility studies for some locations would be more straightforward and could be progressed through BCC Highways at no additional cost.

The CEO confirmed that the draft Devo Deal list had been drawn up following meetings of the working group and that a further meeting would be arranged to consider the draft prospectus.

The CEO reported that there are three outstanding matters in relation to the transfer of the Walmley Ash Allotment site, agreeing the boundary and in particular if the woodland area would be included, rights of access from neighbouring properties and substation rent. It was reported that BCC had conducted a tree inspection which identified that three trees needed to be felled. The Town Council is conducting a tree survey as part of its due diligence. Solicitors had advised that rights of access should not hold up the transfer and could be dealt with post transfer. The CEO advised that the rent due from the substation would be minimal and the transfer would not include this. The CEO further advised that all the allotment sites would not be legally transferred by the start of the new allotment year (October) but that she is chasing a memorandum of understanding from BCC that would enable the Town Council to take over management of the sites. Cllr Parkin asked if the Reddicap Futures community garden would be included in the transfer of the Falcon Lodge Allotment site. The CEO advised that as the community garden is not part of the Allotment site it would not be included in the transfer adding that the land is in the ownership of BCC Housing who granted Reddicap Futures a licence to occupy the site.

7 Human Resources Sub Committee Membership

Cllr Ward asked for nominations to the Human Resources Sub Committee.

Resolved that Cllrs Cooper, Millichope, Parkin, Pears, Puri and S Ward be appointed to the Human Resources Sub Committee.

8 Minutes of the Town Centre Regeneration Partnership (TCRTP)

Following questions from Cllr Parkin the CEO confirmed that the Strategic Outline Case for the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements funding had been submitted to the West Midlands Combined Authority. The CEO advised that a Design Code for the town centre was a key discussion item at the TCRP Planning, Property and Development Task Group meeting.

Resolved to note the minutes of the Town Centre Regeneration Partnership meeting held on 19th May 2023.

9 Town Centre Environmental Improvement Programme Plan

The CEO reported that she had looked at short term improvements that could be made on the route from Sutton Coldfield Railway Station to the Town Centre. Various meetings had taken place, including with Community Groups and in the last three months site meetings had taken place with the Idverde Area Manager and Green Space Development Manager to identify measures to improve the environment. However, to date these meetings have not resulted in any firm proposals. The CEO met with representatives of the United Reformed Church on 2nd June when they expressed a keen interest in participating in any initiatives to improve the area to the rear of the Church. A number of measures were identified, including jet washing paving stones, painting

bollards and barriers, repairing the trip rail, cutting back shrubs and the grassed areas, laying bark in shrubbed areas, removing ivy from boundary wall, installing planters and installing seating. The CEO recommended working with the Town Council's in-house Urban Design Consultant on a proposal for the area. The CEO confirmed that the area was owned by Birmingham City Council (BCC) Transport Technical Services and proposals would need to be approved by BCC with their approved contractors carrying out the work.
There had been a suggestion of bulb planting in King Edwards Square and the top of Upper Reddicroft car park and the CEO would continue the discussion with idverde to improve these locations. It was also agreed that the CEO would progress discussions with Network Rail on improvements to the area at the Station Street exit.

10 Town Ranger Contract

The CEO reported that the Town Ranger contract had been in place since February 2023 and the Town Rangers continue to improve areas across Sutton Coldfield. The new contract was based on a Bill of Quantities (BoQ) that sets out the work to be carried out. In addition, the Rangers continue to provide a reactive service responding to jobs reported by councillors and residents. The CEO added that there is an extra charge for each of these jobs. Officers had been given access to Idverde's Shared Management System (SMS) in May 2023 but issues and problems with the system mean we are still unable to run accurate reports. This has been raised in meetings with idverde Senior Management. The CEO also reported concerns with the idverde management of the contract and quality control and that these concerns would continue to be escalated formally.
Cllr Pears raised concerns that some Idverde rangers were carrying out work in the area without the Town Council branded vehicles and uniform. The CEO confirmed that in addition to the four-person Town Council team, Idverde had recently brought in additional staff from other areas to assist.

11 West Midlands Cycle Hire Scheme

A summary of the last year's performance was circulated to the Committee (attached).
The CEO reported that the statistics are positive although numbers are down on last year, but this variation may have been due to inclement weather.
Cllr Parkin said that Serco had reported a spike in hirers not returning their cycles to a docking station and that any abandoned bikes should be reported to Serco for collection. The CEO reported that permission is still outstanding from Natural England to place a docking station in the new car park at the Boldmere Gate entrance to Sutton Park. There are also delays in the installation of a docking station at Rectory Park.
Cllr Pears raised concerns about electric hire bikes being placed in the vicinity to Sutton Park as they should not be used in the Park.
Cllr Raut asked that the Bike Hire scheme, including statistics, be publicised via the Town Council's social media channels.

12 Health and Safety Policy and Review

The CEO reported that several actions were around documentation from the landlord, and this had now been requested. Worknest will work with the Town Council to find practical and pragmatic solutions.

Cllr Pears asked how much it would cost to action all the recommendations in the report. The CEO confirmed that the cost would be around £3,000 in total with the main cost being around £2,000 for carrying out tree surveys at four sites.

Resolved to note the report and approve the Health and Safety Handbook, Health and Safety Policy and Health and Safety Policy Statement.

13 Strategic Plan Progress Review

Resolved to note the Strategic Plan Progress Review.

14 Bank Reconciliations

Resolved to note the bank reconciliations from April and May 2023.

15 Date of the Next Meeting

11th July 2023 at the Trinity Centre.

The meeting ended at 8:06pm