

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Monday, 21 December 2020

Present: Councillor A Leech (Vice-Chair in the Chair)

Councillors J Williamson P Stuart
JE Green C Spriggs
P Gilchrist T Anderson
P Cleary W Clements
M McLaughlin A Hodson
EA Grey L Rennie
J McManus C Carubia
Y Nolan

Deputy: Councillor J Robinson (In place of T Usher)

33 APOLOGIES

The Vice-Chair announced that apologies had been received from Councillor Tom Usher, and Councillor Jean Robinson was deputising for him.

34 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Vicky Shaw, Head of Legal Services, informed the Committee that Councillor Janette Williamson was having technical difficulties with her broadband connection and although could be present at the meeting would find it difficult in chairing if connection was lost intermittently. She suggested that the Committee agree to waive the relevant parts of the Constitution in respect of the appointed Chair always chairing the meeting when present, and that Councillor Anita Leech, Vice-Chair, chair the meeting for its duration.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Jeff Green, it was –

Resolved (unanimously) – That Articles 11.3 (ii), 11.5 (b) and Standing Order 7 of the Constitution, be waived, in order that Councillor Anita Leech, Vice-Chair, chair the meeting for its duration.

35 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest.

No such declarations were made.

36 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

The Vice-Chair reported that no questions from either members of the public or Members had been submitted. Nor were there any statements or petitions to receive.

37 **SMART BUSINESS PROJECT**

Shaer Halewood, Director of Resources introduced a report on the SmartBusiness Project regarding the proposed upgrade of the Council's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems.

The ERP systems integrated key business processes across Finance, Human Resources (HR), Procurement and other areas. The approach standardised and streamlined procedures to the administration of a number of key business activities. The Council's current ERP system Oracle 1Business had been in operation since 2005 and was now considered obsolete and a critical risk to the business.

The SmartBusiness Project had gone through extensive Discovery and Design phases, including a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) and Outline Business Case (OBC) which was presented to Cabinet on 24 March 2020 and approval was given to complete a tender and evaluation exercise.

A Full Business Case (FBC) for the SmartBusiness Project, was now being prepared to discuss the future of the Council's ERP systems and options to replace the current platform. To support the delivery of the SmartBusiness Project FBC, scrutiny by Members was now sought.

Shaer Halewood and Wendy Nicholls, Senior Business Designer, responded to a number of comments from Members and confirmed that a number of presentations had been made from preferred bidders before a preferred supplier had been chosen.

Councillors Moira McLaughlin and Pat Cleary confirmed that they were happy for Members with experience of these systems to sit on the Task and Finish Group and report back to the Committee.

On a motion by the Vice-Chair, seconded by Councillor Chris Carubia, it was -

Resolved – That this Committee:

(a) appoints Members of the Committee , Councillors Chris Carubia, Paul Stuart and one Conservative Member (to be confirmed), to a Task and Finish group to support the development of the FBC;

(b) agrees that a meeting of the Task and Finish Group be held on 6 January 2021 and that the outcomes of that meeting be reported to the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee scheduled to take place on 20 January 2021.

38 EDSENTIAL WORKING CAPITAL AGREEMENT RENEWAL

Shaer Halewood, Director of Resources, introduced a report which informed the Committee that, the Council with Cheshire West and Chester Council provided a working capital facility to Edsential, a company jointly owned by the two Councils. The report requested the Committee to agree to a renewal of the current working capital facility with Edsential. The renewal would be on similar terms to the existing arrangement which earned a return to the Council as interest was charged on any sum advanced.

In response to a number of comments from Members, Shaer Halewood and Pete Molyneux, Senior Finance Manager, informed the Committee that over the last 12 months Wirral Council had received £50,000 in interest payments. To date Edsential had not required to use the full amount of this facility. The Shareholder Board would receive regular reports in terms of the company's performance.

On a motion by Councillor Wendy Clements, seconded by Councillor Chris Carubia, it was -

Resolved – That the Policy and Resources Committee approves the renewal of the interest bearing working capital cashflow agreement of up to £2 million with Edsential for a 5 year term to commence as soon as applicable.

39 WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

A report by the Director of Law and Governance advised how the Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which were 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 an appendix to the report.

Members suggested a number of items could be added to the work programme, including:

- How the Council undertakes consultation
- An update on the Change Programme
- An update on plans for income generating projects
- An update on invest to save projects
- An overview of Edsential

In response to a comment, Alan Evan, Director of Regeneration and Place, stated that the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee would be having a workshop and presentation in January, 2021 and an invitation would be extended to all Members. The Growth Company business plan had previously been approved by Cabinet in early 2020, any changes would go to the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee and then to this Committee.

On a motion by the Vice-Chair, seconded by Councillor Jeff Green, it was -

Resolved – That the proposed Policy and Resources Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year, incorporating the suggested additions above, be noted.

40 **REFERRAL FROM COUNCIL - MOTION - CANCEL LOCAL AUTHORITY DEBT**

A motion, approved by Council, at its meeting on 19 October, 2020 (minute 29 refers) regarding the Campaign for Council Housing's call to cancel local authority debt had been referred to this Committee, in accordance with the wording of the motion.

The Vice-Chair informed the meeting that a letter had been sent to the Minister but no response had yet been received, and that if the Committee wished to debate the matter a report would need to come before the Committee.

A Member queried whether or not there was any risk to the Council's capitalisation bid in terms of what this motion was asking for.

Members expressed the view that they knew little about this campaign group and would like an officers' report on this.

On a motion by the Vice-Chair, seconded by Councillor Chris Carubia, it was –

Resolved – That the motion be noted and once a response had been received from Government, the motion be brought back to Committee with an officers' report.

41 **MINUTES OF THE SENIOR OFFICER AND APPOINTMENTS STAFFING SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Committee was requested to note the minutes of the Senior Officer and Appointments Staffing Sub-Committee meeting held on 26 November, 2020.

On motion by the Vice-Chair, seconded by Councillor Moira McLaughlin, it was –

Resolved – That the minutes of the Senior Officer and Appointments Staffing Sub-Committee of 26 November, 2020, be noted.

42 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

In response to a Member's comment, Vicki Shaw, Head of Legal Services, explained the meaning of paragraph 3 in relation to the Act and the reasons for excluding the press and public from the meeting. This related to commercial interests, and information relating to financial or business affairs of the Authority or another party, and in this case there could be commercial interests on both sides.

Vicki Shaw also stated that if a decision was made by the Committee and then acted upon, an officer decision notice could be published which would give further details of the action taken.

On a motion by the Vice-Chair, seconded by Councillor Janette Williamson, it was –

Resolved - That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.

43 **EXEMPT REPORT - ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY IN BIRKENHEAD**

Alan Evans, Director of Regeneration and Place introduced a report on a proposal to purchase a property in Birkenhead as part of the regeneration proposals for Birkenhead Town Centre.

After a lengthy debate and the Director having responded to questions from Members, it was moved by the Vice-Chair, seconded by Councillor Pat Cleary and then -

Resolved (12:5) – That,

- (1) the Director of Law and Governance be authorised to acquire, on behalf of the Council, the site identified in the report for the sum as referred to in the report;**
- (2) it be agreed that this decision is urgent and therefore not subject to review.**