

CABINET

7 September 2020

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held at the Remote Meeting on Monday 7 September 2020 at 6.30 pm

Committee Members present: Councillors D.B. Oliver (Leader), S.M. Prochak (Deputy Leader), C.A. Bayliss, J.H.F. Brewerton, T.J.C. Byrne, K.P. Dixon, K.M. Field, H.L. Timpe and J. Vine-Hall

Other Members present: Councillors J. Barnes, Mrs M.L. Barnes, R.K. Bird, S.J. Coleman, Mrs V. Cook, P.C. Courtel, G.C. Curtis, B.J. Drayson, P.J. Gray, J.M. Johnson, C.A. Madeley, C.R. Maynard, A.S. Mier, P.N. Osborne and R.B. Thomas

Advisory Officers in attendance: Executive Director, Executive Director, Assistant Director Resources, Head of Service Acquisitions, Transformation & Regeneration, Head of Service Housing & Community, Finance Manager and Democratic Services Officer

Also Present:

CB20/37. MINUTES

(1)

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 17 August at a later date as a correct record of the proceedings.

CB20/38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(2)

There were no apologies for absence.

CB20/39. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(5)

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

Barnes, J Agenda Item 8 – Personal Interest as an elected Member of East Sussex County Council.

Agenda Item 10 – Personal Interest as a potential board member of Alliance Homes (Rother) Ltd.

Bayliss Agenda Item 6 – Personal Interest as a former member of Democracy4Bexhill and supporter of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.

Byrne Agenda Item 6 – Personal Interest as a former member of Democracy4Bexhill and supporter of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.

Coleman	Agenda Item 6 – Personal Interest as a former member of Democracy4Bexhill and supporter of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.
Courtel	Agenda Item 6 – Personal Interest as a former member of Democracy4Bexhill and supporter of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.
Drayson	Agenda Item 10 – Personal Interest as a potential board member of Alliance Homes (Rother) Ltd.
Field	Agenda Item 8 – Personal Interest as an elected Member of East Sussex County Council.
Gray	Agenda Item 6 – Personal Interest as a former member of Democracy4Bexhill and supporter of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea. Agenda Item 7 – Personal Interest as she was the Council’s appointed Member representative on the board of the Rother District Citizens Advice.
Madeley	Agenda Item 8 – Personal Interest as a member of Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society.
Maynard	Agenda Item 8 – Personal Interest as an Executive Member of East Sussex County Council.
Thomas	Agenda Item 10 – Personal Interest as a potential board member of Alliance Homes (Rother) Ltd.

CB20/40.
(14)

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (EXEMPT INFORMATION)

RESOLVED: That the press and public be excluded whilst matters containing exempt information, as prescribed by Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and relating to Minute CB20/44 and CB20/48 was under consideration. The report and papers submitted in connection with this item and which contained information exempt from publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act shall remain confidential until a further resolution of the Council.

CB20/41.
(6)

BEXHILL COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Members received and considered Minute OSC20/13 arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) meeting held on the 20 July 2020 which considered the draft final recommendations of the Community Governance Review Steering Group (CGRSG).

The CGRSG had met on four occasions between October 2019 and May 2020. At its last meeting held on 29 May 2020, the CGRSG had considered the outcome of the public consultation exercise that demonstrated 78% of all responders supported the creation of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea.

In light of the public support for the creation of a Town Council, demonstrated through both the 2017 and 2020 consultation and in line with the Council's stated objective of delivering a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea, the CGRSG recommended that the Council established a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea. The Town Council would be based on the current District Council external boundary of Bexhill, with nine wards, each appointing two Members and with the first elections taking place in May 2021. The recommendation would result in the demise of the Bexhill Charter Trustees who would become defunct once the Town Council was established.

Cabinet was supportive of the recommendations and noted that work on engaging with younger residents would be necessary, as support for a Town Council among this group had been disappointing.

RECOMMENDED: That:

- 1) a Parish Council be created for the whole of Bexhill-on-Sea, to be styled a Town Council based on the existing Bexhill Ward External Boundary;
- 2) the Town Council to contain nine Wards, based on the 2019 District Ward Boundaries and that two Town Councillors be elected to each Ward, making a total of 18 Bexhill Town Councillors;
- 3) the first elections be held in May 2021;

Subject to the approval of 1), 2) and 3) above,

- 4) the dissolution of the Bexhill Charter Trustees following the formation of the Bexhill Town Council be noted; and
- 5) the consultation results be taken into account when the transfer of services / powers to Bexhill Town Council are discussed.

