

**A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND ORGANISATION BOARD
WAS HELD ON 30 NOVEMBER 2022**

The Mayor Councillor Hutchison

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

47. APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

There were none.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hutchison advised that he was attending in his ex officio capacity and would not speak in agenda item 15 as it was a trustee.

49. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2022

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2022 be signed as a true and correct record.

50. DEPUTATIONS - STANDING ORDER 3.4

A deputation was received on Agenda item 10. Fees and Charges.

Mr More was invited to address the Council. He advised that he was the Chairman of the Allotments Stakeholder Consultative Committee and Chairman of the Gosport Allotment Association.

He advised that he wished to address the Board as the deposit for an allotment key had risen from £50 to £150, which was a far greater increase than the rate of inflation. He advised that there was no justification in the covering report for such a large increase, whereas other significant changes had been justified.

He advised that he had sat on the Allotment Stakeholders Consultative Group for a number of years and there had never been mention of an increase to the charge. He expressed concern that the charge would price people out of owning allotments, as new plot holders would be expected to pay £190 up front, which simply was not an option.

He advised that this charge equated to £3 a week for the key, and that this had also not been detailed in the upcoming new tenancy agreement.

He did not feel that the increase was acceptable as there had been a decrease in warden presence on sites and there was no clear evidence of key mismanagement to justify it, at a time at which there was a cost of living crisis it was felt that the increase was unacceptable.

The health and wellbeing benefits of allotments were well known, and this would restrict the positive impact that owning an allotment had for many. It was hoped that if the charges remained, consideration could be given to allow plot holders to pay the money in installments.

51. PUBLIC QUESTIONS - STANDING ORDER 3.5

There were none.

52. APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY ALDERMAN

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive requesting that consideration be given to a request that former Councillor Lynn Hook be appointed an Honorary Alderman.

In addition, an addendum was presented to the Board requesting that consideration be given to a request that former Councillor Tony Briggs also be made an Honorary Alderman.

The Board supported both proposal to be recommended to Full Council.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Full Council that Former Councillors Lynn Hook and Tony Briggs be appointed Honorary Alderman.

53. CULTURAL STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report of the Corporate project and Economic Development and Regeneration Manager requesting that the Board considers the contents of the 2022-37 Gosport Cultural Strategy, revised following public consultation, and approves the publication of the document.

The Board was advised that the Strategy was a combination of work by Hampshire Cultural Trust and Gosport Borough Council and had been funded by the Arts Council. It covered areas of key growth and publication of the Strategy was key to progress.

The Board acknowledged that Culture was a key driver in regenerating the economy and jobs within the Borough and that what the quality of life the Town offered employees was key in making the Town attractive to employers and businesses. There were examples of success of cultural hubs in Hampshire, such as Winchester, in which Culture attracted a further reaching success for the City.

There were projects on the horizon, including the Criterion Arts Centre and the large scale carnival which were going to provide exciting arts opportunities for the Borough. These were attracting funding to a Council that supported the arts, rather than cut projects.

Members welcomed the document, as preparation for it had been lengthy, this was in part due to the loss of Andrew Sugden and Members noted their condolence.

In answer to a Member's question, clarification was given on the consultation process that had been undertaken. It was also advised that consultation had been undertaken with

Stakeholders, and with young people and the Gosport Ambassadors had also supported the process.

A Member advised that they were concerned that a small number of people had been consulted and requested that details of those that had been consulted with be provided.

RESOLVED:

That the Board

- i) approves the contents of the 2022-37 Gosport Cultural Development Strategy including the changes introduced as a result of public consultation;
- ii) approves the publication of the document and its distribution and promotion through public channels such as Council websites and social media channels.
- iii) Notes the need for elected member representation on the Cultural Strategy working group

54. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW 2021/22, PROGRESS REPORT 2022/23, & PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Treasurer detailing the annual requirement of the Council's reporting procedures covering the treasury activity for 2021/22 together with an in year review 2022/23. It also includes the Prudential Indicators for 2021/22 in accordance with the requirements of the Prudential Code.

Members were advised that there was movement into a higher interest environment, and whilst the impact of this would not be immediate it would be considered moving forward.

The report confirmed that all investments had been made in line with the CIPFA code, and the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

The Board was advised that the inflation rate was higher than could have been anticipated and that there was also the pay increase to staff that had to be considered and taken into account.

It was anticipated that there would be a reduction in the rate of inflation in 2023 and it was recognised that the autumn statement, and the cap on Council tax increases also limited options.

RESOLVED: *The Board noted the report.*

55. CROSS REFERENCE FROM STANDARDS AND AUDIT SUB BOARD

Consideration was given to a recommendation from the Standards and Audit Sub-Board to approve the Audit Planning Report 2021/22.

The Board was advised that although the reporting was late, the Council had met the elements required of them.

RESOLVED: That the Audit Planning Report 2021/22 be approved.

56. FEES AND CHARGES

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Treasurer detailing the amended fees & charges contained in the report.

Members were advised that some work had been undertaken and needed to continue to be undertaken looking at full cost recovery where possible to ensure that all tax payers did not bear the burden of a small amount of users and that a review would be undertaken to ensure fees and charges were consistent with others.

