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POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 13 December 2023

Present: Councillor P Stuart (Chair)

Councillors J Williamson S Mountney
P Gilchrist L Rennie
A Davies P Cleary
S Powell-Wilde H Gorman
T Jones J Bird
JE Green S Foulkes (In place
of J Robinson)
H Cameron J McManus (In
place of EA Grey)

80 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

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

81 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received by Councillors Liz Grey and Jean Robinson.

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

Members were invited to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other disclosable interests.

Councillor Steve Foulkes and Sue Powell-Wilde declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 as members of Planning Committee.

Councillor Lesley Rennie declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 as a member of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority.

Councillor Phil Gilchrist declared a personal interest in agenda item 15 as the documents referred to an organisation in which he held personal savings. Councillor Gilchrist outlined that he had sought advice on the matter, and it did not meet the test for exclusion.

Councillor Jeff Green declared a personal interest in agenda item 11 as a Director of Wirral Growth Company.

83 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 8 November 2023 and 21 November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

84 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair reported that one public question had been received by Mr Philip Barton. Mr Barton asked whether the Committee would commit funding to undertake required structural survey works at Tranmere Tunnels. In response the Chair outlined that he would ask the Director of Finance and Director of Regeneration and Place to establish and provide the cost of the structural survey works to the Chair and Spokes to consider whether a further report on the matter was required.

85 STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS

The Chair reported that four people had registered to make a statement in relation to agenda item 6 'Sale of land at Arrowe Park Road, Upton'.

Stephanie Miller made a statement opposed to the sale of land at Arrowe Park Road, outlining issues relating to development on greenspace contrary to the Local Plan's brownfield first principle, the existing acute traffic pressures owing to the existing businesses and the impact on the Council's commitment to tackle the Climate Emergency.

Councillor Stephen Bennett made a statement outlining the concerns of residents of Upton Ward at the propose to sell develop on greenspace, as well as the impact on public rights of way on the land and how the proposal was contrary to the Council's Parking Strategy.

Councillor Jean Robinson made a statement outlining the requirements of the Open Spaces Act, the significant opposition to the advertisement of the sale of public land with 1,400 residents objecting, and the implications on the Local Plan if the land were to be sold for development.

Councillor Liz Grey made a statement which detailed the difficulty for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians in navigating the roundabout currently, including parents taking their children to and from school via the site. Councillor Grey also detailed the impact the sale would have on air pollution, and the potential of the site with 16 mature trees and the possibility of further tree planting.

86 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

The Chair reported that there were no questions by members.

87 SALE OF LAND AT ARROWE PARK ROAD, UPTON

The Director of Regeneration and Place introduced the report which present options to committee for either the retention or sale of land at Arrowe Park Road, Upton to Lidl Great Britain Limited (Lidl) for the sum of £840,000.

It was reported that the Committee had previously approved the sale of the site in October 2020 subject to notices being placed for the proposed sale of open space and the appropriation of land. The notices had generated objections referenced in the report and the sale was not progressed. Since then, Lidl had increased the offer to purchase the land and changed the red line regarding the site required and given the length of time since the previous decision, was before the Committee for determination.

The Committee considered the proposed sale of the land, and it was highlighted that the Committee had previously resolved to sell the land due to the capital receipt, ongoing business rates and creation of jobs it would create. Members however further noted the local opposition to the proposed sale as well implications on the Local Plan and the sale being subject to Planning consent without onerous conditions. It was highlighted that the Committee had made significant progress with its asset disposals but had opted to not dispose of Carrs Agricultural Land at Meols due to its impact on greenspace, and that the Committee might be minded to follow the same course.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Angie Davies, it was –

Resolved (Unanimously) – That the land at Arrowe Park Road, Upton be retained by the Council and not be declared surplus and disposed to Lidl GB Ltd, considering information contained in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 of the report.

88 **FUTURE REGENERATIONS PARTNERSHIPS FOR WIRRAL**

The Director of Regeneration and Place introduced a report which sought approval to establish a Wirral Regeneration Partnership to steer, support and coordinate the Council's priority projects including the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and emerging Masterplans. It was reported to the Committee that the Birkenhead 2040 Framework detailed a comprehensive regeneration vision that would deliver 21,000 new homes and 6000 new jobs in Birkenhead over the following 20 years, and a framework of that scale required a joined-up approach to a number of regeneration-based activities.

The Committee discussed the governance of the board, noting that the Partnership would adopt the Nolan Principles of Public Life and the minutes of the meetings would be submitted to the relevant Policy and Services Committee. Following a query in relation to the consideration of environmental factors, it was confirmed that the Partnership would work within the priorities of Wirral Council.

