

**A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND ORGANISATION BOARD
WAS HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2022**

Councillors Burgess, Chegwyn, Hylands, Marshall, Pepper, Philpott and Raffaelli

33. APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

There were none

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Philpott acknowledged that he was a Hampshire County Councillor but that this did not impact on his consideration of item 9.

35. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 13 JULY 2022

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2022 be signed a true and correct record.

36. DEPUTATIONS - STANDING ORDER 3.4

There were none

37. PUBLIC QUESTIONS - STANDING ORDER 3.5

There were none.

38. TRANSPORT FOR THE SOUTH EAST CONSULTATION ON THEIR STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN

Consideration was given to a report of the Traffic and Transport Manager detailing the Transport for the South East (TfSE) Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) consultation and the Borough Council's formal response.

Members felt that the proposed response was good but highlighted that some pressure needed to be put onto the County Council regarding their redevelopment plans for bus station. It was agreed that this would be taken forward and also that a briefing note be provided to Members detailing the funds spent.

RESOLVED:

That the Board:

- i) Supports and welcomes the principle of the TfSE SIP to develop transport interventions to improve transport and connectivity within the South-East England sub-region.
- ii) Delegates authority to the Traffic and Transport manager to provide the contents of this report as the Borough Council's formal response to TfSE's SIP Consultation.

39. GOSPORT - THE DIGITAL PENINSULA DIGITAL STRATEGY FOR THE BOROUGH.

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant of the Chief Executive setting out the key elements of 'Gosport – the Digital Peninsula' the digital strategy for the borough.

Policy and Organisation Board
28 September 2022

The Board was advised that the proposal set out the key elements in draft form in preparation for a consultation exercise.

There had been a shift in digital requirements as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic and that work was ongoing to improve connectivity at sites such as the depot and sheltered schemes.

It was recognised that digital capability on the peninsular was critical to encourage and retain business.

Members recognised that connectivity should be as simple as easy as possible for businesses and residents.

Members questioned whether there had been expressions of interest in providing funding for the proposals and it was hoped that private investment could be found.

Members were advised that there had been some funding allocated to the development of the digital peninsular.

The Board agreed to a typographical amendment to the recommendation to ensure that it made better sense.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- i) Endorses the draft version of the digital strategy for the borough.
- ii) Instructs the Assistant Chief Executive to undertake a consultation exercise with partners on this draft digital strategy and, based upon its feedback, a detailed action plan is submitted to a future Board meeting for approval.

40. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) NEIGHBOURHOOD FUND - REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to a report of the Manager of Planning Policy seeking Members approval for a revised arrangement regarding the neighbourhood portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which the Council collects from developers.

Members were advised that the application process was currently managed through GVA and that the proposal was to terminate this and explore options of bringing it back in house.

Members were advised that the final administration fee was likely to be less than £850 this would cover the work involved in tying the process up and handing it over to the Council.

A Member advised that the initial proposal had been made as a result of guidance issued by the DCLG which had not changed, the current arrangement had been used as Gosport did not have parish councils.

Members expressed concern that the existing scheme was being removed before a new scheme was in place. The Board was advised that it was necessary to give notice to end the agreement now, before the next round was due to start.

Members were advised that investigations into different potential schemes would need to be made. Options could include “youdecide” style events or a form of sub-board.

The Board was advised that nothing was yet in place but that a further board report would be forthcoming following the investigations.

Policy and Organisation Board
28 September 2022

The existing paperwork and forms would be transferred across from GVA to the Council.

Members expressed concern at the capacity of Council Officers as it had previously been felt that utilising GVA had been a simple and fair process. GVA were a trusted partner and independent from the Council.

Members hoped that any replacement scheme was implemented quickly to ensure that funding was issued as soon as possible.

Members were advised that GVA were aware of the content of the report being presented to the Board.

