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39

ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

8 June 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Cooper (Chair), Gunner (Vice-Chair), Bennett (Substitute for Purchase), Dendle, Dixon, Edwards, Roberts, Seex, Stanley and Dr Walsh

Councillors Bicknell, Bower, Brooks, Chace, Mrs Cooper, Coster, Mrs English, English, Goodheart, Hamilton, Pendleton and Staniforth were also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

Apologies: Councillors Purchase and Northeast.

56. WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Members of the Committee, the Public and Press, other Members and Officers participating in the first meeting of the Planning Policy Committee under the newly adopted Committee structure.

The Chair explained that this meeting was being held in accordance with the resolution of the Extraordinary Council held on 12 May 2021 [Minute 551] which continued Section 5 Part 5 of the Constitution (The Virtual Meeting Procedure Rules) and declared the use of Council powers, under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, and the general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, for making advisory decisions, as appropriate.

57. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Dendle declared a personal interest in item 7 [Covid Discretionary Business Grant Funding] as two of his businesses had received business grants.

Councillor Dixon declared a personal interest in item 8 [*Bognor Regis Seafront: Review of Seafront Delivery Plan and Deliverable Interventions and Actions*] due to a role he undertook prior to being an elected councillor with Bognor Regis Civic Society where he engaged with members of the public on the topic. He then stated that he would have an open mind and would listen and consider all the relevant issues and interests presented to the Committee today and confirmed that he would reach his decision on merit. Regarding agenda item 9 [Levelling Up Fund BID Submission] he also declared a personal interest in this item as he made a submission that was considered by the Levelling Up Working Party.

58. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair invited questions from members of the public who had submitted their questions in advance of the meeting in accordance with the rules of the Council's

Economic Committee - 8.06.21

Constitution and the Virtual Meeting Procedure Rules amended by the Council on 15 July 2020.

The Chair confirmed that seven questions had been submitted by two members of the public and that only one member of the public was in attendance to read out their questions, the other questions submitted would be read out by the Committee Manager and responded to by the Chair.

There was one supplementary question asked The Chair confirmed that the points raised by the member of the public had been noted and drew public question time to a close.

(A schedule of the full questions asked and the responses provided can be found on the meeting's webpage at: [\(Public Pack\)Economic Committee - Public Question Time - 8 June 2021 Agenda Supplement for Economic Committee, 08/06/2021 18:00 \(arun.gov.uk\)](#))

59. START TIMES

It was proposed and seconded that the remaining Economic Committee meetings for 2021/22 continue to start at 6pm

The Committee

RESOLVED

that the start times for the remainder of the municipal year 2021/22 be 6pm.

60. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

The Interim Monitoring Officer provided members with an overview of his report advising the Committee that they were being asked to make any suggestions to the Constitution Working Party in relation to any changes they wanted to be considered and to agree its reserved matters.

In turning to the debate members raised a number of points of which these were centred around Appendix 2, Reserved Matters, point 3 – Leasing etc, some comments made were that some members would like to review all leases with a view to look into new ways for the Council to make money.

Clarity was sought regarding regeneration and the General Fund as it had been interpreted by some members that these topics would be dealt with by Full Council only. It was confirmed that the latest version of the constitution that was available on the Council's website had been agreed by Full Council at its part two meeting on 24 March 2021, further to that as the constitution was a living document, changes had also been made since the Annual Meeting of the Council on 19 May 2021. The Interim Monitoring Officer confirmed that Full Council had delegated its regeneration matters to the

Economic Committee, however, he also stated that the Economic Committee could make recommendations to Full Council should the Committee feel that the regeneration is of such major regeneration for consultation purposes.

Returning back to Appendix 2, Reserved Matters, point 2 – Acquisitions and disposal, one member sought clarity regarding the figure of £250,001, he asked for confirmation that anything that came under this threshold would not come to Committee should the terms of reference be agreed, he then stated that he thought the Bognor and Littlehampton Regeneration Sub-Committees should be reformed as he felt that having these would reduce the workload of the Economic Committee and allow for agenda's to be slimmed down, finally he asked for members question time to be considered to be added to the Committee's agenda. It was confirmed that the members interpretation of the reserved matters was correct, only acquisitions and disposals over £250,000 would be brought to Committee. It was also confirmed that there was already a proposal going to the Constitution Working Party meeting to be held on 28 June 2021 regarding Member Questions being added to Committee agenda's and should this Committee wish to align itself with that proposal then it could. It was further explained by the Director of Place that the figure of £250,000 was an average house price within the district and therefore a relatively low amount. He also advised that there were approximately 150 leases and licenses, that were spread out over a number of years and given that the Committee had a limited number of meetings he would advise members to focus on the importance of their role which was to look at the strategic matters. The Chair suggested to the Committee that it did align itself with the proposal being sent to the Constitution Working Party, whilst reminding members that submitting questions in advance of the meeting in order to allow for full answers to be given at the meeting.

