

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee

Minutes of meeting held remotely on 15 March 2021 at 3.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Joe Miller (Chair).

Councillors Liz Boorman (Deputy-Chair), Robert Banks, Nancy Bikson, Roy Burman, Roy Clay, Stephen Gauntlett, Isabelle Linington, Christine Robinson and Adrian Ross.

Officers in attendance:

Philip Brown (Property Lawyer), Leigh Palmer (Head of Planning First), Nick Peeters (Committee Officer), Kate Richardson (Strategy and Partnership Lead for Sustainability), Sarah Roberts (Commercial Business Project Manager) and Leighton Rowe (Development Project Manager).

19 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2021 were submitted and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

20 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Steve Saunders. It was confirmed that Councillor Roy Clay had replaced Councillor Milly Manley as a permanent member of the Committee.

21 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Robert Banks declared a personal interest in item 7b on the agenda – ‘Investing in Green Energy Initiatives’, as a result of him being employed by the Local Government Association.

22 Urgent Items

There were none.

23 Written Questions from Councillors

There were none.

24 Updates and Reports from the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee Work Programme

The Chair, Councillor Miller, asked Members which Cabinet reports they wished to be called over and included in discussion. The Committee requested that the following items be called over:

Item 7(b) Investing in Green Energy Initiatives.

RESOLVED that the officer recommendations in the following report be supported in full:

Item 7(a) Interim Policy Statement for Housing Delivery.

24a The Council's approach to development and sustainability for public sector sites in Newhaven - verbal update

Leighton Rowe, HEDP Development Project Manager, presented the report. During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

The operating cost savings were unknown and varied from project to project. However, previous modular developments had resulted in approximately 40 percent of savings in heating bills over a year. Part L of the Building Regulations, which dealt with sustainability, was due for publication in 2021 and was expected to be mandatory by 2022. The standards were already being adopted by the Development Planning team in preparation for the changing legislation.

There would be 21 units on the Police Station site, with a mix of two and three-bedroom flats and two three-bedroom houses. The Fire Station site would comprise of seven three-bedroom properties. All units would be council properties and available for rent.

Electric car charging points would be available for disabled parking spaces. Overall, car-charging points would be included as part of the infrastructure planning and then made available on request – this recognised that not all tenants would have vehicles and that those that did would not all have electric vehicles. A car-charging point for a car-club was also being considered.

RESOLVED to note the report.

24b Interim Policy Statement for Housing Delivery

This report was not requested for inclusion in discussion by the Committee (see minute 24) and the Committee had previously resolved to support the officer recommendations in the report in full.

RESOLVED to support the officer recommendations in the Cabinet report in full.

24c Investing in Green Energy Initiatives

Kate Richardson, Strategy and Partnership Lead, presented the report. During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

In response to concern expressed at the period of time allowed for consideration of the report and appendix, and the level of investment requested, it was confirmed that the same level of due diligence and early feasibility studies would be included as was the case with other significant developments involving the Council. The feasibility element of the project would only proceed if it was considered viable and in the Council's interest.

The investment in the feasibility element would look at other projects in the future and an initial investment of £25,000 would be used to look at up to three projects in one package of work. The feasibility studies were important as they would determine whether projects were progressed.

The project was seen as viable, however, it had not yet progressed to a point where the Council could consider it as a financial investment. A significant milestone would be investment in the project from the Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF), which in turn would provide further assurance in the financial viability of the project; the decision was expected in June 2021.

The due diligence would include a number of milestones and there would be opportunities for the Committee to provide further scrutiny. There would also be further discussion on the wider community benefits. The full business-case would be included in a report to the Cabinet in July 2021.

The use of a solar-farm to provide the infrastructure for other energy sources such as electric and hydrogen vehicle power would be looked at as part of the feasibility study. Community wealth building was a key aspiration for the Council and projects led by not-for-profit organisations would be in line with those aspirations.

Members felt that the Committee should be included in a consultative role during the stage at which up to £100,000 in capital funds would be delegated for initial feasibility studies.

Councillor Bikson proposed an amendment to recommendation 2 of the Cabinet report that, as Chair of the Committee, Councillor Miller be consulted at this stage, including receiving feedback from the Committee members. Councillor Burman seconded the motion.

RESOLVED by a majority of 6 in favour and 5 against (with the Chair using his casting vote) To support the recommendations in the report subject to the following amendment to recommendation (2) being considered by the Cabinet:

(2) Subject to recommendation (1), to delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Chief Finance Officer and Cabinet member for finance and assets, **and in consultation with the Chair of the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee**, to provide up to £100,000 for development funding to take the solar farm proposal set out in section 2 and Appendix 1 of this report, to planning submission, subject to further due diligence being carried out.

25 Forward Plan of Cabinet Decisions

The Chair, Councillor Miller, introduced the Forward Plan of Cabinet Decisions. Members requested that the following items, currently on the Plan, be included for consideration at the Committee's next scheduled meeting:

- Recovery and Reset Programme.
- Community Wealth Building.
- Joint Biodiversity Strategy.
- Commercial Investment Strategy.
- Asset Management Plan.
- Wave Leisure Service Plan 2021/22.
- Update to the Local Validation List (Information required to support/accompany planning applications).

RESOLVED to note the Forward Plan of Cabinet Decisions.

26 Policy and Performance Advisory Committee Work Programme

The Chair, Councillor Miller, introduced the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee Work Programme.

In response to a request from a Member for oversight of the Local Plan, it was explained that the iterations of the Local Plan were still in their formative stages and when included on the Forward Plan of Cabinet Decisions, reports would be available by request on the Committee's Work Programme.

RESOLVED to note the Policy and Performance and Performance Advisory Committee Work Programme.

The meeting ended at 5.20 pm

Councillor Joe Miller (Chair)