

## CABINET

### Minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2021 at 5.30 pm in by Video Conference.

**Present:** Councillor Rick Everitt (Chairman); Councillors Whitehead, Albon, Duckworth and Yates

**In Attendance:** Councillors Ashbee, J Bayford, R Bayford, Pat Moore, Pugh, D Saunders and Shrubbs

#### **709. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies received at the meeting.

#### **710. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **711. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Councillor Duckworth proposed, Councillor Whitehead seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 19 January 2021.

#### **712. CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME - 51-57 HIGH STREET, MARGATE**

The meeting was advised that the Council had received a grant payment of £750,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for a capital project to commence immediately. The 51-57 High Street, Margate (former M&S) site was identified due to it being in the Council's ownership and being in a key high street location.

The project would include; a replacement roof and scaffolding and soft strip out including safe removal of asbestos and services. This project was externally funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and was required to be delivered within the set criteria and restrictions of the Towns Fund programme. An application for Listed Building Consent for the replacement of the roof was granted on 21 January 2021, this was required due to the facade on the Cecil Square side of the buildings being grade 2 listed.

The buildings involved were included in a Joint Venture with Homes England. The works would be subject to formal approval being received through the Joint Venture, permitting the capital works in accordance with the terms and conditions within the agreement. The capital works would be procured in line with the Council's open invitation to tender route led by Procurement. The council was working hard to deliver the project in a timely manner.

This project would enable the vision for the building to be more clearly defined in line with any repurposing of the high street and town centre. It is proposed that the building could form part of a portfolio of assets in a new Creative Land Trust that was proposed within the Margate Town Deal Town Investment Plan submitted to the Government on 11 December, 2020. The proposals within the Investment Plan form part of the discussion with the Joint Venture partners. This capital project fitted strategically with the Council's corporate priorities as it supported inward investment and promotes sustainability and growth of local enterprise.

These works aim to aid the economic recovery for Margate, contributing to the delivery of the Margate Town Deal and the levelling up agenda. Delivery of this capital project would lead to reduced repair bills due to water ingress to the structure and mitigating Asbestos Containing Material management, representing potential revenue savings for the Council.

Councillor Duckworth proposed, Councillor Everitt seconded and Cabinet agreed the following:

1. To permit the expenditure of the allocated budgets for the agreed capital project to renovate 51-57 High Street, Margate;
2. To give delegated authority to the Director of Regeneration to negotiate and agree the contract documents;
3. To give delegated authority to the Director of Law and Democracy, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration, to sign the contract documents and any other necessary documents to give effect to this decision.

#### **713. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT - REVIEW AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

Cabinet considered the report on the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This was a statutory requirement which sets out how the Council would consult on planning policy issues, planning applications and neighbourhood plans. The SCI was originally adopted by Council in 2007. A reviewed and updated SCI was adopted by Council in 2012. The SCI should be reviewed now in line with the forthcoming Local Plan review and update, and to reflect changes in methods of communication and engagement. There was also a requirement under the Town and Country Planning Regulations that SCIs are reviewed every 5 years.

The changes in the SCI Review are set out at paragraph 2.2 to the cabinet report with two key changes which are:

- Increased recognition of more recent changes in the use of social media, and seeking to ensure that the SCI reflects these, and the flexibility to deal with situations such as COVID19; and
- Potential administrative charging for long and complex submissions relating to consultation documents, where those submissions are not made directly into the consultation system, but have to be processed by officers. This can be a time-consuming process, which can cause delay to Local Plan progression. However, based on previous experience, it is anticipated that the vast majority of representations would not be affected by administrative charges.

Members agreed to carry out a 6 week public consultation on the revised SCI. Responses from that consultation would be considered and any appropriate amendments made. This would then be reported to Cabinet and Full Council for adoption.

Councillor Everitt proposed, Councillor Albon seconded and Cabinet agreed the revised Statement of Community Involvement to progress for a consultation period of 6 weeks.

#### **714. YOUR LEISURE**

Cabinet discussed the report on Your Leisure. Members agreed that the financial impact of Covid-19 on the leisure and entertainment industry has been profound. If no corrective action was taken, the council could be faced with the prospect of many local services having to cease operation. This could have far-reaching long-term effects given the health inequalities that are within the district.

There would be significant financial implications for the council, whether the council took the services in-house, was able to identify an alternative provider or allowed Your Leisure to cease operation altogether. Cabinet acknowledged that there was no risk-free option available on this matter. Whilst Cabinet welcomed the recent Government financial support to the leisure sector; that support did not go nearly far enough and only applied from 2 December 2020. This did not address many months of financial loss before that period, given the first national restrictions were imposed in March 2020.

At this point all of Your Leisure's facilities and services were required to close and consequently, their customer income ceased. Whilst some services have reopened, customer confidence remains low and there was significant uncertainty around when the latest national restrictions will lift. The council has worked closely with Your Leisure throughout the pandemic to understand the challenges they have been facing and has confidence in the management's approach. Supporting a Thanet business, which employs many local people and in turn protects the health and wellbeing of so many of Thanet residents, who really value the services provided, has to be a priority.

Councillor Everitt proposed, Councillor Duckworth seconded and Cabinet agreed:

1. To note the report;
2. To give authority to the s151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader to:
  - a. approve a loan to Your Leisure of between £700k-£1.5m, terms to be agreed but with an interest rate equivalent to market rate;
  - b. provide additional funding to the Winter Gardens to ensure that it can reopen and operate from October 2021 to address the cost of replacing and relocating the boilers at an estimated cost of £230,285 plus VAT;
  - c. explore with YL the potential to refinance, through Council prudential borrowing the existing loans in respect of Ramsgate and Hartsdown Leisure Centres;
3. To agree that the Council will extend the Theatre Royal Agreement until 28 April 2022;
4. To give authority to the Director of Law and Democracy to negotiate and agree any relevant Legal agreements required to reflect these recommendations;
5. To bring back a further report following the review mentioned in 3.1 in the cabinet report.

Meeting concluded: 5.49 pm