The Committee then agreed to allow non-members of the Committee to ask any questions they had a summary of the comments made are below;

- Regarding Appendix 2, point 2 – Acquisitions and disposals it was commented that an upper limited should be considered to trigger a Full Council decision opposed to the Committee.
- Further comments made regarding Full Councils delegation for regeneration matters to be made by the Economic Committee were made, including a suggestion that Full Council should ratify all decisions made by the Committee in relation to regeneration.
- Further comments in relation to Bognor and Littlehampton regeneration Sub-Committees in support of reforming these were made

The Leader of the Council stated that he was concerned at the comments made by a number of members who were questioning the changes to the Constitution, given that these had been voted on a number of times after having clear explanations given at previous meetings. He asked the Interim Monitoring Officer what additional training could be provided to members on the Constitution that they had already approved. It was confirmed that several training sessions had been held in March 2021, of which, most Councillors had attended. However, Officers could look to deliver further training.

Economic Committee - 8.06.21

Members then had a discussion on the decisions that would fall to Officers should the terms of reference be approved as presented; it was clear that members were not supportive of this. The Interim Monitoring Officer advised members that Officers would be taking decisions on the operational tasks. He also stated that once an officer decision had been taken, members could not retake that decision. Officers did of course have the option to refer decisions on to the Committee should they feel it appropriate to do so. In response to the answer provided a member of the Committee reminded members of the Referral and Recovery process within the new Constitution, urging members to refer to this as it provided options for members to review any decisions that are made.

Councillor Stanley then proposed the following amendment to be made to Appendix 2, Reserved Matters, point 2 that;

the acquisitions and disposals figure be reduced to **£200,000** and a quarterly report on any Officer decisions that had been made is reported to members outside of committee meetings on a quarterly basis.

This was seconded by Councillor Seex, turning to the debate clarification was sought from the Vice-Chair that this amendment would be being made to the Constitution Working Party for their consideration. This amendment was then put to the vote and was passed.

Councillor Seex then proposed a further amendment to be made to Appendix 2, Reserved Matters, point 3 that;

the lease or licence land or building or any interest in land or buildings which are or will be under the control of the Council ~~where the rent exceeds £100,000 per annum~~ (exclusive of rates) and the term of letting, leasing or licensing exceeds 25 years

Councillor Bennett stated that he would only be happy to second this amendment should the following be inserted **a quarterly report be provided for upcoming leases and licences** to allow for members to select which they wished to review at Committee.

The Director of Place, the Leader of the Council and the Group Head of Technical services all provided further advice to members of the Committee which explained to members that removing thresholds for this item could potentially cause problems for the Committee in terms of taking up a lot of their time, that could be better spent elsewhere, as well as the need for the Council to demonstrate fairness in its review of any leases or license which this amendment would not do, a final point was made that this amendment could also potentially limit the Councils ability to operate within the property market. Based on the advice given Councillor Seex then changed her amendment to;

the lease or licence land or building or any interest in land or buildings which are or will be under the control of the Council where the rent exceeds ~~£100,000~~

£50,000 per annum (exclusive of rates) and the term of letting, leasing or licensing exceeds 25 years

The Chair then moved back to Councillor Bennett to check he was happy to second the proposal that had been put forward, to which he explained that he was not happy to do so unless the wording he put forward was to be included at which point the Leader of the Council then agreed to second the proposal as put forward and amended by Councillor Seex. This was then put to the vote and subsequently approved.

