

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 2 October 2024

Present:

Councillor P Stuart (Chair)

Councillors	J Robinson	T Jones
	JE Green	J McManus
	P Gilchrist	I Lewis
	P Cleary	S Mountney
	EA Grey	L Rennie
	A Davies	H Gorman
	G Jenkinson (In place of J Bird)	S Bennett

30 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast.

The Chair then advised Members that he had received notification that Members wished to make reference to exempt items in the agenda during debate. Therefore he requested that the order of business be amended so that items 6,7 and 9 be moved to the end of the agenda. This was agreed by assent.

31 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Jo Bird. Councillor Gail Jenkinson was in attendance as substitute.

32 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

No such declarations were made.

33 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 11 September 2024 and be approved as a correct record.

34 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

No Public or Member Questions, Statements and Petitions were received.

35 **EDSENTIAL CIC DIRECTOR APPOINTMENTS**

The Head of Legal Services presented the report of the Director of Law and Corporate Services which sought approval of the Policy and Resources Committee to appoint two new non-executive directors. Members were informed that a comprehensive recruitment process had been undertaken and details of this had been included as an appendix to the report, along with biographies of the appointees.

Resolved – That the appointment of Samantha Myers-Whittaker and Phil Dickson as Directors of Edsential CIC be approved.

36 **FAIR TAX UPDATE AND ACCREDITATION**

The Director of Finance presented the report which provided an update on the Fair Tax Foundation objectives, funding and operating arrangements. It also provided details of Wirral Council's tax arrangements specifically in relation to the fair tax foundation principles, and in so doing requested that Wirral become accredited by this organisation as a - UK Fair Tax Council. Members were informed that the report supported the objectives of the Council Plan and had no adverse financial impact to Council Finances.

Members thanked officers for their report, noting that it has been requested by Council in March 2023 and that local authorities have an important part to play in regard to fair taxation.

Resolved – That,

1. the report be noted;

2. the statement as detailed in paragraph's 3.11 to 3.17 of the report be adopted and submitted to the Fair Tax Foundation for Wirral to be designated a Fair Tax Council; and

3. that a statement be published on the Council website declaring Wirral's commitment to Fair Tax and the stated principles as detailed in paragraph 3.18 of the report.

37 **COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1**

The Head of Corporate Office presented the report of the Director of Law and Corporate Services. This report provided a quarterly performance report in relation to the Council Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023-27.

Following the approval of the Council Plan a performance management framework was developed through working group activity with members from all Policy Committees and Policy and Resources Committee between February and April 2024. A reporting approach was approved providing quarterly reporting on the measures identified in the framework. Each Policy Committee received a report related to their key theme, for Policy and Resources Committee this was the 'Efficient, effective and accessible council' theme.

Members considered the inclusion of key risks within the report and noted that risk workshops were being scheduled for each of the Policy and Service Committees. Members discussed the accessibility of the Council, especially relating to data on call centre wait times and numbers of calls terminated by the service user. Members further requested more information on the usage of One Stop Shop booths. In addition, the inclusion of ombudsmen data in the report was discussed, with a request to include the actual numbers of ombudsmen inquiries rather than just the percentages of enquiries that were upheld.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

38 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair presented the report, and informed Members that the Committee was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. It was reported that the work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee. It was envisaged that the work programme would be formed from a combination of key decisions, standing items and requested officer reports. The report provided the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. The work programme for the Policy and Resources Committee was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Members requested that an update to the policy on Consultations be brought to a future meeting of the Committee, alongside an update on Council Assets.

Resolved - That the Policy and Resources Committee work programme for the 2024/25 municipal year be noted with the above additions.

39 **BIRKENHEAD PARK: WORLD HERITAGE PROJECT**

The Director of Neighbourhoods Services presented the report which had been presented to the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee on 17 October 2024.

The report provided Members with an update on progress and achievements regarding the Birkenhead Park World Heritage project; set out the steps ahead for achieving the park's recognition as a World Heritage Site; and sought approval for the allocation of additional funds to realise the site's successful nomination to UNESCO, bringing about the associated wide-ranging benefits of such global recognition.

In April 2023, the UK Government, through its Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), announced the inclusion of 'Birkenhead Park, the pioneering People's Park' on its 'new' Tentative List of potential sites for World Heritage Site nomination to UNESCO over the next 10 years. Birkenhead Park is one of only five sites on this exclusive list for the United Kingdom and its overseas territories.

This success came after a great deal of preparatory work over the last 8 years, and whilst being on this 'shortlist' did not guarantee that the site would be inscribed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, it is the formal 'first step on the ladder' in the journey to seek this prestigious international recognition. The current phase of the initiative was to work towards a formal nomination to UNESCO. This was to be submitted by the UK Government and formed the basis on which UNESCO's World Heritage Committee would decide on inscribing Birkenhead Park as a World Heritage Site.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that there was an update to the recommendation previously agreed by Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committees. This was due to the spending freeze and budget pressures, and it was noted that it was inappropriate for the Council to allocate resources at that time. Members queried how usual it was to bid for external funding and were informed that not all successful World Heritage Bids are directly resources by Local Authorities. Members requested that Members of Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committees be kept updated with progress.