The Board was advised that the lack of increase to fees and charges in previous years had caused pressure and meant it necessary to increase them this year. The 10% increase had been derived from the current rate of inflation and realistic evaluations had to take place in order to preserve services.

It was acknowledged that the funding package from Central Government had been reduced and therefore it was necessary to make increases to ensure the Council continued to provide services.

Members were advised that comparisons would be made to other relative charges, but concern was expressed that at a time when there was a significant cost of living crisis, access to leisure and fitness facilities were being impacted by an increase in cost.

It was felt that an increase in such charges may encourage residents to walk or cycle to the venues.

Members acknowledged that it was important to review charges for things such as sports pitches to ensure they were comparable, however, it was equally important not to price out users to other facilities such as schools, sports centres and in other Boroughs.

A Member advised that they felt there was inconsistency in the quality of facilities provided at the pavilions but that capital investment in them was expensive. It was important that the charges in place reflected the quality of the provision available and that the prices were reasonable.

Members commented that some of the proposed increases were far greater than inflation and would add to the current struggles lots of people currently faced. Concern was expressed that the fees and charges were being increased to accommodate other projects, particularly to the detriment of sporting activities.

Car park permits in particular were increasing by 36 and 40% and which far exceeded inflation of 11.6%, whereas in comparison Fareham Borough Council had frozen their Town Centre car park charges. Members recognised that the charges would impact on visitors.

Councillor Mrs Cully was invited to address the Board as the Ward Councillor for Harbourside and Town ward. She advised that she wished to address the Board regarding the residential parking permits for Town Centre Car Parks.

She advised the Board that residents were only eligible for such permits if their housing provider, or the surrounding area, had no parking provision at all. If there was limited

parking available, albeit less than needed, residents did not qualify. Residents that had garages also did not qualify.

Those residents eligible were mostly located in Mumby Road, Trinity Green and Church Path. These residents had no other option for parking, and rather than it being an optional visit, parking was required because it was for them to be at home.

Currently there were 37 residents with Town Centre resident's permits and that the proposals were to increase them from £85 to £100. This increase would generate minimal in the way of addressing the shortfall, however removing it would support residents that had no other option for their parking. It was also recognised the provision was important to keep residents safe that finished work late at night.

The situation for the residents had been made worse as the enforcement of parking restrictions in the surrounding area had increased. She advised the Board that she hoped that the cost for the permits could be frozen.

It was proposed and seconded that the charge for Town Centre Residents Permits be frozen at £85.

Members felt that there should not be a charge for RADAR keys, Members were advised that the charge was a deposit. It was also suggested that it be considered making the keys available to Hackney Carriage Drivers located at the Ferry to allow them to have facilities available. It was recognised that most RADAR keys were not returned.

A Member advised that the deposit for RADAR keys had remained fixed at £5 for a number of years.

It was proposed and seconded that the £5 deposit charge for RADAR keys be removed and that investigations be made into making keys available to Hackney Carriage Drivers.

As there were proposed amendments to the recommendations each recommendation was taken individually in the following order.

Recommendation iii) Amended to read

Following the review described at recommendation ii) above, where fees and charges are found to be significantly at variance to full cost recovery and/or other comparative charges, the Borough Treasurer be given delegated authority in consultation with the Leader of the Council to amend charges either upwards or downwards accordingly to more comparable levels.

RESOLVED: That this be approved.

An additional recommendation iv) that the Town Centre residents permits price be frozen at £85.

RESOLVED: That this be approved.

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An additional recommendation v) that the £5 deposit charge for a radar key be removed, and that investigations be made as to whether radar keys can be made available to Hackney Carriage drivers.

RESOLVED: That this be approved.

That it be recommended that the Council approve the fees and charges referred to in the report including amendments to iii) and the addition of iv) and v) and appendix for implementation from 1 January 2023 or as soon as practically possible thereafter unless stated otherwise.

RESOLVED: That this be approved.

- i) The Council undertakes a further review of its fees and charges to identify areas where the council's fees and charges:
 - a. Are at a level significant variance to the cost of providing the service
 - b. Are significantly at variance other comparable charges

RESOLVED: that this be approved.

57. CONCESSIONS POLICY & ICE CREAM CONCESSIONS ON STOKES BAY AND LEE-ON-THE-SOLENT

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Housing detailing this report sets out the Concessions Policy for the Council together with proposals for the Council to award new concessions.

In addition, the proposal of an open tender exercise to re-let the Stokes Bay and Lee-on-the-Solent Ice Cream Concessions, offering a 4-year agreement, commencing 1 April 2023, for both concessions.

The Board was advised that a draft concessions policy had been presented to the Board in March and that the concessions currently in place and Stokes Bay and Lee on the Solent.

Members welcomed the policy, it was acknowledged that the pilot had been unsuccessful, it was anticipated that this had been as a result of the short timetable.

It was confirmed by the Chairman that consultations on final locations would be undertaken with the Leader of the Council and Ward Councillors and should there be no agreement, it would be for the Policy and Organisation Board to determine. The concessions policy was therefore important as a framework to follow for any awards of concessions.