The Chair then returned to the substantive recommendations which were duly proposed and seconded;

The Committee

RECOMMEND TO THE CONSTITUTION WORKING PARTY

- 1) that a reduction in the financial amounts in Appendix 2, point 2 be reduced to £200,000 with a quarterly report containing Officer decisions be provided to the Committee outside of Committee meetings for their review, and;
- 2) that a reduction in the financial amounts in Appendix 2, point 3 be reduced to £50,000

RESOLVED that

- 3) the matters reserved scheme whereby matters not reserved by committee to itself are delegated to Officers by default as set out in Appendix 2(attached)

61. COVID DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS GRANT FUNDING

(Councillors Dendle and Cooper both declared personal interests in this item as they have both had businesses that had received mandatory business grant funding. Councillor Dendle also declared an additional personal interest during the debate as he was a shareholder for 'FlexiApp' one of the companies who had put a bid forward for an additional grant.)

The Business Development Manager provided members with an overview of her report and explained that funding from the first allocation needed to be spent by the end of June 2021 in order that further funds would be received. She explained that Arun would not be able to do this and that it effectively meant that the Council have approximately £600,000 available for various grants to provide wider business support, as suggested by government.

These included 'Get online and upgrade', a new business start-up support fund, Leap Grants, which had been run for a number of years and were very popular and a Green Grant Fund. Finally, an online training project for retailers, that could be enhanced so it was specific to Arun retailers. In summing up she explained that there would be a small

Economic Committee - 8.06.21

amount of money left over for other opportunities and that the projects set out within the report would sit within the suggested budget and would be on a first come first served basis, she then confirmed that the monies needed to be spent by end of March 2022 and therefore application would need to close at the end of February 2022..

The Chair extended his personal thanks to the Business Development Manager and her team for all their hard work over the last year. In turning to the debate members were keen to understand if Arun had been in contact with the Bognor Regis BID in relation to retail support as it was felt that their input would be key for Bognor Regis.

The Leader of the Council explained that upon reading the report he was delighted to see the level of support that had been provided. He explained that early on in the last year there had been some frustration initially on the speed at which were able to provide support to businesses in the district. He stated that he would urge members to talk about these grants to make sure people are aware of these grants so all who need to can take advantage of this fund. The recommendation was then proposed and seconded.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

1. the spending from the Discretionary Business Grant fund as set out in the report be agreed.

62. BOGNOR REGIS SEAFRONT : REVIEW OF SEAFRONT DELIVERY PLAN AND DELIVERABLE INTERVENTIONS AND ACTIONS

The Group Head of Economy provided members with a detailed overview of her report, stating that the report had been requested by the Covid Recovery Working Party November 2020. She explained that the report provided members with an update on the regeneration strategy and plans in respect of Bognor Regis Seafront, what had been delivered to date in line with those plans and a list of future deliverable interventions and projects. In summing up she explained that members were now being asked to confirm if there were any projects listed that they did not want to be included as part of the priority list that would be being presented to the Committee at its meeting on 26 July 2021.

In turning to the debate Committee members raised a number of points that have been summarised below;

- Beach Huts it was felt that the Council was missing an opportunity by not considering building and selling as many as possible, there was also a suggestion from one member whereby the Council could divert up to 10 Beach Huts for an online auction with a reserve of £20,000 set, it was

suggested that this could generate further funds that would enhance and help the overall offering to Bognor Regis.

- Concern was raised that the report was recycling old ideas and consideration should be given to new ideas as well as being inclusive of the Pier
- Concerns raised regarding the new Café that was being proposed within the report, given that there were already two distinct operators for the area already.
- Support for having a series of places to eat on the seafront not just suited for families but to target the adult market was also voiced along with considering a road closure to allow for a large square to be created for pop up bars and restaurants right along the seafront.

The Committee then allowed for some non-Committee members to speak; the points raised have been summarised below;

- Concern was raised over the design style that had been documented as following the same style as the new toilets on the seafront and this being something that did not suit everyone's taste
- Concern was echoed by non-Committee members regarding the new Café near the bandstand as it was felt that improvements could be made to those already in place

After hearing non-Committee Members, the Chair returned to two of the Committee Members who wanted to query section 1.3.9 in the report specifically regarding the ownership of the Gloucester Road Car Park. It was confirmed that the report was correct, and the Car Park was under dual ownership by the Council and Butlins. The other member wishing to speak was Councillor Stanley who proposed the following amendment;

We move future projects with the expectation of the Bandstand Café and the new Café and that these be brought back to the Committee at a later date

The Chair sought guidance from the Group Head of Economy who provided clarification on the original request from the Covid Recovery Working Party, she clarified that at the time these proposals were put forward it was unsure what may or may not be considered as future proposals for the Regis Centre and therefore Officers were keen not to blight or restrict anything within that piece of work that could be included within the levelling up submission. That was why the Café opportunity by the Bandstand was considered and the thinking behind this was what was missing on a cold, windy and rainy day, was an area to go to that was warm and dry. She explained that she believed that the approach taken was not flawed as it would allow the Council to deliver something that would add a destination value.

