

IMPROVEMENT & INNOVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2021 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Bayley (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Andrews, Bayley, Bonin, McGregor, Pett and Waterton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Clayton, Eyre, Hogarth and Nelson

Cllr. Osborne-Jackson was also present.

1. Appointment of Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr Fleming be appointed Chairman of the Advisory Committee for 2021/22.

(Cllr Fleming in the Chair)

The Chairman thanked the Committee for his appointment as Chairman, and expressed his congratulations to Charlotte Sinclair on her new position of Democratic Services Team Leader.

2. Appointment of Vice Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr Bayley be appointed Vice Chairman of the Advisory Committee for 2021/22.

3. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee held on 25 February 2021, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

5. Actions from previous meeting

There were none.

6. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

7. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder, and Chairman advised that from September 2021 the Customer Solutions Team would be expanding the hours they were able to take telephone calls from customers to run from 7am to 7pm Monday to Friday. All of the Burlington Mews properties were either sold or had been let. Construction work on 27-37 High Street, Swanley had started and White Oak Leisure Centre was on track.

8. Rural Landowners Forum Update

The Strategic Head of Property and Commercial presented the report which advised that the Rural Landowners Forum was set up with the Council to engage with key rural landowner representatives in the District to understand issues that affected them and the District and inform the development of appropriate strategies, policies and initiatives. The forum was chaired by the Leader of the Council, supported by the Portfolio Holders, and met once a year. The agenda was set by the landowners.

At the most recent meeting the group discussed how landowners could help formulate policy and strategy for the rural economy to bounce back from Covid-19; dealing with antisocial behaviour on private land and rural broadband connectivity. The Committee heard from two rural landowners, Eliza Ecclestone from St. Clere Estate and Sue Green from Montreal Estate, who provided insights as to how the Rural Landowners Forum worked, the value it derives and how the landowners were adopting initiatives that support the Council's agenda in rural land management and conservation, job creation and enterprise development. They also talked about the challenges with recruitment, as well as the opportunities provided for training and self-development.

Members took the opportunity to ask questions from Eliza and Sue, with particular focus on business development opportunities, net zero and affordable homes.

The Committee thanked Eliza and Sue for their attendance at the meeting.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

9. Place Campaign for the District

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The Strategic Head of Property and Commercial presented the report which set out the work progressing on the place brand which aimed to support the wellbeing and economic development of the Sevenoaks District. The intention was to create a common brand that could be adapted and used by numerous organisations within the District to promote it as a place live, work, invest and visit. A marketing consultant, Pillory Barn was appointed in February 2021 to prepare a branding strategy, approach and place campaign. A Steering Group was established to provide input into the emerging ideas and concepts.

The Chairman welcomed Miranda Chapman from Pillory Barn who gave a presentation on the emerging place brand for the District. The presentation covered desk research, emerging themes, and next steps including further testing in the coming weeks, and continuing discussions with steering groups and the Rural Landowners Forum.

The Committee took the opportunity to ask questions and discussed the presentation.

The Chairman thanked Miranda Chapman, and colleagues for their attendance.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

10. Re-profiling Capital Programme 2021/22

The Strategic Head of Property & Commercial Services presented the report which sought prioritisation of the Bevan Place Project within the Capital Programme.

In November 2020, Council had agreed a three-year Capital Programme part of which was to facilitate the development of new regeneration schemes for the Council. At the time of preparing the recommendations, high level assumptions were made as to potential projects, indicative costs, and pace of delivery. This resulted in a list of potential projects and envisaged funding allocations, and a projects approval protocol was put in place.

In establishing a three-year Capital Programme it also required the approval of a funding pot that would facilitate the rapid deployment of funds towards projects. However, with different schemes moving at different pace, there was a greater need to draw funds towards schemes that were maturing faster. The realignment of the Capital Programme would provide officers with greater flexibility in delivering the Bevan Place Project at pace.

He answered questions from Members and advised that the Edenbridge project would be continuing but undertaken in the next financial year.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That

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- a) the requirement to create greater flexibility in drawing down funds from the approved Capital Programme, be noted; and
- b) the following recommendation to Cabinet be endorsed -

That £400,000 be vired within the approved Capital Programme to facilitate the delivery of the Bevan Place project as follows:

- £330,000 from Edenbridge (This project to be postponed to 2022/23 and be re-profiled as part of the 2022/23 Budget setting process)
- £20,000 from the Sevenoaks Town Centre Regeneration Project
- £50,000 from the “Other Feasibility” allocation.

11. Work plan

The work plan was noted, with an update on corporate projects at the October 2021 meeting.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.22 PM

CHAIRMAN