

CABINET

2 September 2019

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held at the Council Chamber on Monday 2 September 2019 at 6:30pm.

Committee Members present: Councillors D.B. Oliver (Leader), Mrs C.A. Bayliss, J. Brewerton, C.A. Clark, Mrs D.C. Earl-Williams, K.M. Field, S.M. Prochak (Deputy Leader) and J. Vine-Hall.

Other Members present: Councillors J. Barnes, Mrs M.L. Barnes, R.K. Bird, T.J.C. Byrne, S.J. Coleman, Mrs V. Cook, P.C. Courtel, G.C. Curtis, K.P. Dixon (in part), B.J. Drayson, A.E. Ganly, P.J. Gray, K.M. Harmer (in part), Mrs S. Hart, Mrs E.M. Kirby-Green, L.M. Langlands, C. Madeley, C.R. Maynard, M. Mooney, P.N. Osborne, G.F. Stevens and H.L. Timpe.

Advisory Officers in attendance: Executive Director (MJ), Executive Director (TL), Assistant Director Resources, Head of Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration, Head of Housing and Community, Programme Office and Policy Manager, Housing and Asset Development Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present: Jan Cutting – Rother Voluntary Action and 10 members of the public.

Publication Date: 5 September 2019

The decisions made under PART II will come into force on 13 September 2019 unless they have been subject to the call-in procedure.

CB19/35. MINUTES

(1)

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2019 as a correct record of the proceedings.

CB19/36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(2)

There were no apologies for absence.

CB19/37. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(5)

Declarations of interest were made by Councillors in the Minutes as indicated below:

Mrs Bayliss Agenda Item 11 – Personal Interest in so far as she was a member of Bexhill Heritage.

Byrne Agenda Item 11 – Personal Interest in so far as he was a member of Bexhill Heritage.

Brewerton	Agenda Item 8 – Personal Interest in so far as she was the Council’s appointed representative on Rother Voluntary Action and former trustee. Agenda Item 11 – Personal Interest in so far as she was Vice-Chair of Bexhill Community Land Trust.
Coleman	Agenda Item 11 – Personal Interest in so far as he was a member of Bexhill Heritage.
Drayson	Agenda Item 11 – Personal Interest in so far as he was a member of Bexhill Heritage.
Gray	Agenda Item 11 – Personal Interest in so far as she was a member of Bexhill Heritage.
Langlands	Agenda Item 11 – Personal Interest in so far as she was a member of Bexhill Heritage.
Madeley	Agenda Item 11 – Personal Interest in so far as she was a member of Bexhill Heritage.
Oliver	Agenda Item 11 – Personal Interest in so far as he had assisted Bexhill Heritage on previous projects.
Timpe	Agenda Item 11 – Personal Interest in so far as she was a member of Bexhill Heritage.
Vine-Hall	Agenda Item 10 – Personal Interest in so far as he had convened Rother’s Neighbourhood Forum.

CB19/38. **PROPOSED FORMAL SUBSTITUTE PROCEDURE FOR COMMITTEES**

(6)

Members received and considered Minute OSC19/14 arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) meeting held on the 22 July 2019 that had considered a recommendation from the Member Development Task Group regarding introducing a formal substitute procedure for Committees.

Research had been undertaken with neighbouring authorities to devise a simplistic, uncomplicated procedure that suited the Council’s decision making structure and available resources. It was noted that provision already existed in the Council’s Constitution for Group Leaders to change membership and appoint substitute members to Task and Finish Groups. The OSC was supportive of the recommendations and noted a number of key points outlined in the draft procedure.

Cabinet was keen to introduce the changes and recommended that full Council approve and adopt the procedure identified at Appendix A to the report with effect from 17 September 2019. It was also recommended that Group Leaders nominated one substitute Member

each in respect of Licensing and General Purposes Committee, OSC and Planning Committee at the full Council meeting scheduled to be held on 16 September 2019 and that the Council's Constitution be amended accordingly.

RECOMMENDED: That:

- 1) the proposed substitute procedure for formal committees, set out at Appendix A to the report be recommended for approval and adoption by full Council;
- 2) the system be implemented with effect from 17 September 2019;
- 3) Group Leaders be requested to nominate one substitute Member each in respect of the Licensing and General Purposes Committee, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Planning Committee at the full Council meeting to be held on 16 September 2019; and
- 4) consequential amendments be made to the Council's Constitution.