On the basis of the explanation provided by the Group Head of Economy, the Chair and the Leader of the Council wanting to allow for the broadest possible scope for these projects. Councillor Stanley then agreed he would withdraw his amendment. The recommendation was then proposed and seconded.

Economic Committee - 8.06.21

The Committee

RESOLVED that

1. the projects listed in the report be included in the list of priority projects to be considered in a separate report to the Economy Committee in July 2021.

63. LEVELLING UP FUND BID SUBMISSION

The Director of Place provided members with a presentation which updated Members on how work had progressed with the two outline projects. It would be for Members to confirm, having received this update, that they confirm they endorse the submission of the bid for funding from the Levelling Up Fund to support projects in Bognor Regis and Littlehampton.

A brief summary of the presentation is below;

- There were a number of parameters that were required to be met in order to submit a bid to the Levelling Up Fund, some of these were a maximum of three projects per bid, if bid was unsuccessful the Council could re-bid in the next round, work for this bid is required to start in 2021/22 and any successful bid must be concluded by 2024/25, support from local MP was encouraged, the Council would need to provide 10% of funding and the bid must be submitted by the deadline of 18 June 2021.
- The Council would be submitting two bid projects, Littlehampton Seafront & Public Realm based on refresh of the original report completed by LDA Consulting in 2017. There had been public consultation completed on the original proposal. The second bid for Bognor Regis Theatre, the proposals had been developed alongside the Place St Maur designs.
- The key strategy for Littlehampton had been to improve the link between the seafront and the town. The rest of the proposal is focused on the greensward down on the seafront, particularly around the concessions building and Banjo Road. Removal of the toilet block to provide a better public realm link with the Harbour Park, provide new toilets with an external shower block providing a better arrival view to those visitors coming to the seafront. Banjo Road area focused on providing a sheltered place to sit down and have something to eat. There is consideration within the bid to add some lighting along with a form of light installation to Oyster Pond, as this would provide additional reasons to keep people and visitors in the area longer.
- The Bognor Regis Theatre improvements had been split in to two phases, phase two is a project for the future and not part of this bid. Phase one is to build a wraparound area of the existing Theatre comprising of new front of house facilities with increased seating and other internal improvements. There would also be the inclusion of 4 new studio areas and exhibition space.

The Chair reminded members that their role tonight was to decide if the Council should proceed with the bid, discussion should not focus on making changes or adding in additional aspects. The bid was as it had been presented to the Committee.

In turning to the debate, the Chair of the Levelling Working Party was invited to speak first, he offered his thanks to those Officers and Members who had been involved in all aspects of the work completed to get the Council to the stage of the presentation that had just been given. He asked if the Council had been in touch with Nick Gibb MP to ensure that his support is documented for this bid submission. He addressed concerns that he was aware of regarding the Bognor Regis improvements, by stating that this is the start of work to come for Bognor and it was a case of let's get the ball rolling with the improvements and get improvements happening for Bognor Regis. The Director of Place advised that he had spoken with Nick Gibb MP, and confirmed that he was supportive of these proposals, a letter has been sent to him to request a letter of support to include with the Council's bid submission.

A summary of other comments made by members and non-members of the Committee are below;

- Concerns raised regarding the inclusion of Surrey street in Littlehampton were raised as members felt this was an important linkage and should be included, it was confirmed that Surrey street was not included within this bid.
- There was overall enthusiasm for the proposals for Littlehampton, however the same enthusiasm for Bognor Regis Theatre proposal was not felt by some members, discussions on delaying this work and removing this part of the bid were had.
- It was commented that as the viability of Littlehampton effected the surrounding villages, had consideration been given to contacting the other MP's to add their support to the bid submission.
- Further discussion was had relating to the option of splitting the bid submission, with the option of submitting the bid for Littlehampton but for the Bognor Regis bid to be submitted at a later date. It was explained that this was not an option in terms of the parameters for the bid submission as the Council is limited to one successful bid only.
- Some members raised concerns that Whitbread may not have been involved in discussions with the Council for phase two of the improvements to Bognor Regis Theatre and should they not be supportive of the proposals, this would cause the Council problems when it came to executing those proposals. It was confirmed that the Council had been in discussions with Whitbread and they were supportive of the proposals that had been presented to members. However broader conversations around leases had not taken place yet but were due to take place soon.

