

Rother District Council

Report to	-	Council
Date	-	21 September 2022
Report of the	-	Cabinet
Subject	-	References from Cabinet Meetings

The Council is asked to consider the recommendations arising from the Cabinet meetings held on 25 July and 5 September 2022 as set out below.

CABINET – 25 July 2022

CB22/18. ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

Cabinet received Minute OSC22/12 arising from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) held on 18 July 2022 regarding the Anti-Poverty Strategy. Cabinet had approved the draft strategy for public consultation at its March meeting, following which a number of amendments had been made. A total of 25 local organisations responded including seven town and parish councils, 13 charities, voluntary agencies alongside three public sector organisations, two political parties (branches) and the Council's Planning Policy team.

A range of organisations fed back that the delivery of the Strategy would need to be integrated with a range of existing strategies, including the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Local Plan, Economic Development and the Hastings & Rother Food Network's 'Food Insecurity Strategy for Rother'. In particular, the consultation responses from East Sussex County Council Public Health and the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) drew attention to the strong alignment between the objectives within the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy and the drivers of broader health inequalities across the Health and Social Care sectors.

The development of the Strategy had highlighted that the causes of poverty were multiple and complex and its symptoms wide ranging. The effects of poverty were felt by a range of different sectors of the community across different demographic groups and geographic locations. Many of the causes of poverty could not be influenced effectively at a local level and the Council could not effectively tackle the symptoms of poverty on its own.

The proposed partnership approach that coordinated the 'whole system' of services supporting those experiencing poverty was therefore important. The proposed Strategy had been developed between key local partners to ensure that the objectives identified were relevant and that the actions proposed ambitious while being measurable and achievable within the resources available locally.

The proposed Anti-Poverty Steering Group (APSG) would be well placed to deliver the strategy action plan and provide periodic progress updates to the Rother Local Strategic Partnership which could, in turn, monitor APSG performance; further, the APSG would be able to build-upon the work of the Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group and develop the Anti-Poverty Strategy into a broader Health and Wellbeing approach, that was better aligned to the emerging priority aims of the new Integrated Care System introduced on 1 July 2022 and other existing local strategies.

Cabinet paid tribute to the efforts of Councillor Coleman, the officers and partners for producing the very timely Anti-Poverty Strategy which provided the framework for a collaborative and holistic approach to poverty and the causes of poverty.

RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) the Anti-Poverty Strategy be approved and adopted; and
- 2) it be noted that an Anti-Poverty Steering Group will be formed to oversee the delivery of the Strategy Action Plan as well as inform the development of a broader health and wellbeing strategy for Rother.

(When it first became apparent, Councillors Field and Maynard both declared a personal interest as an elected Member and an Executive Member with responsibility for Adult Social Care and Health of East Sussex County Council respectively, and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting for the consideration thereof).

(Cabinet Agenda Item 9)

CB22/19. **THE RAVENSIDE GATEWAY ROUNDABOUT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT UPDATE**

In July 2020, the Council had approved a project to improve the Ravenside Gateway roundabout and commission the installation of a sculpture or artwork on the roundabout. A contribution from the Bexhill Local Community Infrastructure Levy (BL CIL) of £150,000 was allocated towards the project at that time.

Officers had been trying to work in conjunction with National Highways (NH) and East Sussex County Council to progress the project in a two-phase approach involving a phase 1 clearance, followed by a phase 2 installation of a sculpture and hardstanding. However, the presence of an invasive plant species, Horsetail, had led to significant delays to clearance of the site as no works could be undertaken unless carried out by NH contractors under their supervision.

This had delayed implementation of the phase 1 works which had yet to be been programmed in. Whilst the allocation of BL CIL was intended to enable this project to move quickly with the certainty of funding, the delay to this project should not stop the progression of other improvements in Bexhill and it was therefore recommended that

the BL CIL allocation be removed from this project at this time. Should this project progress to phase 2, a funding stream would need to be identified and it was proposed that external funding be sought, including a request for a contribution from Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council and a further paper would be presented at an appropriate later date.