RESOLVED:

That this Board:

- Agree to end the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Gosport Voluntary Action (GVA) for the administration of the CIL Neighbourhood Fund and bring the scheme in-house and consequently:
 - Agree a handover period as set out in the SLA to end on the 28th February 2023 unless an earlier date can be negotiated between officers and GVA; and
 - Agree the payment of a reduced administration fee to GVA of approximately £850 to reflect the more limited number of tasks to be undertaken during the handover period.
- Agree that the future distribution of the neighbourhood portion of CIL will be undertaken by the Council with the arrangements to be agreed at a later Board.
- Note the level of CIL funding available and the status of current CIL projects

That the Council formally thank GVA for their work with the first two application rounds of the CIL Neighbourhood Fund

41. WELFARE SUPPORT- HOUSING SUPPORT FUND TRANCHE 2 APRIL 22 TO SEPTEMBER 22

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Benefits, Procurement and Insurance setting out the actions taken to award entitlements to Food Vouchers from national Government funding via a Hampshire County Council grant to Gosport residents.

Members thanked staff for the work undertaken to issue grants and vouchers, in relation to this and other schemes that had been forthcoming.

RESOLVED: That the Board notes the actions taken as detailed in the report and attached Briefing Note dated 27/7/22 including the urgent procurement decision made in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules; and also notes the adjustments made to the method of distribution of the Vouchers.

42. DISCRETIONARY ENERGY REBATE SCHEME

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Benefits, Procurement and Insurance setting out the requirements for the Council to approve a Discretionary Council Tax Rebate Scheme to supplement the standard "Council Tax Rebate" scheme prescribed by Government.

Members asked for an overview of the current position with regards to the Energy Rebates.

It was clarified that the national Energy Bills Support Scheme for £400 would be received directly from the energy companies. The main Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme would close to applicants on 29th September 2022. If an application had not been made or validated then a credit of £150 would be added to the Council tax bills of those properties. There was about 3,000 properties outstanding, to which contact had been made in writing.

The Board was advised that if approval was granted for the scheme presented the order for vouchers would be placed immediately and they would arrive and be processed within 2 – 3 weeks.

RESOLVED:

That the Board approves

- i) the Discretionary Council Tax Rebate Scheme 1st April 2022 as attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- ii) a waiver to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules by the direct award to E-Vouchers (Wonde) to supply "cash out" vouchers for the scheme as set out in the report.
- iii) the Borough Treasurer, Section 151 Officer, to make technical policy amendments to the policy to ensure the scheme meets the criteria set by the Government and the Council (6.1 of the attached Policy).

43. CHANGES TO BUSINESS RATE DISCRETIONARY RELIEFS - COVID-19 ADDITIONAL RELIEF FUND (CARF)

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Local Taxation to note proposed changes to the Council's Discretionary Rate Relief Policy to include a Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) which have been approved by way of an urgent delegated decision

It was recognised that the proposal would provide much needed support to businesses who had received no recompense and that the awards of the fund would be automatic.

Members recognised the benefit this would provide to businesses, and acknowledged the impact the processing of such schemes had on the Council and the demand on staff. Whilst it was acknowledged that there was some recompense from the Government for this, it was also acknowledged that there were few staff external to the Council that were skilled in such work.

The Board advised that they would like to see Honorariums considered for staff that had gone above and beyond for both this work, and those that were involved the organisation of events following the recent passing of HM The Queen.

RESOLVED: The Board is requested to note the amendments to the Discretionary Rate Relief Policies relating to CARF for the financial year 2021/22 set out in the report.

44. ANY OTHER ITEMS

There were none.

45. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That in relation to the following item the public should be excluded from the meeting, as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during this item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information within Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and

further that in all circumstances of the cases, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons set out in the report.

46. ACQUISITION OF THE FREEHOLD BUILDING THE FORMER CRITERION THEATRE, THE TOWERS, FORTON ROAD, GOSPORT PO12 3HA

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive setting out the details of the Council's proposed purchase of the former Criterion Theatre, The Towers, Forton Road, Gosport PO12 3HA ("The Criterion")

RESOLVED: That the recommendations in the report be approved.

CHAIRMAN

Concluded at 9.47 pm