

# ECONOMY REGENERATION & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Monday, 22 January 2024

Present: Councillor T Jones (Chair)

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

## 55 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.

## 56 APOLOGIES

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

## 57 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.

Councillor Ewan Tomeny declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 9; 2024-25 Budget Report Update, regarding the Homes for Ukraine Resettlement Programme as he had people living with him under this scheme and was in receipt of payments from the council.

## 58 MINUTES

**Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2023 be approved as a correct record.**

## 59 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

No questions, statements or petitions from the public or Councillors had been received.

## 59.1 Public Questions

The Chair noted that at the previous meeting of committee on 6 December 2023, a question was asked regarding the area in square meters and square feet rented to market traders at Birkenhead Market. Due to a conversion error, the wrong square metreage was supplied, the Chair offered his apologies to the questioner for this error and gave the correct figures as follows:

There was a total of 1,676 metres squared or 18,047 square feet by all tenants. This was split into 1,480 metres squared / 15,934 square feet indoors and 196 metres squared / 2,113 square feet outdoors.

Freya Levy was not in attendance and the Lead Principal Lawyer read her question on her behalf, She asked whether the Council would consider facilitating plans for co-housing schemes in Birkenhead if they were not already doing so.

The Chair responded that a blended and inclusive approach was extremely important to the Council's regeneration and place making agenda and that initiatives such as co-housing would be considered as part of this.

Mr Alan Featherstone asked what rentable stall area were officers projecting would be provided to Birkenhead Market traders.

The Chair responded that the work that was approved in December 2023 by the committee would, as an outcome, confirm the total space that would be available to traders.

Mr Featherstone had a supplementary question asking whether the Marks and Spencer site would now be included in the high level studies for an alternative market site.

The Chair stated that Mr Featherstone would receive a written response to this question within 10 working days.

Mr Alan Featherstone asked the Chair if he was content with the accuracy of the information provided by the committee.

The Chair responded that, by and large, he was happy with the accuracy of the information provided to committee. He acknowledged the error in conversion from square feet to square metreage at the previous committee and noted that the correct information had now been given.

Mr Featherstone had a supplementary question, asking if the Chair was happy with the current plans for a 60% reduction and eviction of current market traders by way of stolen metreage with all the current plans.

The Chair stated that Mr Featherstone would receive a written response to this question within 10 working days.

Mr Dave Borrill was not in attendance and the Lead Principal Lawyer read his question on his behalf. He asked how and when a third consultation team would be consulting with traders.

The Chair responded that officers were meeting with the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association later in the week that this committee was held on and would go over key details and next steps.

Mike Eccles was not in attendance and the Lead Principal Lawyer read his question on his behalf. He asked how the committee intended to ensure transparent and meaningful participation took place with members of the market community before any crucial decisions were made.

The Chair responded that this would be discussed at the meeting with the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association later in the week and the outcomes of the discussion would be fed back to their members.

Joe Orr noted that he had asked a question at the previous committee regarding the status of surveys aimed at gathering insights on the preferences of the local community regarding the market and asked if those surveys had been conducted.

The Chair responded that the work was ongoing as part of the approvals made at the previous meeting of the committee in December 2023.

Joe Orr asked whether the committee could outline specific lessons learned from comparable successful market preservation projects elsewhere and how Members intended to apply those lessons to Birkenhead Market.

The Chair responded that officers had undertaken visits to successful markets such as Warrington and had wider visits planned to markets such as Sheffield and Barnsley and had appointed a markets curator that had successfully consulted and delivered on over 200 markets. He noted that this appointment provided invaluable experience.

Mr Orr had a supplementary question regarding Chester Market traders receiving a reduction in rent and asked if a similar package could be offered to help Birkenhead Market traders.

The Chair stated that Mr Featherstone would receive a written response to this question within 10 working days.

Gregg McTigue was not in attendance and the Lead Principal Lawyer read his question on his behalf. He asked if the Council could make a commitment to the marker traders that they would be offered viable stalls at the new market.

The Chair responded that work was being undertaken by the councils' design team and market curator which would review trader requirements and feed into the business case.

Kim Roberts was not in attendance and the Lead Principal Lawyer read his question on her behalf. She asked whether the council could offer support to the market traders such as advertising or financial support.