Members were disappointed and frustrated at the lack of progress on this project, largely due to NH, but supported the reallocation of the BL CIL funding to support other current projects that were on-going. It was agreed to issue a press release setting out the reasons for the lack of progress on this project and Members were reassured that the project would be pursued to completion.

RECOMMENDED: That the cost of the Ravenside Roundabout Project be retained on the Capital Programme, but the allocation of Bexhill Local Community Infrastructure Levy (£150,000) be removed; AND

Cabinet also **RESOLVED:** That other sources of funding be sought with a paper to be brought at a future date outlining options for consideration.

(When it first became apparent, Councillors Field and Maynard both declared personal interests as elected Members of East Sussex County Council, and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting for the consideration thereof).

(Cabinet Agenda Item 10)

CB22/20. **DEVOLUTION OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCES IN BEXHILL**

In accordance with the Council's Financial Stability Programme and the Protecting Discretionary Services Strategy, agreement was sought to devolve the public conveniences in Bexhill from Rother District Council to Bexhill on Sea Town Council (BoSTC) by April 2023, as part of the wider programme of devolution.

The devolution of assets and services project had two phases, with phase one focussing on public conveniences in Bexhill and the second phase covering assets/services for all other local councils by April 2024. Discussions were already underway with Rye and Battle Town Councils and discussions had begun with BoSTC about other assets and services that could be devolved. The desired outcomes of this project were to protect discretionary services for future use by the community and to reduce the Council's net spend on discretionary services by 2025/26.

There were 14 public conveniences in Bexhill that could be devolved, listed at Appendix A to the report. BoSTC had indicated its interest in taking on all public conveniences, however, there were also ongoing discussions with two other organisations regarding the future management arrangements of the public conveniences at the Polegrove and Manor Gardens. In 2021, the newly created BoSTC conducted a survey seeking the views of Bexhill residents on a range of issues, with over 2,000 responses; 36% wanting to see improvements to the public conveniences.

It was noted that in order to achieve the ambitious timescale, public conveniences would be leased rather than disposed of, which provided control over potential future uses and a model lease was already available as a starting point for negotiation. Legal Services had confirmed that there was the capacity to deliver the programme and, if necessary, additional external legal support would be commissioned.

Members also requested that consideration be given to the installation of solar panels on any appropriate public convenience buildings as part of this project, to assist the Council in meeting its climate change decarbonisation programme which could potentially be funded through the Climate Change CIL fund. The delivery of local services by local organisations would save money as well as the carbon footprint of the service delivery.

The amount of revenue savings was dependent on the number of facilities transferred, ranging from £123,771.10 to £137,493.99 per annum. These figures were based on 2022/23 expenditure on contract cleaning and 2021/22 expenditure on utilities, grounds maintenance, hired and contract services, insurance and repairs only.

It was proposed that up to £218,000 of local CIL funding collected for Bexhill between 2016 and May 2021 (prior to BoSTC being established) would be made available to BoSTC and other community organisations to enable a programme of refurbishment to be undertaken. A one-off cost of £20,000 had also been earmarked from the Invest to Save fund, set up to enable the delivery of the Financial Stability Programme, to carry out the condition surveys for Bexhill public conveniences.

RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) the principle to transfer public conveniences in Bexhill to BoSTC on long-term leases by April 2023, be approved;
- 2) up to £218,000 of local CIL funds be made available to BoSTC and other community organisations to enable the refurbishment of public conveniences; and
- 3) the Deputy Chief Executive be granted delegated authority to facilitate the devolvement and transfer of public conveniences and enter into leases, when terms are agreed, with BoSTC, and community groups, in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holders.

(Councillor Madeley declared a personal interest as a Director of the Old Town Preservation Society, and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting for the consideration thereof).

(Cabinet Agenda Item 11)

CABINET – 5 September 2022

CB22/27. VILLAGE HALLS ENERGY PROJECT

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;

Cabinet also **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.

(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).

(Cabinet Agenda Item 7)

Councillor D.B. Oliver
Leader of the Council