

CABINET

5 September 2022

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea on Monday 5 September 2022 at 6:30pm.

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

Other Members present: Councillors J. Barnes (remote), C.A. Clark (remote), Mrs. V. Cook, N. Gordon, K.M. Harmer, C.A. Madeley, C.R. Maynard (remote) and P.N. Osborne (remote).

Advisory Officers in attendance: Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Director – Place and Climate Change, Corporate Programme and Projects Officer (in part), Project Officer (Environment) (in part) and Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present: 11 members of the public via the live webcast.

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The decisions made under PART II will come into force on 15 September 2022 unless they have been subject to the call-in procedure.

CB22/24. MINUTES

(1)

The Chair was authorised to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2022 as a correct record of the proceedings.

CB22/25. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(2)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor K.M. Field.

CB22/26. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

(5)

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

J. Barnes Agenda Item 7 – Personal Interest as Chairman of Etchingham Parish Council.

Agenda Item 8 – Personal Interest as a Director of Rother DC Housing Company Limited.

Dixon Agenda Item 6 – Personal and Prejudicial Interest as his wife was the Clerk at Brede Parish Council.

PART I – RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL – not subject to call-in procedure under Rule 16 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

CB22/27. **VILLAGE HALLS ENERGY PROJECT**
(7)

The Village Halls Energy Project (VHEP) aimed to reduce the carbon footprints of village and community halls across the district by reducing reliance on oil and gas as a fuel source, and decreasing electricity drawn from the national grid by 2025. An application for £500,000 from Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) [Climate Emergency Bonus Fund] was submitted in June 2022 and approved by the Strategic CIL Allocations Panel in July 2022.

To support the Council's aim to be carbon neutral by 2030, it was important that village and community halls across the district improved their energy costs and reduced their levels of emissions, particularly those fuelled by oil. Also, as a result of inclement weather, these buildings might be needed as potential Rest Centres for the Council in the future.

Following a review, it was clarified that 40 halls were eligible for the VHEP, 37 of which had already confirmed their desire to participate in principle. Efforts had been made to ensure that at least one hall in every Parish area of Rother was invited to participate however to date no eligible venues had been identified in Bodiam (no village hall) or Rye Foreign. It was noted that the eligible venue identified in Ashburnham and Penhurst had declined the opportunity; it was understood that they were currently working on plans to construct a new village hall.

There were two phases to the VHEP, as follows:

Phase 1 – £42,000: to complete site assessments, prioritising measures for energy efficiency and decarbonisation in-line with the energy hierarchy "Lean, Clean and Green". The report identified the criteria for the awards to be determined which was approved by the Climate Change Steering Group on 26 June 2022. A target date of March 2023 had been set to confirm and prioritise the best range of measures for installation within budget.

Phase 2 – £458,000: a procurement process to acquire suitable contractors for the works as detailed in Phase 1. Installations would be completed systematically between June 2023 and May 2024 until the full budget was spent.

The report outlined the main outcomes, financial and environmental implications, as well as key risks for the project. To measure the impact of the VHEP, baselining for all halls would be undertaken during Phase 1. On completion, the Council should be able to measure the direct impact on energy usage and carbon output, identifying a 'carbon saved' figure for the scheme.

After discussion, Cabinet recommended that £500,000 be ring-fenced from the Strategic CIL Funding and included within the Council's

Capital Programme. It was also agreed that delegated authority be granted to the Director – Place and Climate Change to accept the £500,000 from the Strategic CIL Funding to deliver the VHEP and to procure the contractor(s) required for both Phases 1 and 2 and enter into any other contracts as necessary for the completion of the works. As a result of the current national energy crisis, it was considered important that all community venues were encouraged to investigate ways to reduce their carbon footprint by installing energy efficient products e.g. solar panels etc., which could feedback to the national grid.

Cabinet thanked the Director – Place and Climate Change and Project Officer (Environment) for their hard work in arranging this scheme which supported the Council’s aim to be Carbon Neutral by 2030.

RECOMMENDED: That the Village Halls Energy Project be included in the Council’s Capital Programme with a budget of £500,000 to be funded from ring-fenced Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy Funding;

AND

***RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) subject to Full Council approval, delegated authority be granted to the Director – Place and Climate Change to accept the £500,000 grant from the Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy, for the purposes of delivering this project; and
- 2) delegated authority be granted to the Director – Place and Climate Change to procure the contractor(s) required for both the assessment and installation phases and enter into any other contracts as necessary for the completion of the project works.

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

(When it first became apparent, Councillor J. Barnes declared a Personal Interest in this matter as his wife was Chairman of Etchingam Parish Council and in accordance with the Members’ Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).

