



Strategy and Resources Meeting

Tuesday 9th July 2024

The Trinity Centre

7:00pm

Present:

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

In Attendance:

Olive O'Sullivan – Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Jessica Johnson - Project Manager.

There were no members of the press or public present.

1 Election of Deputy Chairman

Resolved that Cllr Parkin be elected as Deputy Chairman of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

2 Apologies for Absence

The CEO reported apologies from Cllr Mackey and apologies for lateness from Cllrs Pears and Raut.

Resolved to accept the apologies received.

3 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved to confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 23rd April 2024.

5 Matters Arising

No matters arising reported.

6 Questions from Members

No questions had been received.

7 Update from the Human Resources Sub-Committee

Resolved to note the minutes of the Human Resources Sub-Committee meeting held on 23rd April 2024.

Resolved to approve the draft Staffing Structure as recommended by the Human Resources Committee on 9th July 2024.



8 Sutton Coldfield Allotment Rents

The CEO reported that the Allotment sites transferred over to the Town Council on the same terms and conditions as Birmingham City Council (BCC) this includes the requirement to give 12 months notice of any rent changes. The Town Council would need to give notice by 30th September 2024 of any rent changes for the 2025/26 allotment year.

Sub Committee recommended that the Town Council maintain the rent and fees for 2024/2025 as set out by BCC in September 2023 and also recommended that charges from 1st October 2025 be set at the same rates as BCC the Allotment year 2025-2026. This means that there will be consistency for all Sutton Coldfield allotments sites and the Town Council could look to introducing a new rent structure once all sites have transferred from BCC.

BCC base the 2025/26 allotment rent and charges on the RPI figure for August 2024, which will not be known until mid September. Once BCC have confirmed the rent figure, the Town Council will advise the Allotment Associations and they will advise all tenants before the end of September to ensure the full 12 months notice is given.

In response to questions, the CEO confirmed that the rent for sites that have transferred over to the Town Council are paid to the individual Allotment Associations (AA) and transferred to the Town Council. 50% of the rent received is then repaid to the AA as per the management agreement, in addition the sites are benefitting from the Town Rangers service and additional improvement works that have been identified as a priority by each AA are being progressed.

7:11pm Cllr Pears and Raut entered during discussion of this item.

Cllr Parkin asked if the Town Council had received rents from the four sites that were now under Town Council management. The CEO replied that the Allotment Associations collect the rents from tenants and the Town Council had received rents from the sites transferred over to the Town Council.

Cllr Parkin asked if councilors were represented on the Sutton Coldfield Allotments Consultative Forum. The CEO replied that the consultative forum was comprised of Town Council Officers and representatives of the Allotment Associations to ensure a separation of duties given the different role of Councillors and Officers.

Resolved to recommend to Full Council that Allotments Rents and Fees charges from 1st October 2025 be set at the same rates as Birmingham City Council for the Allotment year 2025-2026.

9 Update on Draft Strategic Plan 2024 - 2027

Cllr Ward extended his thanks to Andrew Tucker for the work on the draft Strategic Plan 2024-2027.

In response to a question from Cllr Pears, the CEO confirmed that information would be provided on the budgetary context of the Strategic Plan as part of the consultation. Cllr Ward added that additional professional communications advice would be sought to ensure clear messaging.

Cllr Cairns asked if the consultation period in September 2024 gave sufficient time for Ward Forums and resident meetings to consider responding to the consultation. The CEO suggested that the



Town Council could convene community meetings at the ward level during the consultation period rather than wait for other meetings to be confirmed at which it could be an agenda item.

Cllr Cooper asked if there should be more detail in the plan on the asset devolution aspirations of the Town Council. Cllr Ward responded that the plan sets the strategic vision and direction for the Town Council rather than specific details.

Cllr Parkin asked if there could be a Newsletter and a public drop in space in the Town Centre for people to engage with the consultation. The CEO confirmed that we would look to have a presence in the Town and Local Centres.

Resolved to recommend to Full Council approval of the draft Strategic Plan 2024 – 2027 and public consultation approach.

Resolved to approve the revised timetable for consultation on the draft Strategic Plan 2024 -2027.

10 Sutton Coldfield Library

Several Councillors spoke to raise their concerns that the opening hours of the Sutton Coldfield Library had been reduced during the consultation period but agreed that the funding provided by the Town Council should continue in the short term as withdrawal could further negatively impact the service for residents.

Cllr Ward spoke at his frustrations that the Town Council has consistently provided funding towards Sutton Coldfield Library and Birmingham City Council have changed the opening hours several times without consulting the Town Council as a significant funder.

In response to a question from Cllr Cooper regarding the archive and local studies material, the CEO confirmed that the second phase of the archive work is underway but there is no end date as of yet. There are also discussions with relevant experts to draw up the specification for a facility to house the archival materials to the appropriate standard.

Resolved to note the temporary opening hours for Sutton Coldfield Library.

Resolved to maintain the funding contribution towards the Sutton Coldfield Library on the current basis and continue to monitor any further changes to the service.

11 Performance to Date

Cllr Parkins asked if the precept were to raise how this would be allocated in the budget. The CEO confirmed that there would be a detailed budget setting exercise at the end of the year.

The below virements were proposed:

- £42,000 from the General Reserve to PR and Marketing budget to support the delivery of newsletters to each home.
- £25,000 from Budget Contingency to Professional Services budget for additional consultancy work and work on the Strategic Plan.
- £15,000 from Budget Contingency to Recruitment Expenses budget to support a recruitment drive.

Resolved to approve the virements as listed above.



12 Town Council Charge Card

The CEO reported that the current Charge Card Limit of £500 was sufficient to maintain the monthly subscriptions but gave no flexibility for any urgent expenditure. The card is held by the CEO and is cleared each month as per Financial Regulations.

Resolved to that the Charge Card limit be increased to up to £2,500 in line with the CEO's delegated powers.

13 Reoccurring Payments and Direct Debits

Resolved to recommend to Full Council approval of reoccurring expenditure payments as detailed in section 4 of the report.

Resolved to recommend to Full Council approval of use of variable direct debit for payments as detailed in section 5 of the report.

14 Bank Reconciliations

Resolved to note the bank reconciliations for April – June 2024.

15 Use of Delegated Powers

The CEO reported use of delegated powers, in conjunction with the Leader, to approve;

- Penna Recruitment Agency - To progress the Recruitment of the 2 vacant heads of service roles
£7,160 Recruitment Campaign
£6,750 Candidate Sourcing (Head of Open Spaces)
£7,000 Candidate Sourcing (Head of Regeneration)
- Kinver Business Solutions – To support the set up and administration of the Sutton Coldfield Town's Fund panel - £9,800.
- Changepoint Solutions – To support key areas of work including Finance, due diligence on asset transfer and procurement – Up to 16 days at a total cost of £9,600.
- Gary Phelps Communications Ltd - To support the production of the Town Council's Newsletters and Communications - Up to 20 days at a total cost of £10,000.
- Items in relation to the inauguration of the High Steward.
Fattorinis - Design work and production of a pendant - £3,818
Pigsty Studio - Production of 2 handwritten illuminated scrolls - £300
Mainstream – Printing of High Steward and Mace Booklets - £653

16 Date of the Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting is Tuesday 15th October 2024 at the Trinity Centre but Committee discussed scheduling an additional meeting in September 2024.

Resolved that an additional meeting will be scheduled in September 2024 if required, date to be confirmed and circulated.

The meeting closed at 7:48pm



Signed as a true record

Cllr S Ward

18th September 2024