(Councillors Bayliss, Byrne, Coleman, Courtel and Gray each declared a Personal Interest in this matter in so far as they were former members of Democracy4Bexhill and supporters of a Town Council for Bexhill-on-Sea and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).

CB20/42.
(7)

ROTHER DISTRICT CITIZENS ADVICE

Cabinet had previously agreed, when discussing the Service Level Agreement for Rother District Citizen's Advice (CA) located in Bexhill, to assist the CA in finding and locating alternative premises within Bexhill, and a number of options had been discussed by the Council's Member representative, the Executive Director and CA, as detailed in the report.

The report gave details of an alternative premises located by the CA that their current landlord had agreed to purchase and lease to them, in

order that he could redevelop the remainder of the building the CA currently leased.

The alternative premises in St Leonards Road, Bexhill would meet the CA's specification with some modifications and their current landlord had also agreed to contribute to the modifications. CA had funds of their own and were proposing to use these towards the costs, but there was still a shortfall of some £30k to £40k. They had approached the Council to fund the shortfall in addition to contacting other funding bodies/organisations to potentially reduce the gap further.

In order to meet their timetable for the relocation of their offices, the CA needed to undertake the refurbishment works of the new premises as a matter of urgency. Cabinet agreed that a loan of up to £40,000 be granted to the CA and any Community Grant applied for and awarded, would be deducted from the outstanding value of the loan.

RECOMMENDED: That a loan of up to £40,000 be granted to the Rother District Citizens Advice and the Capital Programme for 2020/21 be increased accordingly;

AND

***RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) Rother District Citizens Advice be invited to apply to the Council's Community Grants scheme;
- 2) any amount awarded under the Community Grants Scheme will be deducted from the loan amount; and
- 3) the Executive Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance Management, be authorised to agree an appropriate rate of interest and repayment schedule for the loan.

*The **RESOLVED** parts of this minute are subject to the call-in procedure under Rule 16 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

(Councillor Gray declared a Personal Interest in this matter as she was the Council's appointed Member representative on the board of the Rother District Citizens Advice and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).

CB20/43.
(10)

ALLIANCE HOMES (ROTHER) LTD, BUSINESS PLAN

In December 2019, Council approved the establishment of a Local Housing Company with the initial aim to complete 1,000 new homes by 2035 and in July 2020, Cabinet resolved that the name of the new company would be Alliance Homes (Rother) Ltd and agreed the Articles of Association and the Shareholder's Agreement. Following approval of four Members as board members of the Company in

August 2020, the Articles of Association were formally registered with Companies House. The Company Secretary was Christopher Crichton, Solicitor Legal Services for Wealden and Rother District Councils.

The Business Plan, attached at Appendix A to the report, had been developed to articulate the ambitions of the Company in its first year. The Company would seek to accelerate the delivery of quality housing throughout the district, in addition to seeking to:

- a. deliver homes built to the highest environmental standards – reducing costs to the occupier whilst moving towards the Council’s ambitious zero carbon agenda;
- b. develop more affordable rented housing – to support the Council in meeting its statutory functions;
- c. develop housing for ownership, targeted at first time buyers including younger families;
- d. deliver stalled sites – aim to unlock sites with planning permission that have become stalled for various reasons;
- e. produce a return to the Council; and
- f. assist the Council in discharging its statutory homelessness duties, including development of interim accommodation.

Sites to be reviewed were included in the business plan and would be assessed against a series of criteria to determine their suitability to the Company.

The Company would favour modern methods of construction, including the use of modular housing, offsite manufacture and timber frame development, where mortgageable. The Business Plan outlined the likely revenue costs for the Company over the following three financial years as well as high level capital expenditure and would be reviewed annually by Cabinet. Costs would be met through a mixture of Share Capital and Loan Funding at commercial rates provided by the Shareholder, in agreement with the Council’s Section 151 Officer.

No capital income forecasts had been provided in the Business Plan as house types and phasing would be agreed as part of the full planning permission process, after which time negotiations with registered providers could be entered into, who would be key to providing cashflow for each scheme. Income and cashflow plans for each development would be provided to the Shareholder and updated in the Business Plan in advance of any commitments being made.