PART II – EXECUTIVE DECISIONS – subject to the call-in procedure under Rule 16 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules by no later than 4:00pm on 14 September 2022.

CB22/28. **COMMUNITY GRANTS SCHEME - ROUND 1**
(6)

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 grant criteria of the CGS. The CGS Panel had delegated authority to grant awards up to £1,000 and it was noted

that one application had been received in Round 1; The Archive Resource Centre for £1,000.

Round 1 for 2022/23 closed on 30 June 2022. A total of five applications were received. The Panel met on 28 July 2022 and recommended awards for five applications from Brede Parish Council, Fairlight Parish Council, Northiam Village Hall, Rye Harbour Sailability and Winchelsea Beach Community Association, 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 £65,435 being awarded in Round 1, leaving £59,565 for Round 2 and other small grants for the remainder of the financial year 2022/23. It was noted that small grant applications were accepted all year round through the on-line application process. Support and guidance could be obtained via Rother Voluntary Action (RVA) and applicants were recommended to contact RVA before submission of an application; £4,000 was available for 2022/23.

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 five grants.

Members were supportive of £15,000 2023/24 CGS funding being allocated to support the Council's Rother Reduce, Reuse and Recycle Scheme (RRRRS). The RRRRS provided funding to parish and town councils, community groups and charities to support environmental projects across the district. The Council would match-fund pound for pound to a maximum of £1,000 per grant. A scheme guide, on-line application process and questions were attached at Appendix B to the report.

Since the Rother Community Lottery's (RCL) launch in April 2022, approximately £12,000 had been facilitated by RCL, with £7,000 distributed to various good causes (68 causes were signed up). To date £2,175 had been awarded in prizes. Should sales remain at the current rate, potential annual income could be £23,500, with a further £17,000 of income to the Council. This funding would be allocated to the CGS. Cabinet thanked all those who had been and were involved in the RCL from its inception.

Members were encouraged to promote RRRRS and Round 2 of CGS within their Wards. A Members' Tour of some of the CGS projects would be arranged in the autumn.

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:

Brede Parish Council – £11,000

Fairlight Parish Council – £5,060
Northiam Village Hall – £10,500
Rye Harbour Sailability – £8,875
Winchelsea Beach Community Association – £30,000

- 2) a fund of £15,000 from the 2023/24 Community Grant Scheme be approved for the Rother Reduce, Reuse and Recycle Scheme for 2023/24; and
- 3) all Members to promote Round 2 of the Community Grants Scheme within their wards.

(Councillor Dixon declared a Personal and Prejudicial Interest in this matter as his wife was the Clerk at Brede Parish Council and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct left the meeting during the consideration thereof).

CB22/29.
(8)

DISPOSAL OF LAND AT BLACKFRIARS, BATTLE

At its meeting on 6 September 2021, Cabinet gave delegated authority to the Chief Executive, to dispose of land at Blackfriars, Battle to the Council's Housing Company on terms agreeable to him in consultation with the (then) Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance (Minute CB21/33 refers).

It was intended that the housing land would be sold to RDC Housing Company Limited (RDCHCL) to procure a development partner to deliver the site. Furthermore, it was expected that the minimum price paid by RDCHCL should not be less than the unfunded costs incurred by the Council in making this scheme 'build ready'.

Since that time, several valuations had been carried out by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors; the latest valuations were being reviewed to reflect the economic predictions, the margins being paid to the contractors and the delivery of the original home specifications. The latest valuation was lower than originally anticipated which could result in a zero-capital receipt in the 2022/23 financial year. This could reduce the total level of funding to RDCHCL and have an impact on the timing of available funding for the Council's wider capital programme. It was still envisaged that as sole owner of RDCHCL, the Council would receive an overage receipt for the homes sold by RDCHCL. This would materialise over several years and would be dependent on the phasing of homes delivered, commercial arrangements and economic pressures.

In addition, and for the sake of accuracy and completion, the matter now falls under the Cabinet Portfolios for Transformation, Procurement and Social Value along with Finance and Performance Management.

Cabinet agreed that the delegation to the Chief Executive to dispose of land at Blackfriars, Battle to RDCHCL on terms agreeable to him in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Transformation,

Procurement and Social Value and Finance and Performance Management be confirmed.

RESOLVED: That the delegation to the Chief Executive to dispose of land at Blackfriars, Battle (as outlined at Appendix A) to Rother DC Housing Company Limited on terms agreeable to him in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Transformation, Procurement and Social Value and Finance and Performance Management be confirmed.

(Councillor J. Barnes declared a Personal Interest in this matter as Director of Rother DC Housing Company Limited and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).

CHAIR

The meeting closed at 7:08pm.