

STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

25 June 2015

7.00 pm – 10.35 pm
 Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Stroud

3

Minutes

Membership:

Councillor Geoff Wheeler (Chair)	P	Councillor Haydn Jones	P
Councillor Steve Lydon (Vice-Chair)	P	Councillor Keith Pearson	P
Councillor Chris Brine	P	Councillor Simon Pickering	P
Councillor Nigel Cooper	P	Councillor Mattie Ross	P
Councillor Paul Hemming	P	Councillor Martin Whiteside	P
Councillor Nick Hurst	P	Councillor Rhiannon Wigzell	P
Councillor Julie Job	P		

P = Present A = Absent

Other Members in attendance:

Councillor John Marjoram Councillor Chas Townley

Officers Present:

Chief Executive	Canal Manager
Strategic Head (Finance & Business Services)	Head of Asset Management
General Manager (Dursley Pool & Sports Centre)	Legal Services Manager
Strategic Head (Customer Services)	ICT Delivery Manager
Accountancy Manager	Graduate Surveyor
Community and Facilities Manager	Democratic Services Officer

SRC.001 APOLOGIES

There were none.

SRC.002 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Nick Hurst declared a personal but non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 12b – Land at Wallbridge, Stroud because Stroud Town Council had undertaken significant lobbying on this item and they were a client of his.

SRC.003 MINUTES

RESOLVED To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2015.

SRC.004 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No questions were received.

SRC.005 **WORK PROGRAMME (VERSION 1)**

The following topics were suggested for inclusion within the work programme:-

- Member Reports – The Risk Champions from each Committee would report;
- Training Sessions would be held for Members looking into performance, including making the best use of Excelsis for a consistent approach across all Committees;
- March 2016 – a final report should be submitted on the Heritage Lottery Fund grant on Phase 1a of the Canal Project;
- A budget item on workforce planning (date to be confirmed);
- Members' Information Sheets would be circulated on:-
 - (a) Car Parking, and
 - (b) The outcome of the Task and Finish Group on the Multi Services Contract.

RESOLVED **The updates to the Work Programme were noted.**

SRC.006 **APPOINTMENTS FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2015-16**

(a) Performance Monitoring Representatives

Both of the current representatives were happy to continue in their roles as Performance Champions.

RESOLVED **That Councillors Keith Pearson and Rhiannon Wigzell would continue to represent Committee.**

(b) Stroud Concordat

RESOLVED **That Councillor Simon Pickering was appointed as the Council's representative on Stroud Concordat.**

(c) Planning Review Panel

RESOLVED **That Councillors Miranda Clifton, Gordon Craig, Nick Hurst, Haydn Jones, Steve Lydon, Stephen Moore, Nigel Studdert-Kennedy, Ken Tucker and Martin Whiteside represent their political groups at future meetings of the Planning Review Panel.**

(d) Risk Champion

RESOLVED **That Councillor Keith Pearson was nominated as the Risk Champion.**

The General Manager (Dursley Pool & Sports Centre) outlined the above report and the reasons for the additional funding. The Officer replied to Members' questions and confirmed the following:-

- The extension complied with the Disability Discrimination Act and extra funding was required to cover unforeseen costs.
- The Combined Heat and Power plant was brought in after the original budget figure and would produce energy to heat the swimming pool, which is very expensive to heat.
- Originally the contingency was £100k, but this had been reduced to £50k.
- The extension had been designed as efficiently as possible.
- The facility had consistently made money and the project aimed to be self-sufficient within 10 years.
- The Architect is Project Managing the scheme on behalf of the Council.

The project team consisted of the following Officers:-

General Manager (Dursley Pool and Sports Centre)
Strategic Head (Customer Services)
Accountancy Manager
Solicitor
Building Programmes Manager
IT representative
Principal Procurement Officer

Councillor Chris Brine moved the Officer's advice which was seconded by Councillor Martin Whiteside.

During debate Councillor Keith Pearson proposed an amendment to the Motion. "That a full review of the design and tendering process is brought back to Committee and completed within a period of 6 months" which was seconded by Councillor Nick Hurst.