It was noted that there was not specific locations identified and acknowledge that the impact of any additional traders on existing traders should be considered as part of the evaluation.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Board approves the attached Concessions Policy for adoption and gives delegated authority to the Head of Housing in consultation with the Chairman of the P&O Board and the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer to:
 - i) Adopt the new Concessions policy; and
 - ii) Delegate choosing of the pitch locations to the Head of Housing in consultation with the Chairman of the P&O Board; and
 - iii) Advertise proposals and award concessions to the successful bidders, to be operated in the Borough.

2. That the Board approves the advertisement to the market of the opportunities for the Stokes Bay and Lee-on-the-Solent Ice Cream concessions in line with appropriate guidelines and gives delegated authority to:
 - a. the Head of Housing in consultation with the Chairman of the P&O Board to determine the winning concessionaires; and
 - b. the Head of Housing and the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer to finalise the terms of the concession agreements with the winning concessionaires.

58. URGENT PROCUREMENT OF MIGRATION SOFTWARE FOR BENEFITS AND COUNCIL TAX NEC PROJECT.

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Benefits, Procurement and Insurance setting out the actions taken to purchase required software for the NEC “spend to save” project as detailed and approved in the report to the Board on the 17/3/2022.

The Board noted the report.

59. BUSINESS RATE SOFTWARE CONTRACT AWARD

The Board was advised that this report had been withdrawn from the agenda. The Board was advised that an urgent decision would need to be undertaken and that Group Leaders would be consulted as part of the procurement process.

60. FORMATION OF A GRANTS SUB-BOARD

Consideration was given to a report of the Manager of Planning Policy seeking Members' approval for the formation of a Grants Sub-Board, which will administer the spending of community grants.

The Board was advised that clarification on the eligibility would be determined and that there would be three pots for funding Heritage, Community Infrastructure Levy and Community.

Members sought clarification that the Sub-board would not be convened or make awards until the terms of reference and process had been agreed.

It was also clarified that grants would not be able to be awarded Gosport Borough Council as they were to support the community.

Some Members felt that the proportionality should be amended to ensure that the Sub Board was not only proportionally representative but also included all parties and proposed that the Board comprise 3:2:1, other Members felt that it would be more appropriate for the Board to be 4:2:1. It was formally proposed and seconded that the Board comprise 3:2:1.

Members advised that they wanted the terms of reference and the application process before grants were issued.

A vote on the proportionality of the Sub-Board was taken and it was agreed that it comprise 3:2:1.

RESOLVED: That this Board:

- Approves the formation of a Grants Sub-Board.
- Delegates authority to the Head of Planning and Regeneration and Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council to determine the detailed elements of each grant including application forms and guidance.
- Recommends to Full Council that it approves amendments to the Constitution to give effect to this resolution.

61. REQUEST FROM ST JOHNS SCHOOL FOR USE OF BLUE SHELTER

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Streetscene seek Board approval to dispose of the unused youth shelter to St Johns School in response to their expression of interest, or through a process of invitation of expressions of interest and bids.

In answer to a Member's question, the Board was advised that consultation had been undertaken with the ward Councillors and that the shelters caused significant Anti-Social Behaviour in the areas they had previously been located.

Members felt that it was good that the shelter was brought back in to use in an appropriate way but sought confirmation that the School would removed and collect the shelter, taking all liability for it.

RESOLVED: That the Board authorises the disposal of the surplus youth shelter direct to St Johns School in response to their expression of interest

62. HEDCA

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

63. FLEETLANDS FOOTBALL CLUB

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Treasurer and Section 151 Officer/Head of Planning, Regeneration and Assistant Chief Executive requesting that consideration be given to a request for financial assistance from Fleetlands Football Club towards the installation of a new on site spectator stand incorporating 100 seats.

The Board was advised that it was important the request for the assistant was considered at this meeting as there was a deadline of March for the improvements to the ground, in line with FA requirements.

The Board was advised that due diligence would be undertaken before any funds would be issued.

A Member expressed concern that the request was being made so close to the deadline and felt the club would have known earlier that the works needed to be undertaken.

The Board was advised that there was an urgency because of the procurement of the stand and the installation would take the Club close to the deadline.

Members discussed the whether the club would return to the Council for additional funding to complete the project if cost predictions were incorrect and whether this would be considered.

The Board was advised that due diligence would be undertaken and that if this was not acceptable the funding could be reconsidered.

Councillor Hammond was invited to address the Board as the Ward Councillor and was advised that the Club was an important part of the Community providing activities for young people. They were a good club and were investing in being even better.

RESOLVED: That the Board approves a contribution of £20,000 towards the stand and seating to be provided at Fleetlands Football Club subject to the completion of proper financial due diligence to the satisfaction of the Council's Section 151 Officer and agreement on the timeframe for implementation of the works.

64. ANY OTHER ITEMS

It was acknowledged that this was the last meeting the Borough Solicitor would attend before leaving the Council. The Board wished him well in his new employment.

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CHAIRMAN

Concluded at 9.08 pm