

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD AT BRAUNSTONE CIVIC CENTRE AND USING ZOOM VIDEO AND WEB CONFERENCING SOFTWARE

THURSDAY 14th JANUARY 2021 AT 7.00PM

PRESENT: Councillor Nick Brown (Chair), Councillor Amanda Hack (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Anthea Ambrose, Shabbir Aslam, Sam Maxwell, Phil Moitt, Tracey Shepherd, Satindra Sangha, Darshan Singh and Robert Waterton.

Officers in Attendance: Darren Tilley, Executive Officer & Town Clerk.

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

151. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Leanne Lee.

152. Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of any Disclosable Pecuniary or Non-Pecuniary Interests by members.

153. Public Participation

In accordance with Standing Order 3.6, members of the public may attend the meeting for the purpose of making representations, giving evidence or answering questions in respect of any item of business included on the agenda.

There were no members of the public at the meeting.

154. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8th October 2020 (item 4a on the agenda) and the extraordinary meeting held on 9th December 2020 (item 4b on the agenda) were circulated.

RESOLVED

1. that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th October 2020 be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record; and
2. that the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 9th December 2020 be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

155. Council Priorities and Objectives

The Committee considered the Council's Priorities and Objectives and determined whether they were relevant to address current and emerging issues faced by the Council and the community (item 5 on the agenda).

RESOLVED THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

1. that the structure of the Mission Statement be amended as proposed in the “Town Council Mission” section of the report;
2. that the nine Town Council Priorities for 2021/2022, based on the 2020/2021 Priorities and as updated, be approved as set out in the “Town Council Priorities” section of the report;
3. that a new Priority 10 “Responding to Climate Change” be approved, as set out in the “Town Council Priorities” section of the report; and
4. that the Council Objectives set out in Appendix 1, as amended, be approved.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To make the Mission Statement clearer and easier to read.*
2. *The Council’s priorities continued to be the focus for delivering a vision for local services and an environment which reached the highest possible standards, and the approach was supported by the Town’s Citizens’ Advisory Panel and the Council’s Standing Committees.*
3. *To provide a framework for Climate Change response objectives to be at the forefront of the Town Council’s service delivery and activities.*
4. *To ensure that the Council’s objectives were relevant and reflected changing issues within the community.*

156. Capital Plan 2021/2022

The Committee considered priorities and projects for the 2021/2022 Capital Plan (item 6 on the agenda).

RESOLVED THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

1. that the project due for completion (section b) be removed, assuming its completion prior to the end of the plan period, otherwise it be included on the 2021/2022 Capital Plan;
2. that the Current Projects (section c) be rolled forward on to the 2021/2022 Capital Plan; and
3. that the Proposed New Projects (section d) be added to the 2021/2022 Capital Plan.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To ensure the plan was updated accordingly reflecting progress with its delivery.*
2. *To confirm that the projects were outstanding and were still required.*
3. *To recognise the need to undertake investment and improvement as identified.*

157. Budget (including Fees & Charges) and Precept 2021/2022 and future estimates

The Committee considered the budget and precept for 2021/2022, including fees and charges, along with proposed estimates for future years (item 7 on the agenda).

The Executive Officer & Town Clerk provided an update on the arrangements for the second instalment of the Public Works Loan for the Shakespeare Park improvements. £500,000 had been secured at 1.87%; the annual repayments for the full loan of £936,936 would total £35,532, resulting in a saving of £2,356 on the proposed budget. This could be reinvested if required against a £2,655 deficit on the staff establishment budget, which had been calculated on the basis that the pay of five members of staff would be frozen under the Public Sector Pay Freeze; however, the Local Government Association had advised that the Pay Freeze did not apply to the sector.

RESOLVED THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

1. that the following be included as one-year items in the 2021/2022 budget:
 - (a) £1,000 for the Covid-19 Community Response, either for the Town's Covid- 19 Community Response Initiative or to provide financial support for associated services and support, for example, the Braunstone Town Community Foodbank;
 - (b) £2,000 in the Civic Centre budget and £1,000 in the Thorpe Astley Community Centre budget to replace and expand the provision of Christmas lights and decorations; and
 - (c) £3,000 in the Library budget to undertake conversion of lighting to LED;
2. that no percentage increase be applied to Community Centres, sports pitches and miscellaneous fees and charges;
3. that £9,000 be earmarked in the reserves in 2021/22 to be used to balance the general fund budget;
4. that £10,000 of the £25,000 one-off Library Transfer Grant received from Leicestershire County Council be earmarked in the reserves in 2021/22 to be used to offset the additional Library staffing costs transferred under TUPE;
5. that the Estimates for 2021/2022, as attached at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved as the Council's Budget for 2021/2022; and
6. that a Net Precept Requirement for £681,961 for the financial year 2021/2022 be submitted to Blaby District Council.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To fund specific items identified as a priority:*
 - (a) *to provide resources during 2021 for services to support residents and the community in response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic;*
 - (b) *to purchase Christmas lights for the Community Centres and the associated fixings (including the electrical installation);*
 - (c) *to reduce cost and emissions and reinvest the Library Service grant into improving and enhancing Library services.*

