



Policy and Resources Committee

Date: Wednesday, 1 December 2021

Time: 6.00 p.m.

Venue: Floral Pavilion, New Brighton

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AGENDA SUPPLEMENT

11. REFERRAL FROM ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE: TOWN DEAL - ACCEPTANCE OF FUNDING (Pages 1 - 2)

Minute attached.

12. REFERRAL FROM ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE: EXMOUTH STREET, SEAMUS O'DONNELLS (Pages 3 - 4)

Minute attached.

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MINUTE EXTRACT

ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE 22 NOVEMBER, 2021

53 TOWN DEAL – ACCEPTANCE OF GRANT

The Assistant Director and Chief Regeneration Officer introduced the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place. Members of the Committee were informed that on 15th July 2021, the Council received notification of the outcome of a submission it had made to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (now renamed Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities - DLUHC) Town Deal Programme.

This announcement set out that the Council had been invited to enter into a Town Deal for Birkenhead, up to a value of £25,000,000. This 'in principle' award was offered subject to the successful completion and approval of businesses cases for the projects included in the bid submission. Both the Council and DLUHC had agreed the Heads of Terms.

The report set out the next steps with Members asked to give consideration to the tight time scales, as well as agreeing to delegate a number of decisions to the Director of Regeneration and Place in terms of accepting the grant and commencing activity to develop and deliver the Town Deal for Birkenhead.

Councillor Emily Gleaves queried if there was separate funding for Start Yard via Egerton House. The Assistant Director and Chief Regeneration Officer confirming any alternative funding would be complementary. This was followed by a question from Councillor Andrew Hodson on the current lease for Egerton House but were advised by the Director of Regeneration and Place that there was little information in relation to the report.

Councillor Burgess-Joyce also queried in terms of the 5% upfront payment asked if it was a non-refundable amount and whether it would be lost if not spent.

The Assistant Director and Chief Regeneration Officer commented to say that this was their understanding.

The Director of Regeneration and Place also confirmed that Town Deal Board decisions would be referred back to the Committee unless they were within the scope of a delegated officer decision.

Councillor Andrew Hodson moved the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Paul Martin

Resolved - That Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to approve the following recommendations:

- (1) note the content of the report and the announcement from Government regarding the Town Deal funding award in relation to Birkenhead;**

- (2) note the re-profiling of the funding allocation for projects as set out in paragraph 3.8 of this report;**
- (3) authorise the Director of Regeneration and Place to accept the offer and funding from DLUHC, via a grant made under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003;**
- (4) authorise the Director of Regeneration and Place to progress delivery of the Town Deal Programme, in line with the Section 31 Grant and the Town Investment Plan, and to implement a change control process (if required);**
- (5) authorise the Director of Regeneration and Place to allocate the Town Deal pre-development funding of £1,250,000 (5% of the total award) on receipt;**
- (6) authorise the Director of Resources as S151 Officer to review and approve business cases, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place, and submit the results to DLUHC in order to release the remaining funds; and**
- (7) authorise the Director of Law and Governance in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place and the Director of Resources to enter into any necessary agreements or other legal documentation to implement the above recommendations.**

MINUTE EXTRACT

ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE 22 NOVEMBER, 2021

57 EXMOUTH STREET – SEAMUS O'DONNELLS

The Assistant Chief Executive introduced the report on behalf of the Director of Regeneration and Place, which sought approval for a recommendation to be made to Policy and Resources Committee to dispose of the Council's freehold interest in land at Exmouth Street, Birkenhead, to the existing lessee that holds a ground lease of the site and owns the operational public house which is sited thereon.

Councillor Andrew Hodson confirmed he did not have an objection to the sale in principle. Councillor Paul Martin queried whether the valuation was recent. He also suggested that the current value could be subject to an uplift due to the regeneration work currently being undertaken in Birkenhead and suggested deferring the decision until a valuation could be produced.

The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that it was a recent valuation and reminded Members that Wirral Borough Council does not own the building, but the freehold interest. The Director of Regeneration and Place also advised Members that Council valuers had given proper consideration to the freehold value and other comparable information. Members were also asked to note the recent reports by DLUHC regarding the disposal of assets and the potential for a backlog should any asset disposal reports be referred back for additional valuations.

The Assistant Chief Executive stated that he would be happy to facilitate a workshop to explain the process in more detail. He stated that Wirral Council had invited auditors to review land disposal practices and they were found to be appropriate.

Councillor David Burgess-Joyce confirmed that assurance was needed and that there should not be a rush to dispose of Assets over the coming months. Councillor Emily Gleaves asked officers if it would be possible to bring three different valuations when presenting asset disposal reports to committee.

The Chair, Councillor Tony Jones reminded Members that additional valuations would be deducted from the overall sale value. The Director of Regeneration and Place expressed caution and the need to move quickly in regard to asset disposals. He advised that a RICS Registered Valuer 'red book' valuation does cost the Council a significant sum, and may cause a backlog, however he noted that if further assurance is needed then officers may need to give further consideration to the process.

Councillor Dave Mitchell moved the motion, seconded by Councillor Andrew Hodson.

Resolved – That Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to approve that:

- (1) the freehold interest of land at Exmouth Street, Birkenhead, (which is held via a ground lease with 56 years unexpired and occupied by an operational public house with a grassed area to one side), be declared surplus to the Council's requirements;**
- (2) authorisation be given to the Director of Law & Governance, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration & Place to dispose the property to the current lessee, JSM Company Group Ltd for a price of £120,000, plus payment of the Council's legal costs.**