

IMPROVEMENT & INNOVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2023 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Bayley (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Andrews, Bonin, Clayton, Eyre, Hogarth, Nelson, Pett and Waterton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. McGregor

Cllrs. Griffiths and Purves were also present.

Cllr. Dickins was also present via a virtual media platform that did not constitute attendance as recognised by the Local Government Act 1972.

30. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held 24 November 2022, be signed and approved as a correct record.

31. Declarations of interest

There were none.

32. Actions form previous meeting

There were none.

DEFERMENT OF AGENDA ITEM

With the agreement of the Committee, the Chairman deferred Agenda Item 7 “Environmental Health Innovation” to a future meeting.

33. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder, and Chairman, gave an update on the services within their portfolio. Despite financial pressures during the budget, the Capital Programme was maintained and progress was being delivered on all sites. Options for the Bevan Place site were being explored. The Meeting Point site in Swanley was set to open in March 2023, and aimed to be fully operational in April.

The White Oak Leisure Centre celebrated its first anniversary in February 2023. The gym seen 4 to 5 times more users than before and performance numbers for all services remained high. The Portfolio Holder emphasised the non-capital benefits that capital programmes can have, including providing sites where

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residents can both enjoy themselves and remain healthy. The leisure centres at Edenbridge and Sevenoaks would be reviewed.

The first car parking spaces on the Stangrove Estate would be operational soon. The Spitals Cross Estate plan had been adjusted following a consultation. The Council aimed to discuss the plans for the land east of Sevenoaks High Street in consort with Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan in the near future.

34. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

35. LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review

The Chief Officer for Customer & Resources presented the report and updated the Committee on the LGA Peer Challenge Progress Review. The review took place in November 2022 and examined the Council's progress against the nine recommendations from the Peer Challenge. The Council had quickly delivered positive actions against most of the recommendations, which impressed the reviewers. They acknowledged that there were some limits on the responses due to the economic climate.

In response to questions, the Chief Officer explained that the Council were praised for their management of large public consultations, and that the actions were progressing towards always engaging the community in smaller issues.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

36. UK Shared Prosperity Fund Update Report

The Economic Development Officer presented the report, which updated the Committee on the key programme to be delivered via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The Council was allocated £1,000,000 for the period 2022 - 2025. The programme included a range of projects working with other Council teams and external partnerships, emphasising building upon existing activity and groups. Some projects would also be delivered across the West Kent partnership with Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, such as the West Kent business support scheme. For example, funding had been allocated to researching sector skills, to inform further People & Skills work. All funding for Sevenoaks District would only be used to support organisations within the District. The Officer then outlined the schemes within each priority.

The Officer outlined the Council's approach regarding the Rural England Prosperity Fund. Funding would be offered to rural businesses to provide a West Kent business support scheme, building on the successes from the former West Kent LEADER scheme. The Council were awaiting approval for spending for the REPF.

In response to questions, the Officer explained that the details of the actions were being refined, as permission to spend was only granted in December 2022. The Council was working with town and parish councils to ensure that work was

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supportive of their town plans. Members discussed the mentoring support for businesses included within the UKSPF plans, and were advised that the Council were commissioning a provider for the plan to support businesses with grants, advice, and events.

Resolved: that Cabinet be updated on the key programme to be delivered via the UK Shared Prosperity fund, including the Rural England Prosperity fund proposals.

37. Work plan

The Work Plan was noted, with the following addition:

27 June 2023:

- Environmental Health Innovation

38. White Oak Residential

The Regeneration Development Project Manager presented the report, which set out updates to the development proposal for the White Oak Leisure Centre Residential Scheme. The scheme had decreased in density, to create a better quality environment and more family houses, resulting in a reduction from 81 to 61 units. This was based on further design and viability testing as well as feedback from Councillors. The procurement approach had been updated to reflect the needs of modern methods of construction (MMC). The Council had successfully obtained £840,000 of Brownfield Land Release grant funding for the site. The Council had a guaranteed fixed works price from its contractor, which gave the cost plan a high degree of certainty. The Officer explained that this was the Council's first modern methods of construction (MMC) scheme, which will deliver high quality, environmentally efficient and sustainable homes with new open space, trees and enhanced landscaping. The scheme's indicative program indicated that a planning application would be submitted for spring 2023, with construction beginning in October 2023.

The Committee discussed the reduction in the number of units, noting that it allowed for a reduction in height of the scheme, an increase in green space, and more family homes. They further discussed modern methods of construction, and heard that there were no issues with obtaining mortgages or insurance for properties built in that way. They heard that houses would have the option of installing PV cells and air source heat pumps.

They discussed the lack of affordable housing provision within the scheme. They were advised that, as a single project within a larger White Oak scheme, revenue from the site were needed to help deliver the overall development and the newly completed White Oak Leisure Centre. They also heard that two developments consisting entirely of affordable housing were under way in Swanley, but that this scheme would not be viable if it included any. They further discussed transport, and heard that 68 parking spaces would be provided, and the train station was within walking distance.

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Resolved: That, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting when considering Appendix B of Item 10 (Minute 38), on the grounds that likely disclosure of exempt information was involved as defined by Schedule 12A, Paragraph 3 (Relating to the business or financial affairs of a particular person (or the authority holding that information))

Members discussed the information within the confidential appendix and asked questions of clarification.

Resolved: That the recommendations to Cabinet and Council be endorsed.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.23 PM

CHAIRMAN