The Chair responded noted that officers had met with market traders prior and following the meeting of the committee in December 2023. He responded that the market currently made a loss of income that the council had been underpinning and were not currently in a position to offer packages of support.

Tommy Roberts was not in attendance and the Lead Principal Lawyer read his question on his behalf. He asked what the plan for the market was moving forward, including when consultation would take place, what the budget was and what the timeline would be.

The Chair responded that officers were meeting with the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association later in the week and would provide updates at that meeting including updates and next steps.

## **59.2 Statements and Petitions**

The Chair noted that no statements had been received.

Mr Joe Orr presented a petition on behalf of the Birkenhead Market Tenants Association signed by 1,586 people online, with a further 173 hand-written signatures. He stated that the petition was a collective plea from the local community to be provided with a new flagship market in Birkenhead. He asked Members of the committee to consider the petition as a powerful endorsement for change and support for a market that stood as a symbol of progress and pride.

## **59.3 Questions by Members**

The Chair noted that no such questions had been received.

## **60 WIRRAL WATERS INVESTMENT FUND – EGERTON VILLAGE**

The Head of Regeneration Delivery presented the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place. The report sought approval to enter into a Deed of Novation of Contract in respect of the Wirral Waters Investment Fund Grant Funding Agreement dated 23 February 2023, to enable the delivery of Egerton Village, a new high quality mixed-use development to come forward within Wirral Waters.

The report stated that the recommendations would also enable Starship Regeneration Egerton Village Limited to progress the development which would

support the priorities of the Wirral Waters Investment Fund, Birkenhead 2040 Framework, and the Council Plan.

Members stated their enthusiasm for the project and sought assurances on the financial security of the agreement. It was noted that while no absolute guarantees could be offered, officers were confident in the agreements and contractual obligations of Peel L&P to complete the project should Starship not be able to deliver.

It was proposed by Cllr Jo Bird that the recommendation in the report be amended to include the words “in consultation with the Director of Finance” after the first line: “That the Director of Regeneration and Place”. This was agreed by the Head of Regeneration Delivery as an amended officer recommendation.

On a Motion proposed by Councillor Andrew Hodson and seconded by Councillor George Davie, it was:

**Resolved - That the Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Director of Finance be authorised to approve the novation of the Grant Funding Agreement between the Council and Peel L&P Investments and Property Limited for the Egerton Village project to Starship Regeneration Egerton Village Limited with Peel L&P Holdings (UK) Ltd acting as continuing Guarantor subject to the requirements as summarised in paragraph 5.1 of this report being satisfied.**

61 **UTILISATION OF PROCURE PARTNERSHIPS FRAMEWORK - BIRKENHEAD WATERFRONT PROGRAMME, CONWAY STREET / EUROPA BOULEVARD AND GRANGE ROAD / CHARING CROSS / GRANGE ROAD WEST MOVEMENT PROJECTS**

The Head of Regeneration Delivery presented the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place. The report sought members’ endorsement of the commencement of a procurement exercise via the Procure Partnerships Framework and the Pagabo Framework (or other suitable framework) to allow for the direct appointment of two separate main Tier 1 contractors that would lead to two direct awards, one to develop the design and undertake the construction works in relation to the highways, public realm and active travel schemes across the Birkenhead Waterfront Programme and the second award to immediately in early 2024 commence the construction works in Birkenhead Town Centre in relation to the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Movement Project and Grange Road/Charing Cross/Grange Road West Movement Project.

The report noted that the Birkenhead Waterfront and Central Birkenhead (Town Centre) Programmes have been awarded significant funding from the Levelling Up Fund, Future High Streets Fund, Active Travel Tranche 3 and Town Deal. All the Programmes were time limited. These time related pressures were exacerbated by the current high levels of inflation in construction costs and the

availability of suitable contractors in a very competitive marketplace due to similar funding awards in many other authorities. Choice of the recommended procurement route and the use of suitably qualified and experienced main contractors would bring significant benefits and efficiencies to the process, would greatly aid project certainty, ensuring that funding deadlines were met, and the Programmes were delivered as efficiently as possible.