Resolved – That

- (1) the establishment of the Wirral Regeneration Partnership and associated hierarchy comprising membership and terms of reference as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.**
- (2) the Director of Law and Governance be authorised to proceed with the necessary memorandum of understanding to establish appropriate legal and governance structures for the Wirral Regeneration Partnership.**

89 SCHEDULE OF RATES CONTRACT FOR ELECTRICAL WORKS

The Assistant Director for Asset Management introduced the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place which sought authority to accept the tender submitted by KDE Ltd for a 2-year contract for electrical works. It was outlined that the contract included day to day responsive repairs, installation and planned maintenance, including out of hours emergency works.

Members discussed the importance of social value particularly in the context of awarding contracts to local firms who employ Wirral residents. Officers were encouraged to give consideration to community wealth building when awarding contracts.

Resolved – That KDE Ltd be awarded the schedule of rates contract for initial 2-year period with an option to extend for a further year to undertake day to day responsive repairs, installation, and planned maintenance of electrical works, within approved budget and in accordance with the most economically advantageous tender criteria.

90 WALLASEY AND BIRKENHEAD TOWN HALL UPDATE AND PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

The Assistant Director for Asset Management introduced the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place which provided an update on the status of both Wallasey and Birkenhead Town Hall including the current changes in the service provided from the buildings and an update on the progress on the planned demolition of the two annex buildings at Wallasey Town Hall. The report also outlined that both Town Halls fell within areas of Master Planning and Regeneration and requested funding to procure a targeted feasibility study of the two Town Halls in relation to future uses by a specialist company experienced in heritage stock, linking to the Master Planning.

The Committee discussed the future use of the Town Hall and assurances were given that any specialist appointed for feasibility works would consider the importance of the heritage status of the buildings. Members considered

the timescales for the demolition of the annexe buildings and the feasibility study, where officers advised that the scheduled demolition of the annexe buildings was on track, and that a further update could be provided on the progress of the feasibility studies in February 2024.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Angie Davies, it was –

Resolved – That

- (1) the Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Director of Neighbourhood Services progress the required feasibility work and Condition Survey refresh on both Town Hall sites.**
- (2) the Director of Regeneration and Place be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee detailing the findings of feasibility studies and presenting options and business cases in respect to the future use of both Town Halls and alternative recommendations for the Committees consideration.**
- (3) Wallasey Town Hall remains stood down until the completion of works outlined in this report and until receipt of the report to Policy and Resources detailing the findings of the feasibility report and condition surveys.**
- (4) a briefing note be circulated to all members of P&R by the end of February 2024 on the progress made in relation to the feasibility studies.**

91 **INTRODUCTION OF ERP SYSTEM**

The Assistant Director of Finance and Investment introduced the report of the Director of Finance which provided an update on the implementation of the new Enterprise Resource Planning system Oracle Fusion. Members were advised of the complexities in the implementation of a system of that scale and the difficulties other Local Authorities had faced. It was reported that the go-live date for the implementation of the system had been delayed from 2022/23 to 2023.24, but that the system had since been delivered within the revised timescale with no interruption to service delivery and within the approved budget envelope. The Committee was further reminded of the decision to change the scope of the project so that Oracle Fusion interfaced with the existing HR system as opposed to replacing it.

The Committee considered the original business case for the system against what was delivered, and officers were encouraged to consider the lessons learned from the project in relation to future business case scoping. It was

noted that external partners had engaged in training Council staff and assurances were given to members that staff had been upskilled in the technical elements of the system and that the training process was ongoing.

Members placed on record their thanks to the project team for the delivery of the project.

Resolved – That the progress made on the implementation of the project, the realisation of benefits and the lessons learned information be noted.

92 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair introduced the work programme which provided an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

Resolved – That the Policy and Resources Committee work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year be noted.

93 **EXTERNAL AUDITORS CONSOLIDATED REPORTS**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance which set out the Council's response to the recommendations detailed within the External Audit Report 2020-21.

It was flagged that the covering reports for the Assurance on Regeneration Schemes and Social Impact Fund Investment had been marked as exempt but had been made public when considered at Audit and Risk Management Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 19.16pm and resumed at 19.25pm.

Following a discussion, Councillor Tony Jones declared a personal interest in the agenda item as a former Director of Wirral Growth Company.

Members considered the content of the reports and the Director of Finance outlined the process for benchmarking financial performance against geographical and statistical neighbours. It was raised that the External Audit report raised issues regarding the oversight and scrutiny of the governance of the Wirral Growth Company and assurances were sought that lessons would be learned prior to any future possible joint venture or delivery vehicles. In response, the Director of Law and Governance outlined that the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee had resolved to consider the future of the Wirral Growth Company and that piece of work would build upon the recommendations made by Grant Thornton.

Resolved – That reports and the updated response to the external auditors’ recommendations be noted.

94 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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.

The above test was applied to documents at Audit and Risk Management Committee and has not been correctly applied to the documents at P&R. This means that the following documents should not have an exemption maintained and should be moved into the public domain:

**Assurance on Regeneration Schemes covering report
Social impact fund investment covering report**

The other documents included within the agenda pack marked as exempt should remain excluded by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Act.

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