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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 29 MAY 2024 AT 6.45 pm

Attendance:

The Mayor (Earle) (in the Chair)

Councillors Namdeo, Finn, Hayes, Ricketts, Ms Ballard, Burgess, Casey, Chegwyn, Mrs Cully, Earle, Hammond, Herridge, Mrs Huggins, Hutchison, Hylands, Jessop, Johnston, Miss Kelly, Philpott, Raffaelli, Scard, Westerby, Durrant, Maynard, K Bradley and Cox

TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR MEMBERS FOR THEIR INABILITY TO ATTEND THE MEETING

An apology for non attendance was received from Councillor Bradley.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

MAYORS COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor reminded the Board of his expectations of behavior for the year.

TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 15 MAY 2024

Resolved: That the minutes of the meetings held on 15th May 2024 be signed as true and correct records.

DEPUTATIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were none.

REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Treasurer seeking approval of the Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27 and to give delegated authority to amend the Prudential Indicators to reflect the capital programme set out in Appendix A.

It was clarified to the Council that paragraph 4.1 was to be removed at this time as it was believed that the grave work had been largely completed and the funds were not required. This would be clarified and confirmed to all Members in writing.

The Council was also advised that there was £795000 set aside to ensure that all of the Capital programme projects were completed and fully funded at all times.

There were 32 items listed, some of which may or may not go ahead, work still needed to be undertaken on investigating exactly what upgrades needed to be made on the IT system and decisions made on the proposed spend to remove equipment at the Lee on Solent Skatepark.

Some Members expressed disappointment that the report had been late, giving little time for consideration, but welcomed the responses from the Finance Officer.

They also advised that they were delighted that there had been money allocated for a survey on Jackie Spencer Bridge, as this was overdue, and presented a risk of losing the lake.

Some Members requested that the administration stop referring to a black hole deficit left behind by the previous administration, as this was untrue and been shown to be by the external auditors. The administration had lost capital and resources to support growth. The ring-fenced £800000 was earmarked for other projects, with £250000 removed from play parks, on top of £1.6 million on a project yet to be delivered, and it was impossible to see how this was legally justifiable or necessary. In previous years, specific projects had been listed, and now funds were lumped together, reducing accountability. Members felt uninformed as to what was happening and the administration could not be held to account. There were no costings, no business plans and no focus.

A Member advised that the paper showed a very clear statement of direction of travel. £1.6million removed from pavilions, allotments, the ice rink, Privett Park, Brookers Field, Nobes Avenue. The removal of funds from schemes that would benefit the entire Borough. The removal of funds from play areas across the Borough, all promised, yet removed after the election had taken place, leaving just £27000 for improvements, with the money being allocated as a slush fund for vanity projects. A total amount of £4million had been ring-fenced for the projects of the People's Park and the Criterion, projects over which there were grave concerns. Projects were meant to benefit residents, not be vanity projects. 20 months later the Criterion was still derelict and the People's Park had no direction. All that had been shown was a loss of parks and pavilions.

Leveling up money of £2450000 was listed but was not detailed, nor was the money clearly allocated. It wasn't clear what money was being spent on and the public were entitled to know.

A Member advised that they felt that their ward received little from the Council as significant amounts of land were owned by developers. The one play park that was in the ward was neglected and the much needed CCTV had been refused, despite the play park improvements being agreed by the Chairman of the Community Board.

Improvements were also being withdrawn from Grange Long Barn, meaning Grange and Alver Valley Ward were receiving nothing.

A Members advised that they had sought clarification on the removal of a scheme from the Cockle Pond and that it had been confirmed that the work had been undertaken, A survey of the Cocklepond water filtration scheme and footpath has been undertaken and the budget revised for the current estimate of cost for the works required. However, if after further survey work is undertaken and the costs change then this will be reviewed.

The money from Daedalus was surplus to requirements so was being redirected and there was sufficient money for the cockle pond pathway works to take place.

Confirmation was sought on the improvements to play areas and it was accepted by some Members that 24/7 CCTV was unable to be paid by the Council and that the underspends on projects were good news, but that full investigations should be undertaken into the specification of the IT system to ensure any spending is robust.

Clarification was sought on the People's Park and the intentions as there were no plans or business plans to understand the proposal.

The Leader advised the Council that the Conservatives had referred to themselves as dysfunctional and had forgotten that the recent election results had resulted with them being in opposition allowing the Liberal Democrats to make progress with getting things done. There was money being spent on play parks, including improvements to Bridgemary and soon to be the Spinney/Rowner Copse. In addition work was planned for Elson and Forton.

Residents of Grange and Alver Valley would choose better in the upcoming election.

Members of the Council were advised that Conservative Councils were cutting important budgets like road safety, street repairs, street lighting, whereas Liberal Democrats were investing in services and delivering.

Money left in the programme was being redistributed, and Section 106 money was being allocated for sports improvements. IT systems would be investigated before they were installed and the report presented tidied up the capital programme. The Liberal Democrats had been elected to deliver regeneration to the High Street and the Criterion and the Levelling Up funding. Manor Way allotments were progressing with tenants moving in next month.

FOR the recommendation: Councillor Ballard, Councillor K Bradley, Councillor Chegwyn, Councillor Cox, Councillor Cully, Councillor Durrant, Councillor Finn, Councillor Hammond, Councillor Herridge, Councillor Hutchison, Councillor Hylands, Councillor Johnston, Councillor Kelly, Councillor Maynard, Councillor Westerby, The Mayor

AGAINST the recommendation: Councillor Burgess, Councillor Casey, Councillor Hayes, Councillor Huggins, Councillor Jessop, Councillor Namdeo, Councillor Philpott, Councillor Raffaelli, Councillor Ricketts, Councillor Scard,

OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENT

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Westerby be appointed to the Gosport Food Partnership
That Councillor Durrant be appointed to the Solent Sea Rescue

And that Councillors Burgess, Cully, Chegwyn, Cox and Hutchinson be appointed to the task and finish group.

The Meeting concluded at 7.22 pm

The Mayor.