2. *Following a review of the budgeted income from Room Hires, Policy & Resources Committee established a Community Centres Working Group, which was postponed due to Covid-19 and was due to commence its work once the impact on the business of the Centres becomes clearer.*
3. *Following the withdrawal of Council Tax Support Grant, to use reserves to protect services, while phasing the equivalent in precept increases over a period of 3-4 years to avoid any adverse impact a single large precept increase would have on residents.*
4. *To enable the Town Council to continue to employ staff at Braunstone Town Library, as set out in its proposed service model.*
5. *To meet the Town Council's operating budgets for 2020/2021 along with funding for the Capital Plan and service pressures as identified in the report on Medium Term Priorities and Financial Planning.*
6. *The precept requirement for the year being the difference between expenditure and income, calculated in accordance with Section 50 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.*

158. Shakespeare Park – Improvement & Development

The Committee received a progress report on the pavilion and site improvement works; along with an update on interest and repayment rates for Public Works Loans (item 8 on the agenda).

The Executive Officer & Town Clerk reported on progress following the recent Project Meeting on 7th January 2021, as follows:

- the external structure and roof of the new Pavilion had been completed and focus was on the internal works;
- plasterboards to ceilings and relevant walls were complete;
- electrical and mechanical works were progressing;
- electric and gas supply connections have been programmed to commence at the beginning of February;
- the demolition of the existing building was due to commence around the end of January / beginning of February; and
- the works were about 3-4 weeks behind schedule due to supply issues and completion was estimated for the beginning of May.

The Executive Officer & Town Clerk confirmed that the second and final instalment of £500,000, of a total Public Works Loan of £936,936, had been secured and was due to be paid into the bank account on Monday 18th January 2021. The interest rate on the second instalment was 1.87% resulting in an annual repayment of £17,808 (the total annual repayment for both instalments of the loan would be £35,532).

A meeting of the Shakespeare Park Improvement Project Working Group, with representatives of both the bowls and football clubs, was scheduled for Thursday 4th February 2021 to discuss the future management and operational arrangements for the new Pavilion and pitches.

RESOLVED

1. that progress with the *Pavilion and Site Works*, including payment, as set out in the relevant section of the report, be noted;

2. that the funding update, including the interest and repayment rates, attached at Appendix 2, be noted; and
3. that the revised timescales for the project, attached at Appendix 3, be approved.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To ensure that the project, which would enable an increase in sport participation and improve recreation and play facilities in a Ward which had high rankings of multiple deprivation across a range of domains, including income, employment and education and had the worst proportion of overweight or obese children in the County of Leicestershire, was delivered efficiently and effectively.*
2. *Appropriate funds were committed and were drawn down when required; the Committee would continue review the project payments and the drawing down of funds to ensure the long-term financial stability and sustainability of the project.*
3. *To provide a guide for the progression of the project, which could be amended accordingly as appropriate.*

159. Review of arrangements for responding to Covid-19

The Committee received an update on the Council's response to the restrictions; reviewed the arrangements for Covid-19 Secure Facilities Hires; and received a recommendation from Community Development Committee concerning the use of the Council's facilities for Covid-19 vaccinations (item 9 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the approach taken by the Management Team on 5th January 2020 in respect of the Council's services in response to the new National Lockdown restrictions, be endorsed;
2. that the updated *Impact of Covid-19 Local Tiers on Council Services*, attached at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved; and that delegated authority be given to the Executive Officer & Town Clerk, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, to amend in response to the changing Covid-19 situation;
3. that the current position set out in the report in respect of "Managing Services during the Winter Period" be noted and the approach endorsed;
4. that no changes be made to the current Covid-19 Secure Room Capacity, Room Hire terms and conditions, specific Covid-19 Terms & Conditions of hire or pricing; and that the arrangements from 1st April 2021 be determined by the next scheduled meeting of the Committee on 25th February 2021; and
5. that the approach set out in the report concerning the availability and use of the Council's facilities for the administration of "Covid-19 vaccinations" be endorsed.

Reasons for Decision

- 1. To recognise that a response to the new national restrictions was required and to provide clarity to residents, customers and users regarding the availability of the Council's services.*
- 2. To provide clarity for residents, customers, users, Councillors and staff on the impact of the tiers on the provision of the Council's services and to ensure that a framework would be in place to respond avoiding undue delays.*
- 3. To continue to meet the requirements to respond to the impact of Covid-19 through the winter period in terms of delivering corporate and service responsibilities, recovery of services, health and safety requirements, priority projects and supporting the coordination and development of the Community Response.*
- 4. To ensure that the Centres remained attractive to hire and to facilitate re-establishing community groups, events and activities in 2021/22 to reduce isolation and build community cohesion.*
- 5. To ensure that all possible support was given to ensure that the community and vulnerable residents received the vaccine in a convenient and timely manner.*

160. External Audit 2019/2020

The Committee noted that the External Audit was completed on 14th October 2020 and no matters were raised concerning the Town Council's accounts and governance arrangements for the year ended 31st March 2020 (item 10 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that it be noted that the External Audit for the 2019/2020 financial year was completed on 14th October 2020.