The Company would be staffed by Council staff and a fee paid to the Council through a Service Level Agreement.

Cabinet was pleased to agree the recommendations and thanked officers for their work in establishing the Company.

RECOMMENDED: That:

- 1) the Business Plan 2020-2023 for Rother District Council's Local Housing Company – Alliance Homes (Rother) Ltd, be approved as submitted;
- 2) the issuance of up to 300,000 shares with a value of £1 each, to be drawn down in agreement with the Council's Section 151 officer and the Shareholder's Representative be approved;
- 3) a £200,000 loan facility to the Company, to be drawn down in agreement with the Council's Section 151 officer and the Shareholder's Representative be approved; and
- 4) an annual report be made to Cabinet on the Business Plan.

(Councillors Barnes, Drayson and Thomas each declared a Personal Interest in this matter as they were potential board members of Alliance Homes (Rother) Ltd and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).

CB20/44.
(13)

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AT BLACKFRIARS, BATTLE

In June 2020, Cabinet authorised the preparatory work required for the making of the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) at Blackfriars, Battle including the completion of land referencing and budget.

The Council had now issued notices under S16 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to those with registered and identified interests in the land that was proposed to be compulsorily acquired (Order Land). The draft Rother District Council (Blackfriars) CPO 2020 (the Order) attached at Confidential Appendix 1 to the report identified the various interests and rights in the Order Land, and those who owned them or had the benefit of them; the land to be acquired was identified in the redline plan at Appendix 2 the report (the Order Map).

The draft Statement of Reasons attached at Appendix 3 to the report set out the Council's reasons for making and seeking confirmation of the proposed Order. This document formed part of a suite of information to be prepared to support the proposed Order. The report provided a description of land to be acquired which comprised of eight separate plots of land.

Whilst formal written offers had been sent to the relevant landowners by the Council in March 2020, agreements to acquire the parcels of land by private treaty had not yet been finalised. Advice received from specialist compensation valuers demonstrated that the financial offers made in March 2020 by the Council were reasonable, and likely to be in excess of any compensation settlement calculated based on the Compulsory Purchase Compensation Code. Following this advice, further correspondence had been sent to the relevant landowners in August 2020, reiterating the Council's previous offer to acquire the land without the need for CPO. Confirmation of any responses received would be confirmed at the meeting.

It was noted that the Council would continue to use reasonable endeavours to assemble the land by agreement or private treaty rather than use the CPO powers which was a last resort.

With regard to the development of the site, it was confirmed that the scheme had been granted Outline Planning Permission in terms of access, alignment of the spine road and scale of development across the site, subject to the signing of a Section 106 Agreement. Architects had been appointed to work up the detailed design for a Reserved Matters Application, with a target for submission of October 2020.

Cabinet was pleased to confirm the making of the Order and note the progress made on this project that would deliver housing choice, increase local economic activity and deliver environmental improvements for Battle and the surrounding area. The new development would be highly sustainable and futureproofed for carbon zero in line with the Council's climate emergency declaration and associated targets. In addition, the construction phase of the development was scheduled to occur over a four year period and was estimated to support the employment of 620 people. It was intended that the project be delivered by Alliance Homes (Rother) Ltd, the Council's wholly owned housing company.

Members thanked the Head of Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration for his work and it was agreed that officers and the Ward Members would meet to discuss how best to present the scheme to local residents.

RECOMMENDED: That:

- 1) the draft Rother District Council (Blackfriars) Compulsory Purchase Order 2020 as attached at Confidential Appendix 1 ("the Order"), the map comprising the land that is proposed to be compulsorily acquired ("Order Land"), as may be subject to amendment pursuant to paragraph (3 a. below) as attached at Appendix 2 and referred to in the Order ("the Order Map") be approved;
- 2) the draft Statement of Reasons made in support of that Order and attached at Appendix 3 ("the Statement of Reasons") be approved; and
- 3) the Executive Director be granted delegated authority to:
 - a. Make changes to the draft Order, the Order Map (within the red line boundary as shown on the Order Map) and Statements of Reasons as considered necessary.
 - b. Exercise powers in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to secure the removal of any apparatus of statutory undertakers.
 - c. Acquire by agreement all third-party interests in and over the Order Land under Section 227 of the 1990 Act before and after confirmation of the Order and in respect of any new rights required for the development or use of the Order Land.