CB19/39.
(12)

PROVISION OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director which identified various options for the Council to acquire property to use as temporary accommodation. Under the Housing Act 1996, the Council had a duty to accommodate homeless households. Investing in property meant that the Council had greater control over the quality and quantity of provision, whilst reducing the net cost of provision.

The Council would continue to use a number of privately owned (15 including eight self-contained properties) well-managed temporary accommodation establishments. The budget for 2019/20 was £775,000 offset by £369,500 of income predominantly recovered through housing benefit; net cost was £385,500.

Requests for temporary accommodation were increasing. Between March 2015 and March 2019 homeless households had risen from 17 to 57. To date 66 homeless households were in B&B accommodation. Appendix 1 to the report identified the types of households the Council had placed in temporary accommodation during 2018/19. Members noted that the Council had no duty to provide self-contained accommodation for single people. The Council, in collaboration with East Sussex County Council and wider partners was currently reviewing the provision of supported accommodation for all groups and, in particular, single people with complex needs.

Members noted that the average length of stay in temporary accommodation across all household types was 77 days. The net cost of placing single households or childless couples and households with children was on average £1,360 and £2,900 respectively. If the Council purchased its own property, over a twelve month period, average costs of £6,000 – £13,000 per household could be avoided.

The report identified the financial assessment and investment required to purchase a range of properties. It also included an illustration of the costs which could be avoided by placing households in local authority rather than private accommodation. The projections were verified in consultation with neighbouring local authorities who delivered similar schemes. An overall net saving of £70,000 per annum was projected.

The Council's Temporary Accommodation Strategy (TAS) was appended to the report at Appendix 4. The TAS outlined the types of properties the Council intended to acquire, alongside how properties would be purchased, managed, maintained and repaired. Property management risks were outlined in Appendix 5 to the report. An audit of the in-house skills required for property management had been completed and highlighted that resources/expertise would be required for managing rental income recovery and out of hours residents' enquiries. In the short-term, these functions would be externally purchased while the Council built its own portfolio of properties; ongoing skills reviews would be necessary.

Should the need for temporary accommodation reduce, the Council could review its assets. Assets could be sold and the capital receipt reinvested into Council budgets.

During discussion the following was noted:

- properties would be purchased in urban areas across the district, however specific need at the moment was particularly focused in Bexhill;
- all households would be supported by the Council to acquire any furnishings they required;
- important to establish in-house expertise or collaboration with other local authorities with regard to property management;
- investigate the option of building modular pre-fabrication constructions on Council owned land. This would be an innovative way to build quick tailor-made value for money properties; and
- investigate alternative solutions such as refurbishing empty/derelict buildings or convert/remodel existing buildings.

Cabinet was supportive of the Council building up a portfolio of suitable properties to use as temporary accommodation to meet the varied needs of homeless households across the district. They recommended that the TAS be approved and adopted. It was recommended that the Executive Director be authorised to borrow an initial sum of up to £3m to prioritise the purchase of properties and that the capital programme be amended accordingly.

RECOMMENDED: That:

- 1) the Temporary Accommodation Investment Strategy at Appendix 4 to the report be approved and adopted;

- 2) the Executive Director be authorised to purchase properties for use as temporary accommodation at a cost of up to £3 million funded through borrowing; and
- 3) the Capital Programme be amended accordingly.

CB19/40. **CORPORATE PLAN DELIVERY PROGRAMME**
(7)

Members received and considered Minute OSC19/16 arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 22 July 2019 which considered the Corporate Plan Delivery Programme.

Following discussion, Cabinet approved the programme for a review of a new Corporate Plan to enable adoption in December 2020 and agreed that the timetable proposed provided the opportunity for an in-depth consultation within available staff resources. It was clarified that Cabinet would be kept abreast of the Corporate Plan's progression.

RESOLVED: That the programme for a review of a new Corporate Plan be approved to enable adoption in December 2020.

CB19/41. **ROTHER VOLUNTARY ACTION - HEALTHY AGING THROUGH INNOVATION IN RURAL EUROPE (HAIRE) PROJECT**
(8)

Rother Voluntary Action (RVA) had requested a grant from the Council towards the cost of match-funding for a European Union (EU) Interreg 2 Seas funded project, known as Healthy Aging and Innovation in Rural Europe (HAIRE). HAIRE was a project designed to increase rural community capacity in Rother by empowering people to play an active role in the design and delivery of local services. Members were advised that RVA had applied for funding through the Council's Community Grant Scheme however the application had failed to meet the required criteria.