Resolved – That

- 1. The Director of Neighbourhood Services be authorised to proceed with the project as described, subject to securing external funding.**
- 2. Should this fail, then the matter be considered by Members in 2025 -26 when the Council's financial circumstances may be clearer.**

40 HIND STREET - MASTER DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT

The Interim Director of Regeneration and Place presented the report which detailed the Hind Street Urban Village project and the proposed development

of around 1,500 new homes over the next 10 to 15 years. The report sought the Committee's endorsement of the finalised provisions of the long-term Master Development Agreement with Ion Property Developments Ltd and provided an update as to the strategy to mitigate the risks of a direct award approach.

The Director reported that the ambitious and transformational project would effectively create a new community adjacent to the town centre. The proposed development was a model of urban living, well connected to Liverpool City Centre through the proximity of Birkenhead Central and Green Lane Station, and provided quality open spaces, public realm and active travel routes. The development was expected to attract existing Wirral residents looking for a modern housing offer and a different lifestyle, afforded by the proximity of Hind Street to so many local and city centre facilities, along with new residents from outside the borough.

This was considered as a landmark scheme for the Council and fundamental to the delivery of the Council's brownfield-first Local Plan. The Council submitted a Full Business Case (FBC) for Hind Street South (the area south of Hind Street) on 9th July 2024, requesting £50.1 million of funding from Homes England (HE) and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA).

This funding unlocked the initial phases in the south of the site, for which planning permission is sought for 633 homes. The future phases in the North of the site comprised of additional new homes, a new school and linkages to the town centre facilitated by the demolition of the Mersey Tunnel flyovers. It was proposed that the comprehensive development of this complex regeneration project would be delivered by way of a direct award of a Master Development Agreement (MDA) to Ion Property Developments Ltd (Ion).

Members commented during the debate that they were pleased that the project was progressing.

Resolved – That the Director of Law and Corporate Services be authorised to enter into Master Development Agreement for Hind Street Urban Village with Ion Property Developments Ltd on the legal, financial and risk basis outlined in the exempt Appendix 1 of the report.

41 **HIND STREET - PRIMARY ENABLING WORKS**

The Director of Regeneration and Place presented a second report which updated Members on the Hind Street Urban Village project, seeking the required authorisations to enable the council to secure the external grant funding required to undertake the primary enabling works and to enter into the various contracts and land deals that will enable the works to be implemented.

It was reported that the Council submitted a Full Business Case (FBC) for Hind Street South (the area south of Hind Street) on 9th July 2024, requesting £50.1 million of funding from Homes England (HE) and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA). The FBC was attached to the report as appendix 1. This funding unlocked phases A and B of the development, a site comprising of 10.9 ha of brownfield land, for which planning permission is sought for the delivery of 633 homes and 1,330sqm (Net Internal Area – NIA) of ancillary commercial floorspace. The package of works set out in the FBC (referred to as the Primary Enabling Works) supported the creation of development plots.

It was further reported that the proposed primary enabling works package was to be implemented following a detailed design stage, with work expected to start in early 2025 and to be completed in Spring Page 2027. Plot development in Hind Street South was expected to commence in summer 2027 and developed out over the following 6 years (2033).

Resolved – That the Director of Law and Corporate Services be authorised to:

- (a) finalise and enter into a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) with Homes England and a GFA with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) to secure the funding required to implement the primary enabling works for the Hind Street Urban Village project as detailed at paragraph 3.2 of this report.**
- (b) enter into a contract for the delivery of the primary enabling works with John Sisk & Son Ltd pursuant to the Procure Partnerships Framework - Infrastructure Lot £15m+;**
- (c) enter into a development management agreement with Ion Property Developments Ltd (Ion) through the Pagabo framework (Lot 3 – Reserved Suppliers – Development Management Services) to enable Ion Property Developments Ltd to manage the implementation of the primary enabling works on behalf of the council;**
- (d) to enter into a legal agreement with Cadent Gas Limited (Cadent) in relation to the relocation of the gas infrastructure, subject to the costs of the arrangement being within the estimates detailed in the Full Business Case (FBC) submitted to Homes England and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.**

The Director of Finance presented the report which sought shareholder approval for Edsential CIC ('Edsential') to enter into a purchase agreement for new office space. This request came after Edsential was informed that it must vacate their existing premises.

Resolved – that shareholder approval be granted for Edsential CIC to enter into the purchase agreement for the acquisition of office accommodation as referred to in the exempt Appendix 1.