

ECONOMY REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 4 March 2021

Present:

Councillor A Leech (Chair)

Councillors	A Hodson	T Jones
	J Bird	D Mitchell
	D Burgess-Joyce	J Stapleton
	A Gardner	K Greaney
	S Hayes	

22 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting including the member of the public who had submitted a question.

23 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

24 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jo Bird declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in item 11 (Minute 38) (Business Support Services: Commissioning Intentions Paper) as she was a Community-Led Housing accredited advisor who sometimes had paid work for Breaking Ground who would be in a position to bid for this this element of the proposed BSS contract.

Councillor Jean Stapleton declared a personal interest in item 11 (Minute 38) (Business Support Services: Commissioning Intentions Paper) as she represented the Council on Birkenhead improvement District Steering Group.

Councillor Tony Jones declared a personal interest in items 8 and 9 (Minutes 35 and 36 concerning the Maritime Knowledge Hub) as he was a Council appointee on Mersey Maritime.

Councillor Andrew Gardner declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in item 12 (Minute 39) (Wirral Ways to Work) as Involve Northwest were a professional client of his.

25 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee held on 26 January 2021 be approved and adopted as a correct record.

26 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

One question had been received.

Question from Gillian Homeri:

Can the committee explain why a large sum of money is being given to the People's Pool for a feasibility study rather than expecting any company capable of creating such a project to be in a position to fund such a study themselves.

Answer: I would like to thank you for your question regarding the award of feasibility funding for the People's Pool project. The decision to grant up to £80,000 to contribute towards feasibility work for the People's Pool project was made at Council on the 2nd March 2020. However, in the light of a material change in circumstances for the council, namely the financial pressures due to Covid and the commissioning of the New Brighton Masterplan, the Committee will tonight be considering a report on the project. This report sets out details of the first phase of the feasibility study and outlines the next stages of work to be progressed which would require Members to agree to the allocation of the remaining £67,500 of grant funding. I am sure members will consider your contribution, as part of the debate that will take place on this proposal.

Supplementary question:

Gillian Homeri: There are the remains of a tidal pool in New Brighton which volunteers sad they could renovate. In my view it is acceptable. I cannot understand how the People Pool will be carbon neutral as people will be travelling as well as using hot tubs, and it will be heated in the winter.

Answer from Councillor Leech:

I am sure this will be taken into consideration. It is very much in the early stages. It will need planning permission. To progress with the feasibility study they are asking for the remainder of funding to be allocated to them so all the matters you addressed can be adhered to.

27 **STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS**

No statements or petitions had been received.

28 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

No questions from Members had been received.

The Chair proposed to amend the order of business so that all items which had confidential information in appendices were grouped toward the end of the meeting.

This was agreed by assent.

29 FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND

The report of the Director of Regeneration and Place set out that in December 2020, the Council received notification of the outcome of two submissions it had made to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Future High Street Fund. Birkenhead had received its full requested allocation of £24.6m and New Ferry was offered an in-principle award of £3.2m from its requested value of £4.6m, subject to an updated proposal to reflect the lower funding offer. The report set out the next steps for both areas, including more detailed information regarding a temporary solution for Birkenhead Market, as well as the process to reprofile and resubmit the New Ferry proposal.

Sally Shah, Chief Regeneration Officer, presented the report and answered Members questions, which mainly concerned the moving of Birkenhead Market and wanting the development of New Ferry to move forward as quickly as possible.