The Leader welcomed Jan Cutting from RVA to the meeting who provided a brief introduction on the merits of the project. RVA was encouraged to contact/liaise with the Parish and Town Councils who currently ran similar programmes/schemes.

RVA had been operational since 2006, was a longstanding and respected organisation, who had invested significant resources into the district to develop community groups, encourage community action and support volunteering. It held a membership base of approximately 500+ local organisations and had a strong relationship with the Council. The Council consistently contributed core funding via a Service Level Agreement which had enabled RVA to acquire additional investment of approximately £4m from other funding sources.

Rother had a high proportion of older persons (aged 65+) which was projected to increase further by 2031. The HAIRE project would tackle issues that contributed to rural isolation, negative health and wellbeing,

as well as develop appropriate solutions e.g. improvements to local transport, usage of the internet, establish good neighbour schemes, access benefits and support the development of local services etc.

RVA required £73,000, of which they had committed £33,000 therefore a further £40,000 would be required over a 3-year period. Once secured, £110,000 of additional investment would be brought into the district from the EU 2 Seas Interreg Fund. The report identified funding costs and how these would be allocated which included staffing costs, supporting activities, design and delivery of services, improvements to quality of life etc.

During discussion, a question was raised regarding whether the project was being funded from the appropriate budget, as it had failed to meet the Community Grant Scheme (CGS) criteria and whether it should be funded from the Council's reserves. The Assistant Director Resources advised that as the Council's CGS was funded from Earmarked Reserves additional funding could be added later in the year, if approved.

Cabinet was supportive of awarding RVA a total grant of £40,000 over a 3-year period from the CGS budget within Earmarked Reserves, subject to specific conditions. It was acknowledged that RVA provided valuable support to local groups, research into strategic and local issues, reduced the sense of isolation in communities and acted as a crucial information source for the Council.

RESOLVED: That a total grant of £40,000 be awarded to Rother Voluntary Action, towards the cost of match funding for a European Union Interreg 2 Seas funded project – Healthy Aging and Innovation in Rural Europe (£15,000 in Year 1 FY 2019/2020), £15,000 in Year 2 FY 2020/2021), and £10,000 in Year 3 FY 2021/2022), to be met from the Community Grant budget within Earmarked Reserves, subject to the condition that sufficient funds are secured from other sources, to enable the project to be completed.

(Councillor Brewerton declared a personal interest in this matter as she was the Council's appointed representative on Rother Voluntary Action and was a former trustee and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

CB19/42.
(9)

COMMUNITY GRANTS 2019 - ROUND 1

The Council's Community Grant Scheme (CGS) made provision for up to £130,000 per annum to be made available to community groups or organisations that met the specific grant criteria of the Scheme. The Panel had delegated authority to grant awards up to £500 and had approved £500 to Peasmarsh Memorial Hall for hot water system improvements.

Members gave consideration to the applications listed in Appendix 1 and each grant was considered in turn as follows:

1. **Beckley Parish Council:** the Panel had recommended an award of £18,500 to transform the old tennis court into a multi-use games area.
2. **Beckley Village Hall:** the Panel had recommended an award of £5,000 to upgrade the kitchen in the village hall.
3. **Beulah Baptist Church, Bexhill:** the Panel had recommended an award of £20,000 to improve access to the first floor rooms and toilet facilities, install a lift and provide more circulation spaces in the reception area on the ground floor.
4. **Crowhurst Village Hall:** the Panel had recommended an award of £3,000 towards redesigning and improving the kitchen facilities.
5. **Flimwell Village Hall:** the Panel had recommended an award of £1,400 to provide furnishings and equipment for the new village hall.
6. **Iden Parish Council:** the Panel had recommended an award of £14,920 towards modernising and improving play facilities at Iden playing fields.
7. **Rye Cricket Club:** the Panel had recommended an award of £3,746 to upgrade disabled access / facilities at the pavilion.
8. **Sedlescombe Village Hall:** the Panel had rejected the award of £25,822 requested by Sedlescombe Village Hall (SVH) to improve the acoustics, as insufficient evidence of the benefits of the scheme had been provided. It was noted that SVH had raised £9,000 instead of £4,000 as indicated in the report towards the project.
9. **Winchelsea New Hall:** the Panel had recommended an award of £975 towards resurfacing the entrance to the hall.