- d. Take all necessary steps to secure confirmation of the Order and the acquisition of all third party interests in the Order Land, including: the publication and advertisement of the Order, serving appropriate notices, seeking confirmation of the Order, taking all steps to acquire relevant interests and such other steps as deemed appropriate to facilitate the development, redevelopment or improvement of the Order Land.
- e. Enter into agreements and make undertakings, contracts and transfers on behalf of the Council with third party interests in the Order Land or for the creation of new rights in favour of or over the Order Land or with parties otherwise affected by the Order, including for the withdrawal of objections to the confirmation of the Order and also including the offering back of any part of the Order Land or rights over it, or acquisition of additional land or interests in or over any such land and the removal of any land from the Order.
- f. Defend any proceedings challenging these decisions, and the making, confirmation or implementation of the Order or any notice, general vesting declaration or anything else made pursuant to the Order.
- g. Publish and serve all appropriate notices of confirmation of the Order and to make one or more general vesting declarations or serve notices to treat and notices of entry (as appropriate) in respect of the Order Land.
- h. Initiate or take part in any arbitration or proceedings before the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) or the Courts in order to resolve any disputes as to compensation or other payments payable for any interests in the Order Land or arising from the making or confirmation of the Order or securing possession of any part of the Order Land or title to any part of the Order Land or the removal of any occupants or apparatus of statutory undertakers or communication code operators.

(The Confidential Appendix in relation to this matter, as set out at Agenda Item 16 was considered exempt from publication by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended. In accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 Cabinet did not consider it necessary to exclude the press and public whilst considering this matter).

CB20/45. **INTRODUCTION OF CHARGES TO OFF-STREET CAR PARKS WITHIN THE CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT AREA**

(8)

The Council currently operated its designated car parks under the District of Rother (Off Street) Parking Places Order 2020 (PPO). The PPO provided a framework under which the Council could manage the car parks under its ownership and enforce parking conditions to ensure proper use.

East Sussex County Council intended to introduce Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) on 29 September 2020, which had recently been passed in Parliament. CPE would introduce charging to certain on-street parking locations throughout Bexhill, Rye and Battle, but not to other areas of the district; however, other restrictions could apply, such as double yellow line enforcement or resident permit schemes, for example.

The introduction of CPE was likely to increase the use off-street car parks under the Council's ownership. Residents, local businesses and visitors expected a parity of parking charges between equivalent areas, therefore it was important that the cost of off-street parking was standardised between equivalent areas of the district.

Any increase in the use of Council owned car parks would have attached associated maintenance and administration costs. The COVID-19 pandemic had compounded what was already a challenging time for the Council's finances, therefore any increase in the Council's costs needed to be met by an increase in relevant charges; charges had not been increased since 2014. Furthermore, those car parks that were presently free to use, did not contribute to the Council's maintenance and operational costs.

The report sought authority to introduce parking charges to those car parks that fell directly within those CPE areas where on-street charges would be introduced. It was also proposed that those car parks that were in close proximity to areas where on-street charges would apply should also have charges introduced.

Details of the proposed variations to the PPO were at Appendix B to the report. Since publication of the report, Members had raised specific concerns regarding the ability of local residents and business owners to park locally, given the limited on-street parking options at many locations. Consequently, Appendix B had been amended to include the introduction of permits to all car parks where charges presently applied.

It was proposed to place a cap on the number of permits that could be awarded at each location to ensure that spaces remained available to non-permit holders. The cost of a permit would be standardised across the district at £321.50 per annum. Members noted that this was equivalent to the cost of an annual permit at Gibbets Marsh Rye and equated to 90p per day. Spaces in car parks where charges would be introduced would be advertised for four weeks and allocated in order of priority: *local disabled residents, *local residents, *local businesses, other (*local was defined as those within a ¼ mile radius of the respective car park location).

Capital investment would be required to bring in charges to the car parks that were presently free to use. These costs included new signage and the introduction of payment machines; a table of estimated equipment costs was presented to Members within the report. It was proposed that the cost be met from the Car Parks Earmarked Reserve. In addition, there was an annual revenue cost

associated with maintaining the payment machines as well as collecting the cash of approximately £1,500 per machine or £12,000 for the eight additional machines required. Members suggested the use of mobile phone payments only in smaller car parks rather than purchasing machines and officers confirmed that was already being considered.