Reason for Decision

An unqualified opinion was given by the External Auditor, PKF Littlejohn LLP, on the Council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/2020.

161. Blaby District Parish Councils Group

The Committee received feedback from the Blaby District Parish Councils Group and considered whether any issues needed to be raised at future meetings (item 11 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that a suggestion be made to the Board of Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils (LRALC) that at least two of the current vacancies on the Board be filled by persons from BAME backgrounds.

Reason for Decision

To allow for specific perspectives and skills to be brought into the LRALC Board, including contributing towards the development of its new Strategic Plan.

162. End of Quarter Financial Position - Cashbook and Reserves

The Committee received a summary of the Council's Cash and Reserves for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st December 2020 (item 12 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that the end of quarter financial position be noted.

Reason for Decision

There were no issues of concern with the management of the Council's Finances.

163. Financial Comparisons

The Committee received Financial Comparisons for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st December 2020 (item 13 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason for Decision

There were no issues of concern with income and expenditure against the budget for 2020/2021.

164. Approval of Accounts

The Committee considered payments from 1st October 2020 until 31st December 2020 (item 14 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that the list of Approved Expenditure Transactions for the period 1st October 2020 until 31st December 2020 be approved.

Reason for Decision

To authorise payments in accordance with the Accounts & Audit Regulations and the Council's Financial Regulations.

165. Shakespeare Park Playground and Tennis Courts Improvements

RESOLVED that in view of the special / confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the press/public be excluded and they be instructed to withdraw (Standing Orders 3.5 and 3.7 apply). *Reason for exception – Commercial Interest.*

The Committee considered an assessment of the shortlisted and preferred suppliers for the playground and tennis courts improvements and to select preferred contractors to undertake the works (item 15 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the tender submitted by Contractor C to supply and install new play equipment and refurbish existing play equipment at Shakespeare Park, as detailed in the tender specification (Appendix 1), be accepted;

2. that the tender submitted by Contractor E to refurbish the tennis courts at Shakespeare Park, as detailed in the tender specification (Appendix 2), be accepted;
3. that the tender submitted by Contractor G to refurbish the tennis courts at Shakespeare Park, be accepted as second choice and that in the event of the chosen contractor (E) being unable to accept, withdrawing from the process, or the terms being unacceptable to the Council, then the second choice tender be progressed;
4. that delegated authority be given to the Executive Officer & Town Clerk to liaise with the selected contractors (as set out in 1 – 3 above) to
 - (a) determine the detailed arrangements, timings and work schedules,
 - (b) make minor modifications to the design and installation proposals, including requesting additional supplies and options within the delegated spending limits allowed under paragraph 11.1i of the Financial Regulations, and
 - (c) award the contracts; and
5. that the funding position, set out in the report and at Appendix 4, be noted; and that delegated authority be given to the Executive Officer & Town Clerk, to prepare and submit applications to external funding bodies to access funding towards the projects.

Reasons for Decision

1. *The tender from Contractor C represented best value when balanced against the approved assessment matrix, including cost and ability to undertake the proposed works. The tender was explored in more detail, confirming the initial assessment and had been the subject of consultation with residents, who broadly welcomed the proposals.*
2. *The tender from Contractor E represented best value when balanced against quality and durability and scored in the top scoring ranges across the assessment matrix. The tender was explored in more detail, confirming the initial assessment and had been the subject of consultation with residents, who broadly welcomed the proposals.*
3. *To avoid delaying the project in the event of withdrawal by the preferred contractor for the tennis courts improvements or the terms being unacceptable to the Council.*
4. *To allow detailed arrangements for the work to be negotiated, practical modifications to be made and additional miscellaneous items to be incorporated where necessary.*
5. *To enable appropriate funding options to be assessed and sought to ensure the projects could be delivered.*

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

NOTE:

CRIME & DISORDER ACT 1998 (SECTION 17) – The Council has an obligation to consider Crime & Disorder implications of all its activities and to do all that it can to prevent Crime and Disorder in its area.

EQUALITIES ACT 2010

Braunstone Town Council has a duty in carrying out its functions to have due regard to:-

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and;
- foster good relations between different groups

To ensure that no person receives less favourable treatment on the basis of race, disability, sex, gender re-assignment, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity.

These issues were considered in connection with each of the above decisions. Unless otherwise stated under each item of this report, there were no implications.

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____