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ECONOMY REGENERATION & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Monday, 16 October 2023

Present:

Councillor T Jones (Chair)

Councillors	GJ Davies	A Gardner
	M Skillicorn	J Bird
	P Martin (for R Pitt)	E Lamb
	A Davies (for G Wood)	E Tomeny
	A Hodson	H Raymond

34 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair opened the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast and a copy is retained on the Council's website for two years.

35 **APOLOGIES**

Councillor Gill Wood sent her apologies. Councillor Angela Davies substituted.

Councillor Ritchie Pitt sent his apologies. Councillor Paul Martin substituted.

36 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

No such declarations were made.

37 **MINUTES**

Councillor Jo Bird noted that Minute 26 stated that a copy of the Regeneration Delivery Plan had gone before the Policy and Resources Committee in September 2023. Councillor Bird stated that this had not happened. The Chair agreed that this wording would be removed from the minutes.

Councillor Ewan Tomeny noted that Minute 28 stated that "The original motion was then put to the vote and carried (7:3)...". He stated that no Councillors had voted against the motion and that the 3 Green Councillors had abstained. The Chair agree that the wording would be updated to reflect this.

Councillor Mark Skillicorn noted that Councillor Gill Wood had not attended the meeting on 18 September 2023 and that this was not reflected in the minutes for that meeting. The Chair agreed that the attendance list would be amended to reflect Councillor Wood's absence.

Resolved – that, subject to the appropriate corrections, the minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2023 be approved as a correct record.

38 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

The Chair indicated that four public questions had been received from members of the public.

Councillor Pat Cleary in his capacity as a member of public asked when a report on Mass Transit would be received by councillors and when work was likely to start on any solutions.

In response the Chair noted that a final draft of the Outline Business Case for Phase A of Mass Transit had been completed in July 2023 and was being reviewed by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. Once the review was complete, officers intended to bring the report before committee in early 2024. The Chair also noted that work was underway with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Peel Land and Property regarding interim travel solutions to help link Wirral Waters to the existing Merseyrail network.

Councillor Cleary asked a supplementary question seeking assurance that a report on Mass Transit would be delivered to Members no later than February 2024.

The Chair stated that officers would respond to him in writing offering a planned timescale for delivery of this report within ten working days.

Alan Featherstone asked a question regarding the Council's plans to locate Birkenhead Market traders in the Argos building at the Pyramids shopping centre. He stated that the site would only offer 33 individual units to traders and wanted to know why the Council were considering such a small market for Birkenhead as this would damage market business and other high street traders.

The Chair responded that officers had carried out a high-level feasibility study and had found that the site offered 64 10m x 10m market stalls as well as required back of house storage and facilities.

Mr Featherstone asked a supplementary question regarding a report that he stated was commissioned by the Council from Marketplace Management Ltd which noted that there was a requirement for at least 86 market stalls in Birkenhead. Given this, he wished to know why the Director of Regeneration and Place had commissioned an architect to create a market space within the former Argos site that would only accommodate 64 market stalls.

The Chair stated that a written response would be provided to Mr Featherstone within ten working days.

A question regarding Birkenhead Market and the Council's plans to move the market from David French was read out by the Lead Principal Lawyer. The question asked why the Council had not consulted with the market traders on the suggested move to the Argos building.

The Chair noted that that no decision had been made in respect of the market. A feasibility study on the former Argos unit was undertaken to determine if it was of a sufficient size and configuration to accommodate traders before any consultation with traders. He noted that there was no point in engaging with the market traders if the study had found that the site was not an option.

A question from Janice May was read out by the Lead Principal Lawyer. The question stated that Birkenhead Market traders currently pay rent for 100 stalls and that the plan to move to the former Argos site would only be able to accommodate 33 stalls. The question went to ask how the loss of 66 market rents would maximise the rental stream for Wirral Council.

The Chair responded that no decision in respect of the market in in the context of the former Argos unit had been made and that any decision would need to take various matters into account such as sufficiency of size, configuration, accommodation and viability.

39 **ACTIVE TRAVEL FUNDING TRANCHE 3**

The Lead Commissioner for Strategic Transport and Technology introduced the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place. The report sought approval to spend £1,625,000 of additional Active Travel Tranche 3 grant funding which has been made available to the Council from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and to amend the 2023/2024 capital programme to allocate the funding to the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme.

The funding outlined in the report had been allocated to the Council for the delivery of the specific project identified and could not be used for any other purpose. If the funding was not accepted, it would be returned to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Members discussed terms within the report and queried the timeframe for the scheme. The Lead Commissioner for Strategic Transport and Technology assured them that part of the scheme was complete and out to tender, with a number of tender returns under evaluation.

Resolved – that,

- 1. the Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to utilise the £1,625,000 from Active Travel Fund Tranche 3 received by the**

Council from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to support the delivery of the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme; and

- 2. the Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to approve that the Capital Programme for 2023/2024 be amended so that the additional £1,625,000 grant funding from the Active Travel Fund Tranche 3 allocated to the Council by Liverpool City Region Combined Authority be allocated to the Conway Street / Europa Boulevard Movement Scheme.**

40 **WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Lead Principal Lawyer presented the work programme update. Members were informed 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.

Members stated that the Work Programme did not give an indication of a delivery timeline for non-key decision reports and updates and requested that future Work Programmes included an indicative delivery timeline.

Members requested sight of the Regeneration Risk Register, for the Financial Monitoring reports to include the holding costs of the assets that have been held for community asset transfer but have not yet been agreed and their budget implications.

A motion was proposed by Councillor Ewan Tomeny and Seconded by Councillor Ed Lamb that:

- “1. the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year be agreed; and
2. the Regeneration Member Working Group shall have its next meeting before Saturday 4th November 2023”

Members agreed to take a separate vote on each limb of the above motion. The first limb of the motion was agreed (11-0) and the second limb of the motion was lost (4-7)

Resolved – that the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year be agreed.