Based on the revised charges and the increased number of chargeable parking spaces, it was estimated that income from car parks would increase by approximately £150,000 per annum. This would meet the ongoing costs and was an estimate based on a 50% occupancy rate at each car park.

Cabinet welcomed the parity of car park charges across the district and the amendment to Appendix B to include the introduction of annual permits for all car parks.

It was recommended and agreed that car park charges be reviewed after six months and a report be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with any recommendations back to Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the variation to the District of Rother (Off-Street) Parking Places Order 2020 be approved to allow the introduction of a scale of charges in certain car parks that are free to use at present;
- 2) the variation to the District of Rother (Off-Street) Parking Places Order 2020 be approved to revise the charges within certain car parks that fall within those areas where on-street charging will be introduced under Civil Parking Enforcement;
- 3) the cost of equipment and signage, estimated at £47,500, be met from the capital parking earmarked reserve; and
- 4) car park charges and the effects of Civil Parking Enforcement be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee after six months and any recommendations made to Cabinet.

(Councillors Barnes and Field each declared a Personal Interest in this matter in so far as they were elected Members of East Sussex County Council and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).

(Councillor Madeley declared a personal interest in this matter as a member of the Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).

(Councillor Maynard declared a personal interest in this matter as an Executive Member of East Sussex County Council and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).

CB20/46. **REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING
QUARTER 1 - 2020/21**

(9)

Members received and considered the report of the Finance Manager on the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter 1 2020/21. The report contained details of the significant variations of the Revenue Budget and updated Capital Programme.

Since the detailed budget had been approved by Cabinet in February 2020, there had been two reportable virements. Firstly, savings of £422,000 had been achieved by reducing the staffing structure and incorporating them into departmental budgets, leaving a balance of £78,000. Secondly staff turnover of £282,000 was originally budgeted centrally but had since been consolidated into departmental salary budgets.

The cost of services showed a deficit of £3.082m and non-service budgets increased the forecast over-spend to £4.536m. This was reduced by £2.607m mainly due to additional grant income from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG).

The Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic had inevitably put the budget under enormous pressure despite some costs being partially offset by non-ringfenced grants from the MHCLG. The net impact of the virus was forecast to be £1.719m.

The main reasons for the variations were detailed in the report. The variances specifically relating to Departments had been split between those arising as a result of the pandemic and those arising as part of normal operational activities.

Environmental Services was forecast to under achieve its income budgets by £43,000 in the areas of Food Safety training, Licensing and Pest Control, however this was mainly offset by vacant posts in the Pollution and Food Safety teams.

Strategy and Planning was forecast a shortfall of £186,000 against Planning fees and Land Charges, which suffered a downturn due to the pandemic.

A provision for property rental income shortfall of £200,000 had been included in the forecast due to the impact of the pandemic; no rents had yet been written off at that stage.

Cabinet had previously agreed to provide financial support to Freedom Leisure until 31 March 2021 and the estimated cost to a maximum of £415,000 was included in the forecast. If costs looked to exceed the maximum, a report would be brought back to Cabinet.

Interest income from investments was expected to be £148,000 below budget. This was in line with expectations as the pandemic has had a major impact on global financial markets and the forecast would continue to be subject to fluctuations due to the level of uncertainty. The Council had invested £8m in two property funds and most of its

interest income was returned by these. However, their current market values had fallen by about £0.5m and could fall further still as the crisis continued, but Members noted that these were long term investments and were expected to recover over time.

The Council Tax part of the Collection Fund was currently 1.58% below the annual estimate. The Business Rates Tax part of the Collection Fund was broadly in line with the annual estimate and the previous year's performance. The collectible debit and income received were much lower due to the additional reliefs announced by the Chancellor in the March budget statement. They had been replaced with additional section 31 grant payments. The MHCLG had recently announced that any Collection Fund deficits incurred during the year could be spread over a three year period. There would be no impact in the current financial year and any future impact would be included in the Medium Term Financial Plan to be reported to Cabinet later in the year.

A summary of spend by capital project for 2020/21 and financing sources was shown at Appendix A to the report and an overall five year capital programme had been updated for Member decisions and slippage from the 2019/20 outturn at Appendix B. The five year capital programme totalled just under £60m.

The Quarter 1 forecast out turn for 2020/21 was a deficit of £1.9m and included the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic which had resulted in a £1.7m overspend.