RESOLVED - That Policy and Resources Committee be requested to approve the following recommendations:

- (1) Note the content of the report and the announcement from Government regarding the Future High Street Fund award in relation to Birkenhead and the in-principle award in relation to New Ferry.**
- (2) Note that a re-profiled application was submitted to Government on 3 February 2021 in respect of the New Ferry Future High Street Fund in-principle award.**
- (3) Authorise the Director of Regeneration and Place to consider and approve final sign off of the Future High Street Fund grant funding agreements for Birkenhead and New Ferry, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance.**
- (4) Authorise the Director of Regeneration and Place to commence delivery of the Birkenhead and New Ferry Future High Street Fund programmes in line with the grant funding agreement and change control process.**
- (5) Authorise the Director of Regeneration and Place to progress with scoping out a design, costed model and fit out of the current preferred option for the temporary market, namely Unit 2 St**

- Werburghs Square and St Werburghs Square itself, that will be used as a temporary holding position while the current Birkenhead Market site be made available for re-- development.**
- (6) Note that a further report will be brought forward to Members for approval of the finalised proposal for the temporary market.**

30 **REVISED STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

The report of the Director of Regeneration and Place sought approval of a revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The existing SCI had been adopted in March 2014 and set out the Council's minimum consultation and engagement requirements during the preparation of the Local Plan, Supplementary Planning Documents, Neighbourhood Plans and the determination of planning applications. It had been necessary to update the SCI to be legally compliant, take account of Government regulations, guidance on temporary changes to consultation arrangements arising from the Covid 19 emergency, guidance on arrangements for Neighbourhood Plans and to reflect new opportunities for best practice engagement offered by web-based applications.

RESOLVED – That:

- (1) The Statement of Community Involvement attached at Appendix 1 to the report be adopted; and**
- (2) Authority be delegated to the Director of Regeneration and Place to make minor, non-material formatting and typographical changes to the Statement of Community Involvement prior to publication.**

31 **NEW FERRY – IMPLEMENTING THE REGENERATION PLAN**

The report of the Director of Regeneration and Place set out that in March 2017 an explosion in New Ferry devastated the heart of the New Ferry retail centre, destroying businesses and homes, having a significant impact on the local community. Since that time, the Council had been fully supporting the recovery of the area, seeking additional funding to acquire the interests of key properties and parcels of land which would enable the regeneration and redevelopment of the town centre to proceed under the New Ferry Regeneration Plan.

The plan sought to protect local businesses and bring a mix of new residential and retail units into the town to create a sustainable future for New Ferry. However, negotiations for the acquisition of a number of property interests were not progressing. The use of Compulsory Purchase Order powers was therefore recommended as the Council was unlikely to be able acquire these interests by agreement. The report also detailed a preferred development option. This had been endorsed by a Leader Decision in December 2019,

then followed by an outline planning application for the preferred development option approved by Council in September 2020. The scheme would be taken forward for delivery and a preferred developer partner would be appointed to deliver the scheme in 2021. It was anticipated that the overall scheme would be delivered by 2024.

Members were keen that the redevelopment be accelerated where possible and asked questions about potential delays. Members offered their thanks to the team who had worked on the proposals.

RESOLVED –

That Policy and Resources Committee be requested to approve the following:

- (1) The making of a Compulsory Purchase Order(s) (“the Order”) under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 226(1)(a), and section 13 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 for the acquisition of land and new rights in respect of the area identified in the plan and table of Appendix 1 of the report to enable the regeneration of New Ferry to be undertaken and that the process for the Order shall be subject to following the procedures laid down by the Acquisition of Land Act 1981.**
- (2) The draft skeleton Statement of Reasons (Appendix 2 to the report) which (in addition to the information in this report) sets out the justification for making the Order.**
- (3) The Director of Regeneration and Place in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance be granted delegated authority to:**
 - (a) finalise the Statement of Reasons.**
 - (b) draft the Order Map and Schedule before the making of the Order (if required).**
 - (c) negotiate, agree terms and enter into agreements with interested parties including agreements for the withdrawal of blight notices and/or the withdrawal of objections to the Order and/or undertakings not to enforce the Order on specified terms, including (but not limited to) where appropriate seeking the exclusion of land or rights from the Order, making provision for the payment of compensation and/or relocation.**
- (4) The Director of Law and Governance be granted delegated authority to:**
 - (a) take all steps to secure the making, confirmation and implementation of the Order including the publication and service of all notices and the promotion of the Council’s case at any public inquiry.**
 - (b) in the event the Order is confirmed by the Secretary of State, to advertise and give notice of confirmation and thereafter to take all steps to implement the Order.**