In 2018/19, Westfield Parish Council (WPC) was awarded a £25,000 grant towards the development of a new pavilion for Westfield Cricket Club. This was subject to all funding being secured. Members were advised that, to date, WPC had only secured £5,000 towards the project and that Rother's CGS could provide match-funding only. Therefore, in order to progress the project, it had been recommended by the Panel that an early drawdown of the grant to the value of £5,000 be agreed subject to a strategy being submitted outlining how the shortfall would be funded. WPC had also been advised to consider obtaining a Public Works Board Loan.

Cabinet was reminded that conditions were applied when awarding grants; specifically, that full funding was required to be obtained in advance of any Rother payments being made and that Rother District Council was acknowledged in any publicity and promotional material associated with any project. After discussion, Cabinet approved all eight grants as detailed above, as well as the £5,000 drawdown grant to WPC.

Members were supportive of a £10,000 Council fund being allocated for VE Day (8 May 2020) commemorative / celebratory events. The Council would match-fund pound for pound to a maximum of £500 per grant. The grant would be available on a first come first served basis for Parish and Town Councils or properly constituted community groups to apply. Members were encouraged to promote the VE Day scheme within their Wards.

Round 2 of the CGS would open for applications on 1 October 2019 and close on 15 January 2020. The total remaining was £46,959 having taken account of these grant applications and the Healthy Aging and Innovation in Rural Europe (HAIRE) funding commitment. Members were asked to encourage groups within their Wards to seek advice from Rother Voluntary Action (RVA) prior to starting the application process. Members were also reminded that small grant applications (up to £500) were accepted all year round and prospective applicants were encouraged to make applications through the on-line application process, with support and advice through RVA, as required.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the Community Grants listed below, as recommended by the Grants Panel be approved, subject to specific conditions relating to each application

Beckley Parish Council – £18,500
Beckley Village Hall – £5,000
Beulah Baptist Church, Bexhill – £20,000
Crowhurst Village Hall – £3,000
Flimwell Village Hall – £1,400
Iden Parish Council – £14,920
Rye Cricket Club – £3,746
Sedlescombe Village Hall – £0
Winchelsea New Hall – £975

- 2) an early drawdown of grant to the value of £5,000 to Westfield Cricket Club awarded in 2018/19 be approved, subject to the submission of a funding strategy detailing how and when the shortfall will be funded;
- 3) a fund of £10,000 from the Community Grants Scheme be approved for supporting community events to celebrate the forthcoming VE Day (8 May 2020); and delegated authority be granted to the Executive Director in consultation with the Chairman of the Community Grants Panel to award or decline VE Day grants within the criteria set out within Appendix 2 to the report; and
- 4) all Members be requested to promote the VE Day scheme within their Wards.

CB19/43.

BATTLE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - PROPOSED LOCAL GREEN SPACE DESIGNATIONS

(10)

The Leader confirmed that Agenda Item 10, Battle Neighbourhood Plan – Proposed Local Green Space Designations had been withdrawn from the Agenda.

(Councillor Vine-Hall had declared a personal interest at the commencement of the meeting in this matter as he had convened Rother's Neighbourhood Forum).

COMMUNITY LED HOUSING PROGRAMME UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director which updated Members on the Community Led Housing (CLH) Programme including funding agreements and project progress.

In December 2016, the Government allocated community housing funds to 148 councils to provide additional homes and affordable housing within their communities. Rother had received a total of £748,899 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the largest amount in East Sussex. In July 2017, full Council approved to ring-fence £50,000 of the Community Housing Fund (CFH) allocation for revenue spend, supporting start-up fees of CLH groups and pre-development costs, as well as meeting any funding gaps to ensure community groups had the financial means to progress schemes. To date £31,049 had been allocated to deliver 22 affordable homes. Additionally, it was agreed that £598,899 would be used to support capital funding of affordable housing delivery.

