

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

16th November 2021

Present: Councillor Marc Bayliss in the Chair

Councillors Allcott, Barnes, Cronin, Denham, Griffiths, Hodges, Mrs L. Hodgson, Mackay, Mitchell, Stafford, Stanley and Stephen (Vice-Chair)

Officers: Mark Baldwin, Head of Finance
David Blake, Managing Director
Shane Flynn, Corporate Director – Finance and Resources
Sian Stroud, Corporate Director – Planning and Governance

49 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor Barnes for Councillor Riaz, Councillor Cronin for Councillor Gregson.

50 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Bayliss – Future High Street Fund - Programme Update (Minute 54) - A non-pecuniary interest insofar as the items relate to Trinity House. Councillor Bayliss left the room for consideration of this item.

Councillor Hodges - Future High Street Fund - Programme Update (Minute 54) – As a trustee of Worcester Theatres.

Councillor Mrs Hodgson – Future High Street Fund - Programme Update (Minute 54) – As a trustee of Worcester Theatres and a Board Director of Worcester BID.

51 Public Representations

None.

52 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 7th September 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

53 Minutes of Personnel and General Purposes Sub-Committee

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2021 be received.

54 Future High Street Fund - Programme Update

Councillor Bayliss left the room for this item and Councillor Stephen took the Chair.

COUNCILLOR STEPHEN IN THE CHAIR

The Committee considered a report on progress on the Future High Street Fund programme. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report, which included a summary of the work undertaken to date, including land assembly and property acquisition, an update on project feasibility (where undertaken) and options appraisal and recommendations for taking the project forward. It was proposed to seek agreement from DLUHC to reallocate the funding originally earmarked for the former Panama Jacks building and investment in alternative vacant/derelict commercial properties to Trinity House.

Officers responded to questions from Committee Members on the report.

In the ensuing discussion, it was explained that Worcester Theatres are the preferred operator for the Scala Theatre and Corn Exchange development.

It was clarified that any decisions on alternatives to Trinity House will be taken in collaboration with the Chair and both Vice-Chairs. Officers are looking for alternatives which deliver the same or very similar outcomes as the initial proposal. If that cannot be achieved a further report will be made to this Committee. These alternatives are subject to the funding body agreeing to any change from the approved proposals.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

- 1. note progress on the Future High Street Fund programme;**
- 2. approve the preferred design option for the Scala Theatre and Corn Exchange;**
- 3. support the working title of “Scala, Worcester” for the new facility;**
- 4. approve a request to government to revise the financial profile to invest in the new Worcester Theatre rather than the former Panama Jacks restaurant; and**
- 5. consider the investment in alternative vacant/derelict commercial properties to Trinity House and delegate authority to the Managing Director in collaboration with the Chair and Vice-Chairs of this Committee to submit a business case change request to government where alternative sites are identified.**

55 Setting of the Budget for 2022/23 and MTFP to 2026/27

The Committee considered a report on the Budgets for the various services for 2021/22 and progress made in delivering the projects included in the City Plan relevant to this Committee. The Head of Finance presented the report and invited Members to submit suggestions for potential service improvements. It was noted that the Medium Term Financial Plan indicates a budget gap which will need to be addressed.

The report also asked Members to consider whether the current capital programme projects are still appropriate for each service and whether there are any further needs that require addressing.

A question was raised about discounted rates for Guildhall room hire. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources advised that any proposals to amend the rates can be proposed to the Income Generation Sub-Committee at its January 2022 meeting as part of the consideration of fees and charges for 2022-23.

It was noted that Capital Programme will be amended as a result of the decisions on Panama Jacks taken in previous item.

The Chair encouraged Members to speak to Officers about any budget proposals for 2022-23 or capital projects so that these can be considered as part of the next cycle of meetings as part of the budget setting process.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

- 1. note the Budgets for the various services identified for 2021/22; and**
- 2. note the progress made in delivering the projects included in the City Plan relevant to this Committee and to confirm the programme of work resourced.**

56 Referral Report From Place And Economic Development Committee, 1st November 2021 - Skills Officer, Tourism And Events Officer, Commonwealth Games And Queen's Jubilee In 2022

The Committee considered a referral report from the Place and Economic Development Committee. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and explained that the Committee were being asked to consider a number of funding proposals, as follows:

Skills Officer - fund the post from reserves for one year from 1st April 2022, pending the appointment of the new Head of Service for Economic Development and the review of the current Employment and Skills Strategy.

Tourism and Events Officer - fund the post from reserves for one year from 1st April 2022, pending the appointment of the new Head of Service for Economic Development, the review of the Tourism Strategy and the development of the forthcoming Cultural Strategy.

The Corporate Director explained that the Committee were being asked to decide whether to commit to fund these posts for 2022-23 from reserves now, or to consider the proposals as part of the budget setting cycle in January and February 2022.

Commonwealth Games and Queen's Jubilee – funding for proposed activities to help generate benefits from Worcester's proximity to the 2022 Commonwealth Games of up to £30,000 and £10,000 funding to support and enhance Jubilee activities, including entertainment at the beacon lighting, funding for trees as part of the Queen's Green Canopy, and promotion of events.