Whilst debating the amendment Members were in favour of the evaluation. Councillor Chris Brine requested that the Community Services and Licensing Committee carry out the review because the project was within his Committee's remit. Strategy and Resources Committee had been requested to approve additional funding.

On being put to the vote the amendment was carried.

- RESOLVED**
- (a) To approve the additional funding of £100,000 from the capital reserve to secure the contract to build the fitness extension at Dursley Swimming Pool.**
 - (b) That a full review of the design and tendering process would be carried out by the Community Services and Licensing Committee within 6 months.**

(a) General Fund Final Outturn Report 2014-15

The Accountancy Manager provided an overview of the above report. The anticipated level of income from business rates has been lower than had been expected due to a significant increase in appeals lodged prior to the 31 March 2015 deadline set by Government. The Officer also highlighted the impact that Virgin Media's business rates appeals had on the Gloucestershire Pool – leading to a deficit this year with Stroud contributing £301k as per the pool governance arrangements.

The Head of Asset Management confirmed that an update on the handing back of the next phase of Industrial Units and the likely dilapidation costs was expected later in the year.

The Strategic Head (Finance & Business Services) confirmed that the Local Government Association were lobbying the Department of Community and Local Government regarding the Virgin Media business rates issue and all Gloucestershire authorities had written to Eric Pickles regarding this matter.

- RESOLVED**
- (a) To note the General Fund revenue and capital outturn for 2014/15, as shown in Appendices A, D and E;**
 - (b) To approve the transfers to and from earmarked reserves for the year, as set out in Appendix C (Pages 21-23);**
 - (c) To approve the final list of budgets to be carried forward to 2015/16, as set out in Appendix B;**
 - (d) That capital slippage identified in Appendix E, together with the sources of finance, are approved and added to the 2015/16 capital programme;**
 - (e) The revised capital programme and financing statement for 2015/16 is approved.**

(b) Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn 2014-15

The Accountancy Manager outlined the above report which presented the forecast of the outturn position against the revenue budget and capital programme for 2014/15.

During debate it was confirmed that the in-house heating and gas servicing had started, budget monitoring arrangements were being reviewed and an IT investment plan was being considered.

- RESOLVED**
- That HRA revenue and capital budgets for 2015/16 be increased by revenue carry forwards of £71k and capital slippage of £1,423k, as listed in table 5.**

The Leader suggested, and it was unanimously agreed, that the order of the items on the published Agenda were taken out of sequence.

SRC.010**CANAL PROJECT UPDATE**

The Canal Project Manager gave a powerpoint presentation which highlighted the achievements to date along the canal corridor from Stonehouse to Brimscombe. Confirmation was given that over the 6-7 year timescale the expected shortfall of £777,000 equated to 4% of total budget. Due to the expertise of the volunteers and their willingness to assist some project costs had been reduced.

In reply to questions the following points were made:-

- Funding was secured before entering into a contract.
- A seminar could be held to celebrate the success of the project.
- The findings from the survey undertaken from over 1,000 users of the towpath would be fed back to Members via a Members Information Sheet or The News.
- By using volunteers to undertake works, costs were reduced but tasks often took longer, with completion dates difficult to accurately predict.
- Specialist work was undertaken by contractors.

Councillor Rhiannon Wigzell proposed an amendment to paragraph (b) of the decision box that the figure of £777,000 should be included, this was seconded by Councillor Nigel Cooper.

Members unanimously supported the amendment and

RESOLVED

- (a) **To note progress in delivering the Canal Project.**
- (b) **Approve that the expected shortfall of £777,000 is funded from the Capital Reserve.**
- (c) **Approve a grant of up to £50,000 to the Stroud Valleys Canal Company, to be met from the Jobs and Growth Fund.**
- (e) **Accept Cotswold Canals Trust's invitation to become a member of its phase 1B Core Group, with the Canal Project Manager as its representative.**

SRC.011**PROPERTY MATTERS****(a) Sale of former Ship Inn, Bristol Road, Stonehouse**

The Head of Asset Management updated Members on the above site. In response to questions the following was confirmed:-

- The land could be used for residential, community or commercial use.
- Receipts from the sale would be used to fund the canal project.
- The value of the site would be lower than the high bids received for use as a petrol filling station.
- All avenues would be explored to realise the highest possible return which may result in the Council developing this asset itself for affordable homes.

