

Minutes of the Meeting of the FINANCIAL STRATEGY ADVISORY GROUP held at Committee Room 1, Epsom Town Hall on 29 September 2023

PRESENT -

Councillor Neil Dallen (Chair); Councillors John Beckett, Hannah Dalton, Steven McCormick and Julie Morris (as nominated substitute for Councillor Alison Kelly)

Absent: Councillor Alison Kelly and Councillor Clive Woodbridge

Officers present: Brendan Bradley (Head of Finance) and Sue Emmons (Chief Accountant)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by Members regarding items on the agenda for the meeting.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Financial Policy Panel meeting held on 31 January 2023 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3 MEMBER QUERY REGARDING MEETING LIVE-STREAMING

Members noted that the meeting was not being live-streamed online.

Following a query from a Member on the matter, Democratic Service Officers confirmed that the current meeting of the Financial Strategy Advisory Group was open to public attendance. The Democratic Service Officers confirmed that there is no requirement to live-stream the meetings of bodies of the Council, and that the current meeting's business could be transacted lawfully in the absence of a live-stream.

Satisfied with the explanation provided, the Chair decided that the meeting could continue.

4 COUNCILLOR BECOMING ABSENT FROM MEETING

Councillor Steven McCormick left the meeting at circa 2:15pm.

Democratic Services Officers confirmed that the meeting remained quorate. In light of this, the Chair decided that the meeting was to continue.

5 TREASURY MANAGEMENT YEAR-END PERFORMANCE 2022/23

Following consideration of the report's contents, the Group moved to consider the report recommendations, which were agreed as follows:

- (1) Receive the report on the Council's treasury management performance 2022/23;**
- (2) Receive the 2022/23 prudential indicators.**

6 INITIAL CAPITAL PROPOSALS - 2024/25

The Members requested that any final proposal brought back to the Group in November should include the potential impact of not progressing each scheme.

Members provided the following feedback on each proposal:

Strategy & Resources 1 – Business Assurance Performance Software:

That the proposal was not to be progressed through the capital programme, but the Group requested to be informed whether this project is ultimately progressed by Officers through existing revenue budgets.

Strategy & Resources 2 – Longmead Depot Contamination Works:

That the proposal could progress to the next stage of the capital programme. Members requested that the final proposal consider whether external funding could be secured, for example, or whether funds could be available from a nutrient mitigation scheme.

Environment 1 – Ashley Centre Barriers Replacement:

That the proposal could progress to the next stage of the capital programme. Members requested that the final proposal provide more detail on how the system would operate and address what alternative options might be available, and that the Car Park Working Group should also be consulted on the proposal.

Environment 2 – Ashley Centre Level 3 Fencing:

That the proposal was not to be progressed through the capital programme unless there is a legal requirement on the Council to put up fencing. The Members preferred to focus on earlier interventions to prevent suicide, in line with the Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

Environment 3 – Listed Wall:

That the proposal was not to be progressed through the capital programme. The Members agreed, however, that the proposed works may be brought through the revenue maintenance programme if Officers can demonstrate that the works are

essential and subject to relevant approvals. They also agreed that external funding should be explored.

Environment 4 – Stew Pond Silt Removal:

That the proposal was not to be progressed through the capital programme. The Finance Officer was asked to investigate external funding (especially new funding opportunities that may be available should the area be included within the proposed new National Nature Reserve). The Members agreed that the scheme would be deferred either until external funding can be secured, or until it can be demonstrated that the works are essential/unavoidable.

Environment 5 – Streetlamps Replacement:

That the proposal could progress to the next stage of the capital programme. Members requested that the final proposal contain more detail including which streetlamps would be replaced and a priority list, including the benefits provided by lighting the area. Safety statistics or a safety assessment were also requested. Members requested that the final proposal confirm what increased maintenance costs the Council would incur if the scheme were not progressed.

Community & Wellbeing 1 – Bourne Hall Roof Replacement & Solar Panel Installation:

That the proposal could progress to the next stage of the capital programme. Members agreed if Empty Homes Council Tax funding from SCC is received in 2024/25, this would be earmarked to progress this scheme. If this funding stream is insufficient or not received, then capital receipts would be used to fund the balance.

Members agreed the final proposal should clarify what part of Bourne Hall is listed. Also, whether the solar panel installation is dependent on the roof replacement.

Community & Wellbeing 2 – Community & Wellbeing Centre Solar Panel Installation:

That the proposal could progress to the next stage of the capital programme. It was agreed the final proposal should confirm:

- The impact on the current boiler and whether a new boiler would be required;
- Why has there been a movement in the estimated cost from £45k earlier in the year to £60k now;
- How would the panels be protected, and vandalism be mitigated?

Community & Wellbeing 3 – Community & Wellbeing Centre Windows Replacement:

That the proposal could progress to the next stage of the capital programme. It was agreed the final proposal should address:

- Are cheaper replacement windows available, or could some windows be bricked up to reduce costs and the payback period?
- Are there synergy savings from progressing the solar panels and windows scheme at the same time?

Community & Wellbeing 4 – Disabled Facilities Grant:

That the proposal could progress to the next stage of the capital programme.

Following consideration of the above matters and the report's contents, the Group moved to consider the report recommendations, which were agreed as follows:

- (1) Provide guidance on which of the initial schemes in the first draft 2024/25 capital programme should be developed for further consideration in November.**

The meeting began at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.36 pm

COUNCILLOR NEIL DALLEN (CHAIR)