Strategy and Resources Meeting
Tuesday 19th September 2023
The Trinity Centre
7:00pm

Present:

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

In Attendance:

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

There were no members of the press or public present.

32 Apologies for Absence

The CEO had received apologies from Cllrs Cairns and Raut. The CEO advised that under 4(v) of the Town Council Standing Orders, for this meeting Cllr Briggs would be substituting, with voting rights, for Cllr Raut.

Resolved to accept the apologies received.

33 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Pears declared an interest in item 47a as a trustee of Royal Sutton Coldfield Community Town Hall Trust. The CEO advised Cllr Pears had requested and been granted a dispensation to speak on agenda item 47a as his knowledge may be useful in its consideration but confirmed that Cllr Pears would not be voting on the matter.

34 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved that due to the confidential nature of the business of item 47, under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s3, members of the public and press will be excluded during discussion of this item.

35 Minutes of the Previous Meetings

Resolved to confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 11th July 2023.

36 Matters Arising

In response to a question from Cllr Cooper asking for an update on the Sutton Coldfield Library Archives and Local Studies Collection, the CEO advised that as the Town Council's contribution towards the work had been agreed in July, it was hoped the work would progress. Cllr Mackey reported that as Birmingham City Council (BCC) is navigating the impact of the Section 114 notice, projects may stall as all spend needs to be approved by the spending control board. Progress of this and other projects would be confirmed by BCC in due course.

37 Human Resources Sub Committee Meeting

Resolved to note the minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Sub Committee held on 11th July 2023.

38 Update from the Human Resources Sub Committee

The CEO reported that recruitment to the Head of Operations & Estates and the supporting role would be progressed this week.

Sub-Committee had discussed the Consultants that work with the Town Council and recommended that their services continue for the next 12 months.

Resolved to recommend to Full Council that Andrew Tucker, PJA, Clarity NS, Trevor Askew, ASkills and LGRC continue to provide consultancy services to the Town Council, as needed, for the next 12 months.

39 Minutes from the Town Centre Regeneration Partnership

The CEO confirmed that work on the Strategic Outline Case for the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements Funding was still progressing.

Resolved to note the minutes of the meeting of the Town Centre Regeneration Partnership held on 21st July 2023.

40 Questions from Members

Cllr Parkin asked for updates on the Devo Deal proposal and Sutton Park with Birmingham City Council (BCC).

Cllr Ward confirmed that a positive initial meeting had taken place with BCC's leader Cllr Cotton, where Cllr Cotton had agreed to discuss both the Devo Deal and Sutton Park at the next Leaders meeting, after he had been fully briefed by BCC Officers. Unfortunately, the meeting arranged for last week was postponed but another meeting has been arranged in a couple of weeks.

The CEO reported her discussions with a BCC Officer, who was supportive of the Devo Deal approach and proposal submitted by the Town Council to BCC. He had confirmed that discussions were progressing on BCC's response. As BCC have since issued a Section 114 Notice, it was unclear at this time how this would affect progress of these discussions.

Cllr Parkin asked if Council should be concerned about BCC's position as a landowner of the Red Rose Centre and Newhall Walk following the Section 114 Notice. Cllr Ward said it was important to consider and would be addressed on the Risk Register.

Following a question from Cllr Cooper as to when the Town Council's Active Travel Group would be meeting again, the CEO responded that a date for a meeting in October had been circulated to the working group.

41 Update on Town Centre

The CEO advised Committee that concept drawings and costings for the public realm improvements at the land adjacent to Brassington Avenue and the United Reform Church had been produced and a report would be taken to a future meeting of S & R.

Cllr Ward reported that the new owners of the Gracechurch Centre, BGP and SAV Group, were actively engaging and positive.

42 Town Ranger Service Contract Progress Report

The CEO reported that improvements had been made to the delivery of the Town Ranger contract and in particular idverde's supervision and management of the contract. There are however, still some issues to address with additional works, i.e those not in the Bill of Quantities.

In response to questions from Cllr Parkin the CEO advised that the cost of additional jobs undertaken during the first six months of the contact was approx. £2,200 and that there would be some offsetting of additional works against Bill of Quantities jobs that were unable to be completed.

In response to a question from Cllr Briggs, the CEO confirmed that a way forward had been agreed for works at Forge Farm Allotments and a Health and Safety visit had been arranged for a further two sites to identify immediate works that would need to be addressed on transfer. Cllr Ward added that there is an annual budget for works at allotment sites and works would be staged within this budget.

Resolved to note the Town Ranger Service Contract Progress report.

43 Internal Audit Appointment 2023/24

Resolved to approve that Auditing Solutions Ltd be engaged as the Town Council's internal auditor for financial year 2023/24.

44 Risk Register Review

In response to questions asked by Cllr Pears, the CEO confirmed that GDPR training for staff had been completed, that the Business Continuity Policy would be reviewed by Committee, that all staff carried out self-assessments in regard to Display Screen Equipment.

Cllr Ward noted the increased risk factor for Financial and Operation Challenges faced by Birmingham City Council (BCC) and asked the CEO to prepare a paper to identify the key dependencies that the Town Council has with BCC. The paper should as a first stage identify the projects and budgets at risk in the short term.

Resolved to note the Risk Register Review.

45 Bank Reconciliations

Resolved to note the bank reconciliations from July and August 2023.

46 Date of the Next Meeting

14th November 2023 at the Trinity Centre.

The public session ended at 7:50pm.

47 Exclusion of the Press and Public

a) Town Hall Loan

Cllr Pears left the meeting at 8:05pm.

Resolved to recommend to Full Council that a loan of £100k over a seven year period be made to Royal Sutton Coldfield Community Town Hall Trust to provide working capital for the Trust's operations.

Cllr Pears re-entered the meeting at 8:22pm

b) Town Council Treasury Advisors

Resolved to approve that Arlingclose be engaged to provide treasury management services for the next three years at an annual cost of £9,950 in year one.

The meeting ended at 8:25pm