Members thanked and congratulated staff on the enormous amount of work carried out during the current crisis and for the improvement to the reception area of Town Hall, coordinated by the Customer Services Manager.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CB20/47.
(11)

COMMUNITY GRANTS SCHEME - ROUND 1

The Council's Community Grants Scheme (CGS) made provision for up to £130,000 per annum to be made available to community groups or organisations that met the grants criteria of the Scheme. The Panel had delegated authority to grant awards up to £500 and had approved £500 to Strive Café for the renovation of a room to be used at the café. In addition, £15,000 had been allocated to the HAIRE project for year 2, leaving a total of £114,500. The Panel met to consider two rounds of grants, in July (Round 1) and February (Round 2).

Round 1 of the Rother CGS for 2020/21 closed on 15 July 2020. A total of six applications were received. Two applications did not meet the CGS criteria, and those applicants were being encouraged to seek advice from Rother Voluntary Action before a new application was submitted. The Panel met on 27 July 2020 and recommended awards for four applications from Bexhill Environment Group, Ewhurst and Staplecross Village Hall, Little Common Football Club and Ticehurst Parish Council, as set out in the report. (Each application was summarised in Appendix A to the report.) If agreed, this would result in

a maximum of £24,534 being awarded in Round 1, leaving £89,966 for Round 2 and other small grants for the remainder of the financial year 2020/21. Round 2 of the Community Grants Scheme (applications above £500) would open for applications on 1 October 2020 and close on 15 January 2021.

Members agreed with the Panel's recommendation that it should be mandatory for all grant applications to have the written support of at least one Ward Member from the relevant area and that the Panel's Terms of Reference, attached at Appendix B to the report, be amended to reflect this change. Information concerning the Scheme would be circulated to all Members in due course to assist with its promotion.

RESOLVED: That:

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

Bexhill Environmental Group – £1,500
Ewhurst and Staplecross Village Hall – £1,234
Little Common Football Club – £20,000
Ticehurst Parish Council – £1,800

- 2) the amended Terms of Reference for the Community Grants Panel, at Appendix B to the report be approved; and
- 3) all Members to promote the small grants scheme within their wards.

CB20/48. **LETTING OF BEECHING ROAD STUDIOS, 18-40 BEECHING ROAD**

(12)

In December 2018, the Council completed the acquisition of the head leasehold interests of three sites on the West Trading Estate in Beeching Road Bexhill, including the site at 18-40 Beeching Road.

One half of this site was let to commercial tenants (Screwfix and Phase Electrical); the remainder was vacant and in a deteriorating condition. The purchase price for the head leasehold interest reflected the fact that the vacant premises would require significant refurbishment in order to re-let them.

The Council had successfully secured £960,000 through the Local Growth Fund grant through South East Local Enterprise Partnership, to convert the vacant premises into workspaces aimed at developing creative sector enterprises and funding was allocated in the Council's capital programme for this work.

The project had been given the working title of 'Beeching Road Studios' and details of the vision of the project, to be established by 2025, were detailed in the report before Members. A Steering Group of stakeholders, including the Council, the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill Contemporary Group, Bexhill College and others engaged closely with

the development of the business plan; the Council would continue to work closely with the Steering Group in bringing forward the project and monitoring its future success.

The refurbishment of the exterior of the premises had recently been tendered and work on site was due to commence imminently, with completion expected by December 2020. Phase 2 of the refurbishment comprised the internal fit-out and mechanical and electrical systems, which would follow once a tenant had been selected, with a view to being open by the spring of 2021.

Four potential operators had expressed interest in managing the scheme and the Council had invited interested parties to set out their proposals, to include a rental level and preferred length of lease. These had been reviewed by a panel comprising the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Regeneration, along with the Head of Service for Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration, the Property Investment and Regeneration Manager and the Regeneration Officer. The Panel had concluded that Bexhill College offered the best strategic fit with the aims and objectives of the scheme, the draft heads of terms of the proposal were set out for Members in the Confidential Appendix 1 to the report.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Director be authorised to enter into a lease with Bexhill College for the Beeching Road Studios project at 18-40 Beeching Road Bexhill, for a term not exceeding 20 years and otherwise on terms approved by the Executive Director.

(The Confidential Appendix in relation to this matter, as set out at Agenda Item 15 was considered exempt from publication by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended. In accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 Cabinet did not consider it necessary to exclude the press and public whilst considering this matter).

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm