

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Strategy and Resources Committee held at Virtual - Online meeting on Monday, 7th December, 2020 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Members:

Councillor Worden (Chair)

Councillors Henderson, Knight, Lofthouse, Patrinos, Pearson, L. Spear, Wilkinson and Yabsley

Officers:

Chief Executive, Head of Resources, Senior Solicitor/Monitoring Officer, Contracts Delivery Manager, Parks, Leisure and Culture Officer and Head of Place

Also Present:

Councillors D. Spear and Tucker

223. VIRTUAL MEETING PROCEDURE - BRIEFING AND ETIQUETTE

The Chair outlined the virtual meeting procedure and etiquette to the Committee and attendees.

The Senior Corporate and Community Services Officer confirmed the Members of the Committee, Members and Officers who were present.

224. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

225. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 OCTOBER 2020, 2 NOVEMBER 2020 AND 13 NOVEMBER 2020 (ATTACHED).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 19 October 2020, 2 November 2020 and 13 November 2020 (circulated previously) be approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

226. ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE MEETING AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.

The Chair advised the Committee that there would be an informal briefing for Members following the Committee.

227. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS.

The following declarations of interest were announced:

Councillor Knight – Item 8 personal interest as a Member of Tawstock Parish Council. Item 10 personal interest as he had a trade waste bin for his business.

Councillor Lofthouse – item 8 personal interest as a Member of Tawstock Parish Council.

228. GROUND'S MAINTENANCE SERVICE

The Committee considered a report by the Contracts Delivery Manager (circulated previously) regarding the Grounds Maintenance Service.

The Contracts Delivery Manager highlighted the following:

- The Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract ended on 31 March 2021. The contract allowed for an extension of two years at the end of the initial contract term and the Council had agreed to an extension with the contractor. In July 2020 the contractor advised the Council that it could no longer agree to a contract extension and would not be signing an extension agreement as previously agreed.
- There was now insufficient time to prepare and tender the grounds maintenance contract before the current contract end date.
- Officers had started to explore the possibility of running the contract in house and it was intended that this could be delivered within the constraints of the existing base budget.
- Running the contract in house will bring certain benefits such as greater control of the service and increased flexibility. For example, officers can manage grass cutting more effectively, cutting when it's needed, rather than being tied rigidly to a certain number of annual cuts, as is the case with the existing contract. There was also scope to align grounds maintenance more closely to NDC's corporate objectives, particularly "cherishing and protecting the environment". There were also opportunities to generate an income by delivering grounds maintenance services on behalf of other agencies.

In response to questions, the Contracts Delivery Manager advised the following:

- Bringing the contract in-house would enable the Council to experiment with alternative methods of powering vehicles and equipment. The Council was currently working on the TUPE of staff across to the Council and the hiring of vehicles to enable the service to be up and running by 1 April 2021. Officers would look to incorporate the fleet within the corporate procurement of fleet vehicles in the future which would be considered with the corporate contract in October 2021.
- The Council currently used sub-contractors for work such as tree works, clear up after fly tipping and would continue to use sub-contractors as and when required.
- The service would be managed by the Contracts Delivery Manager.

- The current supervisor for the contractor would transfer across and had good ideas for making the service more efficient.
- Discussions had already taken place with the Works and Recycling team regarding working across both services. Unfortunately the Works and Recycling team would not be able to provide any assistance during the summer months as it was their busiest time, however there may be other opportunities to share resources within both teams. Grounds maintenance staff would not hold a HGV licence, therefore would not be able to assist Waste and Recycling with driving.
- Prior to undertaking grass cutting, a litter pick should take place in accordance with the contract.
- All required training would be provided to staff.
- The current contractor used seasonal staff, however these were used on a regular basis and should therefore be aware of the requirements of the contract.

RESOLVED that subject to Senior Management Team approval of an appropriate business case, the Grounds Maintenance Contract be brought in house ready for service delivery on 1 April 2021.

229. APPROVAL AND RELEASE OF SECTION 106 PUBLIC OPEN SPACE FUNDS - TAWSTOCK

The Committee considered a report by the Parks, Leisure and Culture Officer (circulated previously) regarding the allocation of section 106 public open space funds towards projects in Tawstock.

The Parks, Leisure and Culture Officer advised that the project would be funded from section 106 funding secured through the planning application as detailed in paragraph 5.1 of the report.

RESOLVED that £7,586.52 be allocated to Tawstock Parish Council towards the enhancement of Tower View Playing Field.

RECOMMENDED that Council vary the capital programme by £7,586.52 and that funds be released, subject to a Funding Agreement upon such terms and conditions as may be agreed by the Senior Solicitor, for external projects.

230. LEISURE CONTRACT PAYMENTS

The Committee considered a report by the Contracts Delivery Manager (circulated previously) regarding Leisure contract payments.

The Contracts Delivery Manager highlighted the following:

- Under the terms of the interim leisure contract between Parkwood Leisure and the Council in line with Government PPN Guidance, Parkwood can claim for financial support from the Council to help cover losses incurred due to Government imposed restrictions on the leisure industry.

- To date, the Council had made payments to Parkwood Leisure totalling £158,000 to cover losses for the period April–July 2020.
- Parkwood have now issued claims to the Council for further payments for the months of August and September. Parkwood's most recent claims show a loss £48,000 in August and £19,000 in September. NDC's Head of Resources has scrutinised the claim and was agreeable to a payment of £59,000 to Parkwood for August and September losses incurred, representing £40,000 for August and £19,000 for September.
- Parkwood were showing almost no losses for the month of October and appeared to be on the road to recovery, with no further financial assistance required from the Council, however the impact of the recent lockdown was not yet known.
- Sport England had now announced a recovery fund for leisure, specifically for centres owned or operated by local authorities. Specific funding details were still to be released, but it has been confirmed that the Council would be eligible to apply for funding to cover the losses experienced since the first lockdown began this summer.
- Works on the construction of the new leisure centre had commenced and the steel frame would be constructed in January 2021.

In response to questions, the Contracts Delivery Manager advised the following:

- The COVID Relief Period within the contract could be extended by mutual agreement between the two parties.
- The Chief Executive chairs the South West Leisure Group who were making representations to the Government regarding the need to support the leisure industry.
- The new leisure centre was due to be completed in 2022.
- If the Council was successful in obtaining funding from Sport England it was anticipated that this would enable the Council to continue to support Parkwood until March 2021.

In response to a question, the Head of Resources advised the following:

- The Council was unable to claim loss of fees and charges in relation to the Leisure Centre. It had been agreed previously to cap the monthly losses experienced by Parkwood to £40,000. The Council was funding this through the Covid fund. If Parkwood walked away from the contract, the Council would incur higher costs as it would have to pay for the building expenses.

RESOLVED that the Council makes a grant payment of £59,000 to Parkwood Leisure to cover losses experienced in the months of August and September 2020 due to Covid 19.

231. WASTE AND RECYCLING - UPDATE

The Committee considered and noted a report by Councillor Pearson, Lead Member for the Environment (circulated separately) regarding the Waste and Recycling service.

The Committee asked that their appreciation be passed on to the staff working within the Waste and Recycling service who were responsible for undertaking the waste and recycling collections.

In response to questions, the Chief Executive advised:

- That he would seek clarification regarding the frequency of the invoicing for the trade waste collection service.
- Provided an update regarding the Council's position in relation to the impact of staffing of the waste and recycling service due to Covid 19. Last week, 29 members of staff were having to self-isolate and it was anticipated that the majority of staff would return to work this week. Overall, the Council had 10 positive cases in total and were recovering well, some of which had returned to work. Crews were being kept in bubbles, which meant that if a member of the crew as off, they could not be replaced. The Council had tried to keep any disruptions to a minimum.

232. INTERIM DEVON CLIMATE CHANGE PLAN AND NORTH DEVON COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Place (circulated previously) regarding the Interim Devon Climate Change Plan and North Devon Council Environmental Policy.

The Head of Place highlighted the following:

- The Environmental Policy was agreed by the Strategy and Resources Committee for the purposes of consultation at its meeting on 3 August 2020.
- The Committee agreed the Policy subject to the date by which the Council would achieve net-zero carbon being 2030 at the latest, rather than the recommendation of 2025 from the Council's Climate Action Team.
- For a variety of reasons the Policy had not yet been put out for public consultation. One of these reasons was that in the intervening period the early draft of the Interim Devon Climate Change Plan was received for checking by the Local Authority partners, before going out to consultation.
- This Devon Climate Change Plan included the advice from the Devon Net-Zero Task Force that the target dates for reaching net-zero carbon should be 2030 at the latest for organisations and 2050 for the whole of Devon, reflecting the government's current target.
- The Net-Zero Task Force felt that with the current powers and levers available to local areas to achieve net-zero by 2050 would be challenging and that going for an earlier date would not be realistic or deliverable.
- The Council's Climate Action Team considered the proposals within the draft Interim Devon Climate Change Plan but did not wish to amend their recommendation to Strategy and Resources Committee. However, to publish North Devon Council's Environmental Policy now would overlap with the consultation period for the Devon consultation, which commenced on Monday 7 December, with the potential for confusion amongst the public in North Devon, with two different sets of target dates.

- In consultation with the Lead Member for Climate Change, to avoid further delay in the Council adopting the policy, it was recommended that the Committee agree the Environmental Policy as it stands (as amended at Committee on 3 August) and recommended that Council adopts it as an interim policy. It was identified as interim in recognition of the review that will be carried out in light of the consultation response to the Interim Devon Climate Change Plan and the subsequent finalised Plan.
- Members had been invited to attend webinars that had been arranged in relation to the Interim Devon Climate Change Plan.
- There were inconsistencies within the draft Environmental Policy which needed to be amended to reflect the latest target for the whole of Devon reaching net zero carbon by 2050.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the interim North Devon Council Environment Policy (Appendix A) be approved and recommended to Council for adoption to guide the organisation, its Members and staff in taking a consistent and standard approach when considering the environmental impact of their actions and that the impact be reported to the relevant Committee subject to the following amendment:
- (i) Second paragraph on page 52 being amended to the following wording "Support a District wide programme with the aim of making North Devon carbon neutral by **2050.**"
- (b) That it be noted that the Environmental Policy was interim, in recognition of the imminent consultation exercise on the Interim Devon Climate Change Plan and its subsequent adoption.

233. URGENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Committee noted the urgent decisions that had been made by the Chief Executive in accordance with paragraph 3.48, Annex 2, Part 3 of the Constitution (circulated previously), regarding Pannier Market concession, delegation of powers to authorise, E-scooter pilot and Additional Restrictions Grant Discretionary Grants Policy.

Chair

The meeting ended at 11.15 am

NOTE: These minutes will be confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.