An amendment to the Officer's recommendation was proposed by Councillor Keith Pearson "that if an offer for the site was less than £50,000 of the estimated valuation a further report would be brought back to Committee." The amendment was seconded by Councillor Nigel Cooper.

Upton the vote the amendment was lost.

RESOLVED To delegate the disposal of the former Ship Inn site, Stonehouse to the Head of Asset Management in consultation with the Chairs of Strategy and Resources and Community Services Committees and the Strategic Head (Finance & Business Services) for best consideration.

(b) Land at Wallbridge, Stroud

The Head of Asset Management outlined the above report and requested Committee to consider the process and options for determining the future use of this land. Public opinion had supported the site becoming a public open space.

Councillor John Marjoram asked questions regarding this site and was assured that at this stage no decision for future use would be taken, only the exploration of future use.

During debate Members agreed that the potential use of the site should be explored and a decision made once the further report was presented.

The Leader proposed a Motion to amend the decision box:-

“That the Head of Asset Management:

- (a) Completes the transfer of the Wallbridge site with Gloucestershire County Council as soon as possible.
- (b) Promotes discussion with other interested parties to explore options for the space, including obtaining a commercial value for the site.
- (c) Reports back to Committee for a decision on the future use of this site.”

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Chris Brine.

In debating the amendment Members agreed that discussions should take place with other stakeholders and consultees. The opportunities that come forward would be evaluated and reported back to Committee.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

RESOLVED That the Head of Asset Management:
(a) Completes the transfer of the Wallbridge site with Gloucestershire County Council as soon as possible.
(b) Promotes discussion with other interested parties to explore options for the space, including obtaining a commercial value for the site.
(c) Reports back to Committee for a decision on the future use of this site.

During consideration of this item, and in accordance with the Council's Constitution, Members voted to continue with the meeting after 10.00 pm until the business on the agenda had been concluded.

Councillor Nick Hurst left the meeting.

SRC.012 **INFORMATION COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY 2015-2018**

The ICT Delivery Manager outlined the above report and strategy.

RESOLVED **To approve the ICT Strategy as set out in Appendix A.**

SRC.013 **THE OPTIONS FOR PROVIDING MORE HOMES IN THE DISTRICT OUTSIDE OF THE FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS OF THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

The Strategic Head (Finance & Business Services) summarised the work that had been undertaken by the Task and Finish Group. The Small Sites Group would be exploring how to make best use of sites.

RESOLVED (a) **That the New Build and Regeneration Steering Group, the Older Peoples Project Board, the Brimscombe and Littlecombe Project Board, the Small Sites Group and this Task and Finish Group are merged to form one group focussed on the provision of more homes in the district either through the HRA, the General Fund or other delivery model making best use of all the land and opportunities available to the Council.**

 (b) **That officers continue to explore opportunities for housing development through the General Fund recognising that a full business case will need to be produced to support the setting up of some form of special purpose vehicle (SPV) if appropriate.**

 (c) **That officers research the private rent sector to see if there are any opportunities for the Council to ‘add value’ and improve the market rent offer to local residents.**

SRC.014 **JOBS AND GROWTH PLAN 2015-18**

(a) Member Engagement with Local Businesses

A copy of the updated Jobs and Growth Plan 2015-18 had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting by the Chief Executive. Group Leaders had nominated members to visit local companies.

RESOLVED **To note the update.**

(b) Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee

The Leader gave a verbal update and confirmed that a ‘pipeline’ of suitable projects was being drawn up. A Members’ Information Sheet would be circulated at a later date.

RESOLVED **To note the update.**

SRC.015

DEVOLUTION UPDATE

The Leader referred to Leadership Gloucestershire's intention to ask the Government to devolve functions and resources to a local level, potentially with the creation of a combined authority. A copy of the letter would be circulated to Members when this was available.

SRC.016

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

There were none received.

Meeting closed at 10.35 pm.

Chair