- (c) take all steps in relation to any legal proceedings relating to the Order including defending or settling claims referred to the Upper Tribunal and/or applications to the courts and any appeals.
- (5) That where required to assist in the delivery of the New Ferry Preferred development option land may be appropriated for planning purposes pursuant to Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972 to enable Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to be utilised to override any third-party rights of land or part thereof.
- (6) The Economy, Development and Regeneration Committee be authorised to make all necessary further decisions that are not otherwise delegated to officers, in relation to the Compulsory Purchase Order and consequential on the Compulsory Purchase Order including the selection process for and approval of a development partner the structure of that partnership arrangement whether through a land transaction or otherwise and any related land transactions and settlement of compensation and the engagement of appropriate advisors to advise on compensation for any business interests.

32 **2020/21 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER THREE**

The report of the Director of Regeneration and Place provided a summary of the projected year-end revenue and capital position for Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee as at the end of Quarter 3 (December 2020) of the 2020/21 financial year. The Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic presented financial risk due to uncertainty and fluidity in the external environment.

The overall financial position for the Council remained challenging, and a number of actions had been in progress to mitigate the overall forecast position presented at quarter 3, including limiting spending to essential areas of service delivery only, with Corporate Directors supported to mitigate the risk of overspending.

RESOLVED – That:

- (1) The adverse year-end forecast position presented at Quarter 3 of £0.714m be noted; and
- (2) The impact of funding and expenditure as a direct consequence of Covid-19 be noted, including the additional funding sources which have been identified but, as yet, not received.

ACTIVE TRAVEL CROSS PARTY MEMBER WORKING GROUP

The report of the Director of Regeneration and Place sought approval for the establishment of a Member Working Group focussed on active travel. The Working Group would be within the category of an Advisory Group and would support the Council to secure a positive outcome in delivering increased levels of sustainable travel as set out in the emerging Local Plan and the target in the Cool2 Strategy to 'a complete transition to fossil fuel free local travel by around 2030'. Recommendations and findings from the Working Group would be presented to the Economy Regeneration and Development Committee.

The Chair proposed that the recommendations be adopted subject to an amendment to enlarge the membership to 8. Having regard to the current membership of the Council this would allow all parties on the Council to be represented with 3 Labour group members, 2 Conservative group members and the remaining groups having 1 representative. The Chair also proposed that the Chair of the Working Group be selected from its number. This was seconded by Councillor Jo Bird.

Members were advised that the proposed terms of reference enabled relevant officers and representatives of the Combined Authority and other local or national organisations to attend meetings of the Working Group as required.

RESOLVED – That:

- (1) The Active Travel Working Group be established with the Terms of Reference as attached to this report at Appendix 1 subject to the following amendments to the Membership:**
 - (i) The Working Group will comprise of eight members. In addition, Members of other Committees may be invited to attend as and when appropriate at the discretion of the Chair of the Working Group.**
 - (ii) A Chair will be selected by the Group from amongst its number.**
 - (iii) The Working Group shall appoint a Chair.**
- (2) The Monitoring Officer be authorised as proper officer to carry out the wishes of the Group Leaders in allocating Members to membership of the Active Travel Working Group and to appoint those Members with effect from the date at which the proper officer is advised of the names of such Members.**

WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme, to align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key

decisions which are within the remit of the Committee. The work programme was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

RESOLVED – That the content of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year, as set out within the report, be agreed.

Members resolved en bloc that the appendices that are marked exempt/confidential items to the remaining agenda items contained exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of the Council and other persons of a commercially sensitive nature, as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and that they would be treated as confidential information items during their public consideration by members.