In July 2018, the Government announced that a further £163m CHF allocation would be available for communities across England. Bidding for this funding would need to be made to Homes England and would only be available up to 2020. Future funding was currently under review and the Government had recently asked the CLH sector to collate a strong evidence base, demonstrating the need for funding to be extended beyond 2020. Therefore, CLH groups and local authorities were encouraged to progress all projects as quickly as possible.

To deliver CLH projects and in conjunction with nine other local authorities across Sussex, full Council approved 4-year funding of £25,000 per annum and the development of the Sussex Community Housing Hub (SCHH). The SCHH had successfully held a number of events to grow the sector, helped to establish community groups across the county, provided business planning assistance, project management and general advice etc.

The report identified the current CLH schemes in Rother, as follows:

- **Main Road, Icklesham:** A rural exception site delivered by Icklesham Parish Community Land Trust (IPCLT) in partnership with Hastoe Housing Association. In May 2019, planning permission was granted for 15 affordable homes, subject to section 106 agreement. It was noted that to progress the site, IPCLT would require additional CHF provision.
- **Cemetery Lodge, Bexhill:** Situated on the corner of Turkey Road and St Mary's Lane. Early discussions with planning indicated that as a cleared site the land had potential for 5-8 dwellings, subject to specific conditions including demolition of Cemetery Lodge and relocating the entrance of the cemetery to St Mary's Lane. However Bexhill Heritage has raised concerns over the demolition of Cemetery Lodge and requested other options for development be considered that retained the Lodge. Bexhill Community Land Trust

Steering Group (BCLTSG) had agreed to consider all options for developing the site and their current preferred option was for a cleared site. In order for BCLTSG to progress the site and deliver a viable CLH scheme it was proposed that the Council sold the site at a capped existing use value (current form) to BCLT.

- **Sidley Allotments:** Identified for small scale housing scheme. BCLTSG had engaged with a registered provider to undertake a robust feasibility assessment of potential options for the allotments. Development of the site would be subject to Secretary of State approval and public consultation, as well as the provision of suitable alternative allotments. Members felt this was premature and wanted further consultation with the Ward Members, Allotment Holders and local residents and to report back to Cabinet.
- **Land at Fairview, Guestling:** Identified for a rural exception CLH scheme. It was recommended that SCHH engage with the local community to progress this site.

Each recommendation was considered in turn and the following was noted:

- Cabinet was supportive of the progression of the Icklesham exception site and exploration of the land at Fairview.
- Mixed views were expressed regarding the site at Cemetery Lodge; should the Lodge be retained or demolished? Additional information provided by Bexhill Heritage who wanted to preserve the Lodge was considered. Following discussion, it was agreed that BCLT be offered the site for sale subject to progress to a planning application being approved within 12 months, and that delegated authority be granted to the Executive Director to agree the final terms of the sale. If planning or the sale to BCLT was not achievable to report back to Cabinet.
- Members felt that further consultation with Ward Members, Allotment Holders and residents was required prior to the sale of the Sidley Allotments site. It was therefore agreed to defer this recommendation until after this had been completed.

Cabinet was fully supportive of the delivery of CLH schemes, increasing affordable housing projects and potentially attracting future funding opportunities to the district.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the progress of the Icklesham exception site by Icklesham Parish Community Land Trust in partnership with Hastoe, detailed within the report be noted;
- 2) exploration of the site of Land at Fairview by the Sussex Community Housing Hub for the purposes of delivering a Community Led Housing Scheme be supported;
- 3) the site of Cemetery Lodge be offered for sale to Bexhill Community Land Trust for the purposes of delivering a Community Led Housing

Scheme subject to progression to a planning application within 12 months; if not able to deliver to report back to Cabinet;

- 4) delegated authority be granted to the Executive Director to agree the final terms of sale for the Cemetery Lodge site, recovering the costs incurred by the Council in preparing the site for future development; and
- 5) the consideration of the sale of the site of Sidley Allotments be deferred until further consultation had been held with Sidley Ward Members, Allotment Holders and residents.

(Councillors Mrs Bayliss, Byrne, Coleman, Drayson, Gray, Langlands, Madeley and Timpe each declared a personal interest in this matter as they were members of Bexhill Heritage and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

(Councillor Brewerton declared a personal interest in this matter as she was Vice-Chair of Bexhill Community Land Trust and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

(Councillor Oliver declared a personal interest in this matter as he had assisted Bexhill Heritage with previous projects and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 7:58pm