The Leader of the Council stated that there was great enthusiasm for Littlehampton, and as a Council we were utilising our natural assets to get people into our District and Towns. He further stated that he was a strong advocate for ensuring that Surrey street was included in some way. He said that with the proposals for Bognor Regis there was more nervousness, however, he believed that that these plans showed

Economic Committee - 8.06.21

ambition and that the Council would be investing in Bognor Regis. He stresses the importance of the fact that the Government were investing in our District and that more importantly it would be a catalyst to both public and private investment in the future. The recommendations were then proposed and seconded.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

1. they endorse the submission of a bid for funding to the Levelling Up Fund for funding to support projects in Bognor Regis and Littlehampton to this report; and;
2. authorise the Director of Place to finalise the bid documentation and make changes as considered appropriate without changing the core messages or details and to seek letters of such from interested parties and partners.

64. CLOSURE OF TRISANTO DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED

(The Director of Place declared a personal interest in this item as the Director of Trisanto Development Corporation Limited)

The Leader of the Council explained that he was aware of concerns regarding this item and had an alternative proposal which was that the business case for Trisanto Development Corporation Limited be brought back to this Committee at a later date and the Directorship be brought back to this Committee at a later date for the Committee's review, he felt that the closure of this company was potentially a bad idea for the Council

The Director of Place explained to the Committee that he only no longer wanted to be a director should this company continue as a paper entity only. If the Committee were keen to do something proactive with the Company, he would be happy to remain as one of the directors.

In turning to the debate, a proposal to amend the recommendations to include a time limit for actions was suggested early on and seconded, but later withdrawn. The Leader of the Council stated that if the company was closed the argument could be made that the Council didn't want this as an option. He referenced Wokingham Homes who had taken the same approach and stated that their company was now generating a very good return.

The Director of Place stated that a report would be brought back to the Committee for their review at the earliest opportunity. The recommendations were then proposed and seconded.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

1. that the business case for Trisanto be updated and brought back to this committee, and;
2. that the risk register be updated and brought back to this committee

65. WORK PROGRAMME

The Director of Place provided members with an overview of the Committee Work Programme and confirmed that this was a living and evolving document.

There was a short discussion on suggestions for future items for the Committee and Officers to consider to be sent through to the Chair and the Committees team for further discussion. It was also confirmed that the list of the Outside bodies had been distributed to members as a supplementary pack for the Annual Council meeting on 19 May 2021.

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

66. EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Committee

RESOLVED that

under Section 100a (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and accredited representatives of newspapers be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.

67. PART B - AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR OFFICE GUARDING AND SECURITY SERVICES

The Senior Estates Surveyor presented his report to the Committee explaining that following a procurement exercise, the Committee's approval was sought to proceed with entering into a five-year contract for the continuation of office guarding and security services across the general fund portfolio. He also confirmed that the service costs received could be accommodated within the accommodation services budget. The recommendation was then proposed and seconded.

Economic Committee - 8.06.21

The Committee

RESOLVED that

1. the five-year contract from 01 July 2021 for the tendered works be awarded to Tenderer B.

68. PART B - AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR RESURFACING & REPAIRS TO COUNCIL OWNED CAR PARKS

The Group Head of Technical Services presented his report to the Committee explaining that following a procurement exercise the Committee's approval was sought to proceed with entering into a contract to undertake resurfacing, repairs and ancillary works to several Council owned car parks and an access road. The repairs had been identified within the Councils five-year planned maintenance programme. He also confirmed that the project costs received could be accommodated within the capital asset management budget. The recommendation was then proposed and seconded.

The Committee

RESOLVED that

1. the JCT Minor Works Building Contract (MW) 2016 for the tendered works be awarded to Tenderer A.

(The meeting concluded at 10.07 pm)