35 **MARITIME KNOWLEDGE HUB**

The report of the Director of Regeneration and Place explained that the Maritime Knowledge Hub was a catalytic project to support wider development within Wirral Waters. It was to create a world class centre of excellence for maritime business growth and sector development. It would also bring together the region's key maritime assets in business, research, education and training to address challenges around innovation and skills within a refurbished and new build high profile centre.

Participating in the development of the Maritime Knowledge Hub through a Forward Funding Agreement and taking of a 250-year lease would create a world class centre of excellence for maritime business growth and sector development. It would bring together the region's key maritime assets in business, research, education and training to address challenges around innovation and skills within a refurbished and new build high profile centre. The project would be an investment vehicle for the Council with the potential to deliver a financial return to offset the capital investment.

RESOLVED – That Policy and Resources Committee be requested to approve the following recommendations:

- (1) The Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance and the Director of Resources, be authorised to finalise the Heads of Terms substantially in accordance with the draft Heads of Terms attached as Appendix 3 to the report.**
- (2) The Full Business Case for Maritime Knowledge Hub be approved.**
- (3) The Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place and the Director of Resources, be authorised to finalise agreements for the Council to enter into a conditional Forward Funding Agreement, Agreement for Lease**

and Lease, based on the finalised heads of terms, with Peel Land and Property (Intermediate) Ltd.

- (4) The Director of Regeneration and Place in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance and the Director of Resources be authorised to accept the terms of the Grant Funding Agreement, subject to successful award, from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government in respect of the pre-test and trial Maritime Accelerator Project and to commence necessary procurement exercises to enable the delivery of the Accelerator.

36 **WIRRAL WATERS ENTERPRISE ZONE INVESTMENT FUND - MARITIME KNOWLEDGE HUB**

The report of the Director of Regeneration and Place sought approval to provide a grant to the Council to enable the delivery of new high quality Maritime Knowledge Hub floorspace in Wirral. The Maritime Knowledge Hub would create a world class centre of excellence for maritime business growth and sector development. It would bring together the region's key maritime assets in business, research, education and training to address challenges around innovation and skills and build a high-profile centre. The funding package had been set up within the Enterprise Zone to reinvest business rates and could operate up to 2037.

RESOLVED –

That Policy and Resources Committee be requested to approve funding from the Wirral Waters Investment Fund to the Council to support the development of new high quality mixed use floorspace at the Maritime Knowledge Hub.

37 **WIRRAL WATERS ENTERPRISE ZONE INVESTMENT FUND - EGERTON VILLAGE**

The report of the Director of Regeneration and Place sought approval to provide a grant to Peel Land and Property Investments (Intermediate) Limited to enable the delivery of new high quality mixed use floorspace at Egerton Village within Wirral Waters. Egerton Village would be a new, low carbon 14,671 sq ft gateway community, amenity and arts facility located in the Four Bridges area of Wirral Waters, and would provide a focal point for arrival and orientation around Wirral Waters. The development had been designed to create a new semi-public, semi-covered 'square' at its heart that would be used for events and other activities.

RESOLVED –

That Policy and Resources Committee be requested to approve the following recommendations:

- (1) A grant from the Wirral Waters Investment Fund to Peel Land and Property Investments (Intermediate) Limited be approved to support the development of new high quality mixed use floorspace at Egerton Village.**
- (2) The Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place, be authorised to draw up and sign a conditional legal agreement between the Council and Peel Land and Property (Intermediate) Limited to reflect the grant arrangements.**

38 BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES: COMMISSIONING INTENTIONS PAPER

Councillor Jo Bird, having expressed a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in this item, left the meeting for the debate and vote.

The report of the Director of Regeneration and Place summarised progress of Wirral Council's Business Support Service commission which was to run to May 2021, and asked the Committee to endorse the extension of the current contract to September 2021 to align procurement timescales with the complementary Third Sector Infrastructure service and sought authority to undertake market procurement for a re- prioritised Business Support Service in 2021.