Members discussed their concerns that it had taken so long to get to this point but were happy to see progress. They noted that it was important that with two different contractors working on these projects that the street scene was kept consistent with the same quality work undertaken across all areas of work.

#### **Resolved -**

- 1. That the commencement of a procurement exercise(s) via the Procure Partnerships Framework and the Pagabo Framework (or other suitable alternative procurement framework) be approved to allow for the direct appointment of two separate main Tier 1 contractors that will lead to two direct awards of construction contracts to develop the design and to undertake the construction works in relation to the highways, public realm and active travel schemes across the Birkenhead Waterfront Programme and to undertake construction works in Birkenhead Town Centre in relation to the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard and Grange Road/Charing Cross/Grange Road West Movement Projects.**
- 2. That the Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to make direct appointments in relation to the above procurement exercises including in due course via the Pagabo framework for the Birkenhead Waterfront Programme, (where the design needs to be developed through an initial pre-construction services agreement with the contractor prior to the main construction contract) for the contracts referred to in recommendation (1) upon receipt of suitable bids from the relevant contractors; and**
- 3. That the above recommendations be deemed urgent and therefore not subject to the procedure for re consideration.**

#### **62 BIRKENHEAD HEAT NETWORK**

The Director of Finance presented his report which summarised the findings of the Detailed Project Development Study and Outline Business Case for Birkenhead Heat Network.

The report noted that the potential development of a Green Heat Network in Birkenhead would deliver against key priorities for the Council around both carbon reduction and regeneration. Wirral's Cool 2 Climate Change Strategy 2019 included an objective to generate and/or source all the Council's local

energy needs from zero carbon and renewable sources by around 2041 and commitment to progress heat networks. Provision had been made within the draft Local Plan to support a heat network through making provision for an energy centre and mandating suitable buildings to connect to a heat network. Birkenhead Heat Network was listed as one of eight catalyst projects in the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework.

Members were universally excited by the project and wanted to know what timescales were expected. They were informed that the project was at too early a stage to give timelines but that further reports would be delivered in future.

**Resolved – That:**

- 1. The work to date on the development of the Birkenhead Heat Network be noted;**
- 2. The grant funding received to date to support this work be noted;**
- 3. The application to the Green Heat Network Fund be endorsed; and**
- 4. The proposed project review around commercialisation options be endorsed.**

63 **2024-25 BUDGET REPORT UPDATE**

The Director of Regeneration and Place presented the report of the Director of Finance. The report gave an update on the budgets within the remit of the Committee in respect of forthcoming pressures and proposed savings that were being considered within the Medium Term Financial Plan. The report noted that the Council had a legal responsibility to set a balanced budget, which sets out how financial resources are to be allocated and utilised. The report highlighted the external challenges impacting the 2024/25 budget setting process and proposed options to address the challenges faced.

Members queried the figures on the budget pressures relating to the Birkenhead Commercial District and whether tenants had been secured for the new office buildings. The Director of Regeneration and Place explained that the budget pressure figure of £2 million was not for void periods and was being utilised for a range of issues relating to the completion of the buildings. He noted that marketing had begun for the office buildings and was going well, he stated that a report updating Members would be brought to committee in due course.

**Resolved – That**

- 1. The indicative pressures and proposed savings detailed in Appendix 1 be noted; and**

- 2. The Budget Workshop feedback and outcomes, as detailed in Appendix 3 be agreed.**

**64 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Lead Principal Lawyer presented the report of the Director of Law and Governance. 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 queried when the Project Delivery Plan would be available for Members to view. It was noted that the Project Delivery Plan was not yet ready and would be added to the Work Programme when it was close to completion. Members noted that the Masterplan and Neighbourhood Framework item was listed in both the key and non-key decision tables. The Lead Principal Lawyer noted that this was an error and stated that this would be corrected.

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

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

**Resolved – That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the following appendices be deemed to be exempt from publication on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.**

**Wirral Waters Investment Fund – Egerton Village – Exempt Appendices 2 and 3;**

**Utilisation of Procure Partnerships Framework – Birkenhead Waterfront Programme, Conway Street / Europa Boulevard and Grange Road / Charing Cross / Grange Road West Movement Projects – Exempt Appendix 4; and**

**Birkenhead Heat Network - Exempt Appendix 1.**