The Chair of the Place and Economic Development Committee spoke in support of the proposals and also asked that consideration be given to an additional £20,000 allocation to support celebrating the Queen's Jubilee. Following a discussion, it was clarified that this proposal will be considered by Officers and a report made to the Place and Economic Development Committee at its next meeting in January. If agreed, the additional funding would form part of that Committee's overall budget proposals for 2022-23.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree:

- 1. to fund the post of Skills Officer from 1 April 2022 from reserves for 2022-23;**
- 2. to fund the post of Tourism and Events Officer from 1 April 2022 from reserves for 2022-23;**
- 3. an allocation of £40,000 from reserves for 2022-23 as an enabling budget to support proposed activities to celebrate the Commonwealth Games and the Queen's Jubilee in 2022; and**
- 4. request the Place and Economic Development Committee to consider a report on an additional £20,000 allocation to support celebrating the Queen's Jubilee at its January meeting.**

57 Referral Report from Environment Committee, 2nd November 2021 - Proposed 2022 Gull Control Work Programme

The Committee considered a referral report from the Environment Committee. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and explained that the Committee had considered an update on all the gull control work undertaken in 2021 and proposed actions for next year's breeding season to build on the work done to date. Delivering the recommended actions required an additional £40,000 to the existing budget. The Chair of the Environment Committee also spoke in support of the proposed additional funding.

In the ensuing discussion, it was clarified that, if agreed, the additional allocation will go straight into the budget for 2022-23 without any further consideration as part of the budget setting process because the proposed reserve was already available to the Environment Committee to use by a previous decision of the Policy and Resources Committee, but was being repurposed.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree an additional £40,000 funding from reserves to support the proposed Gull Control Work Programme for 2022 as detailed in Section 3 of the report.

58 Referral Report from Communities Committee, 3rd November 2021 - Hosting of the Knife Angel - The National Monument Against Violence and Aggression

The Committee considered a referral report from Communities Committee. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and explained that, at its meeting on 3rd November 2021, the Committee had agreed to host the

Knife Angel during Spring 2022, supported by a programme of activities and materials to raise awareness of the impacts of violence and aggression. An allocation of £7,500 was required to ensure that the full costs of hosting the Knife Angel and delivering an associated engagement and education campaign can be met.

It was proposed to meet these costs from the allocation from reserves of £50,000 towards arts and cultural events approved by this Committee in June 2021.

The Committee had also asked for further consideration to be given to whether this allocation can be increased so as to give greater support to educational activities.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree the allocation of £7,500 from the funding towards Arts & Cultural Events approved in June 2021 towards the costs associated with those activities to support hosting the Knife Angel during Spring 2022.

59 Appointments to Outside Bodies

The Committee considered a report on appointments to a number of outside bodies. The report explained that various appointments had been considered at the meeting on 8th June 2021. For some charity appointments, the term of office expires later in the year. The Committee were therefore recommended to agree appointments to those bodies in question.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree the following appointments:

Bishop Hall's Charity for the Advancement of Christian Religion - Councillor Allcott (for 4 years to 01.12.2025)

Claines Charities (inc Susannah Jolly Charity) - Councillor Stafford (for 3 years to 16.12.2024)

Hallow United Charities (Best and Others) - Councillor Mitchell (for 3 years to 12.12.2024)

Worcester City Parish Relief in Need Charity - Mr Paul Denham (for 4 years to 10.07.2025).

60 Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring Report 2021/22

The Committee reviewed the financial monitoring details including budget variances and performance indicators for the 2nd quarter ended 30th September 2021. The Head of Finance presented the report and highlighted the main points. Officers responded to questions from Committee Members on detailed aspects of the report.

It was highlighted that the year-end forecast assumes a return to the budgeted management fee being received from the Council's leisure services provider. However, this is dependent on how quickly memberships return to the pre-pandemic level. Therefore the best and worst case scenarios needed to be kept under review.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree to:

- 1. approve the write-offs of Council Tax and Business Rates for the quarter; and**
- 2. approve the delegation to the Corporate Director – Finance and Resources, in consultation with Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Committee to negotiate with Freedom Leisure on the Management Fee to be received for 2021/22.**

61 Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2021/22

The Committee received a Mid-Year Report, in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services, and the Prudential Code for Capital Finance. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and highlighted the main points. He, and the Head of Finance, responded to questions from Committee Members.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the contents of the Mid-Year Report in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services, and the Prudential Code for Capital Finance.

62 Corporate Risk Management Report - Quarter 2 2021/22

The Committee considered a report on action taken and progress made against corporate risks for quarter 2, the period of July – September 2021. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and highlighted the main points. Officers responded to questions from Committee Members.

In response to a question about risks associated with Council's recent management restructure and resultant staff vacancies, Officers advised that there is nothing specific about this in the risk register currently, but it can be added.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the Corporate Risk Management Report, including associated mitigating actions.

63 Quarter 2 Performance Report for 2021/22

The Committee considered a report on the Quarter 2 performance report for the Policy and Resources Committee. The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and Officers responded the Members on detailed aspects of the report.

In the ensuing discussion the following main points were made:

- Members were advised that Civica do not wish to continue the Revenues and Benefits contract when it expires in December 2022. A report on this will be brought to the next meeting.
- Equalities and Diversity – It was noted that the Council has begun work on engaging with disabled people and a request was made for this be reported to Health and Wellbeing Committee. In response, Members were advised that this will be raised with the relevant Corporate Director.

- Staff absence – A request was made for the information to be separated to illustrate Covid-related and normal sickness absence, and also to highlight the variation between office-based and frontline staff. Members were advised that this information can be provided.
- Member attendance at mandatory training – A request was made for clarification as to whether any training took place in 2020 and what training has been completed this year.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the Council's Quarter 2 performance for 2021/22.

64 Any Other Business

None.

65 Items Involving the Disclosure of Exempt Information

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of information as defined in Schedule 12A of the said Act.

66 Future High Street Fund - Programme Update

The Committee noted the Theatreplan Feasibility Study.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. – 8.48p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
14th December 2021