RESOLVED –

That Policy and Resources Committee be requested to approve the following recommendations:

- (1) An extension of the Business Support Services contract to 30 September 2021 be endorsed.**
- (2) The Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Chair and Spokespersons of the Economy and Regeneration and Development Committee, be authorised to:**
 - a. Approve the final Business Support Services specification for delivery of a new service from October 2021 to October 2024, with an option to extend by one year to October 2025 based on satisfactory performance.**
 - b. Commence procurement and select the most economically advantageous supplier(s) to deliver the commissioned services.**
 - c. Conclude the final contract award.**

39 WIRRAL WAYS TO WORK

Councillor Andrew Gardner, having declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, left the meeting for the debate and vote.

The report of the Director of Regeneration and Place sought authority for the Council to enter into an extension of a supplier agreement with Involve Northwest whilst the Council awaited formal award of European Social Fund. Following a competitive tender exercise, Involve Northwest had been selected as preferred supplier to deliver the Worklessness Support Service, which was part of the Wirral Ways to Work Programme. The contract was due to expire on 30th June 2021 but an application had been made for funding from the Liverpool City Region which would enable the Council to extend this contract for 16 months until October 2022. An option to extend for 3 months at risk was also sought whilst this application was processed.

RESOLVED –

That Policy and Resources Committee be requested to approve the following recommendations:

- (1) The Director of Law and Governance in consultation with the Director for Regeneration and Place be authorised to enter a contract extension and sign the supplier contract with Involve Northwest to continue delivery of the Wirral Ways to Work Worklessness Support Service.**
- (2) An option be authorised for the Director of Regeneration and Place in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance to enter a 3-month contract extension from July to September 2021 to cover off the risk of awaiting a grant funding agreement from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and then proceed to a full extension once confirmation of EU funds is received, should this option need to be utilised.**

40 **THE PEOPLE'S POOL**

The report of the Director of Regeneration and Place provided an update on a proposal brought forward by an external organisation named Our Lido Ltd (OLL) to build a lido complex on a Council site within Wirral, fully funded by external grant funding applied for by OLL. The proposal ('The People's Pool') was to provide a hub for the community with a mixed business model to support this to include a food and drink offer, retail, spaces for community use, a proactive employment and training policy, and potentially partnerships with local independent businesses and social enterprises. The aspirations for the pool itself were that it would provide a 50-metre-long pool, open all year round and heated using environmentally sustainable energy.

A decision had previously been taken by the Council to approve up to £80,000 grant funding to contribute towards feasibility work for the People's Pool project through the Council's Capital Budget (Council, 2 March 2020, Minute 122 refers). A decision had also previously been taken by the Leader of the Council to support the People's Pool project and to approve the investigation to identify a Council site within Wirral to potentially be transferred under the

community asset transfer process or occupied in some other way to be decided at a future date (Leader Decision, 24 March 2020 refers). Since its previous decisions, the Council had faced significant financial pressures largely connected to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which required it to review its commitments. The New Brighton Masterplan had also been commissioned to develop a long-term framework to inform future decisions in New Brighton. It was considered that this represented a material change of circumstances.

Members asked questions about the proposal and were concerned at the use of Council funds at a time when budgets were under pressure, and the lack of risk for OLL. Officers had investigated OLL who were a Community Interest Company and they had applied elsewhere for funding. A proposal in line with the recommendations within the report was voted on and lost with 4 votes for and 6 against.

Members continued discussion on the issue and were in favour of the Lido in principle but could not justify the spending of funds at the current time.

Councillor Andrew Hodson proposed that the Committee resolve to be in favour of the Lido in principle but could not justify the spending of funds at the current time and Councillor David Burgess-Joyce seconded this proposal.

**RESOLVED (6 in favour, none against and 4 abstentions) –
That the People’s Pool project be supported, in principle, but the
Committee could not support the funding request from Our Lido Ltd
from the Council’s Capital Budget of £67,500 at the current time.**