

FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE CABINET ADVISORY BOARD

Tuesday, 13 July 2021

**Present: Councillor Tom Dawlings (Chairman)
Councillors Scott (Vice-Chairman), Simmons, Chapelard, Hickey, Everitt, Goodship,
Hall, Scholes and Knight**

Officers in Attendance: Jane Fineman (Head of Finance and Procurement), David Candlin (Head of Economic Development and Property), Katie Exon (Corporate Property Manager), John Antoniadis (Estates Manager), Mike Catling (Corporate Health and Safety Advisor), Claudette Valmond (Principal Solicitor) and Caroline Britt (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors Allen, Ellis and Hamilton

APOLOGIES

FG16/21 There were no apologies. Councillor Holden was not present.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

FG17/21 There were no disclosable pecuniary or other significant interests declared at the meeting.

NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK

FG18/21 Councillor Bailey had registered to speak on Agenda Item 10 – The Town Hall. Councillor Allen read the statement on his behalf.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 8 JUNE 2021

FG19/21 No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED - That the minutes dated 8 June 2021 be approved as a correct record.

FORWARD PLAN AS AT 29 JUNE 2021

FG20/21 No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – The Forward Plan as at 29 June 2021 be noted.

BUDGET PROJECTION AND STRATEGY 2022/23

FG21/21 Jane Fineman, Head of Finance, Procurement and Parking introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- A full set of benchmarking data was not available at the meeting. This would be sent after the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report be supported.

PROPERTY TRANSACTION REPORT JANUARY TO JUNE 2021

FG22/21 John Antoniades, Estates Manager, introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- The Council owned 8.47% of the land sold at Bridge Ridge. Speldhurst road, Southborough and therefore received the equivalent percentage of the overall sale, a total of £160,930.00 (8.47% of £1.9m). In addition TWBC received costs associated with obtaining planning permission, a total of £22, 022.44.

To note, the matter was decided in taking the exempt information set out in the Agenda as read.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report be supported.

ANNUAL CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

FG23/21 Mike Catling, Corporate Health and Safety Advisor introduced the report set out in the agenda.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report be supported.

PROPERTY ASSET PROGRAMME

FG24/21 David Candlin, Head of Economics, Development and Property introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- The long lease that was currently in place for TN2 was no longer suitable. TWBC were now in discussion with the landowner to try and bring this forward.
- Options for the use of TN2 were also being discussed with the landowner and could include part residential or a possible medical centre.
- The Development Programme Officer Group (DOG) met on a monthly basis. The proposed Property Asset Oversight Panel would sit above this Group.
- A delegated budget for the Property Asset Oversight Panel would be set by Cabinet. Projects would then come forward to be dealt with by the Portfolio Holder, in this case the Leader of the Council.
- Final decisions on the disposal of any property remained with Cabinet and would therefore go through the normal Cabinet process.
- The Civic Complex Working Group would have oversight for the Civic Complex. The Working Group would be in the lead for this work, with the Property Asset Oversight Panel having a watching brief.
- Information related to assets would be disseminated to the appropriate Ward Members.
- Information and engagement would be done by the Property Asset Oversight Panel. At the appropriate time, and if required All Member Briefings would be arranged, especially for the disposal of any major

- assets (this would be alongside the normal Cabinet process).
- Materials related to meetings of the Property Asset Oversight Panel would be available to Members on request. Members would need to decide how best to ensure that information was disseminated so that Members were aware of when meetings were scheduled to take place. It would be important that the necessary Governance arrangements were in place.
- The Property Asset Oversight Panel would take the place of the Development Advisory Panel (DAP).
- Meetings of this nature (also including other panel meetings e.g. ASMOP) were held in private to allow issues including financially sensitive information to be discussed in full.
- Using the £500k for consultancy fees ensured that all the necessary skills were obtained to undertake the work required. To obtain those skills via in house recruitment would be a very big undertaking with no guarantee of success. It was very unlikely the Council would be able to secure the range of skills required.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report be supported.

TOWN HALL

FG25/21 Katie Exon, Corporate Property Manager introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Councillor Harry Allen read a statement on behalf of Councillor Bailey.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- Retaining ownership and the continued use of the Town Hall was important to residents.
- Heritage of the Town Hall and measures to reduce operational costs was also considered important. Letting vacant space would defray costs to the Council.
- Using the Town Hall in a way that would encourage more people to work in Tunbridge Wells would have a positive knock on effect for the Town Centre.
- Engagement with Council staff on any decisions related to the future use of the Town Hall would be very important.
- TWBC envisaged working with one landlord/tenant. Office space would be rented from the landlord/tenant. TWBC would then only be dealing with one person. Included in the lease agreement would be a service charge that would cover any necessary costs e.g. the appropriate portion of business rates.
- It would be paramount to ensure that the building was brought up to an acceptable standard not only for the portion that would be rented out but also for Council staff that continued to use the building.
- The Town Hall would be open for business use (rather than residential, hospitality etc.).
- Procurement would not need to follow the OJEU route.
- It was noted that the indicative timetable included in the report had changed. It was hoped that a Members Briefing would be scheduled for the week beginning 30 August 2021. Supplier engagement would be done potentially towards the end of the week beginning 12 July

2021. This would allow approximately 4 weeks to gather information before the internal briefing session.

- In taking this forward it would be important that measures were taken in terms of carbon reduction and energy efficiency.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report and including the addition of ensuring appropriate carbon reduction and energy efficient measures were included be supported.

URGENT BUSINESS

FG26/21 There was no urgent business.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

FG27/21 The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 7 September 2021 at 6:30pm.

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 7.39 pm.

An audio recording of this meeting is available on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council website.