

FINANCE, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 20 September 2021.

PRESENT: Councillor Gareth Roberts (Chair), Councillor Michael Wilson (Vice-Chair), Councillor Richard Baker, Councillor Richard Bennett, Councillor Aphra Brandreth, Councillor Robin Brown, Councillor Ian Craigie, Councillor Lesley Pollesche and Councillor Pamela Fleming

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Roger Crouch (Minute 179)

175. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Paul Hodgins. Councillor Pamela Fleming served as his substitute for the meeting.

176. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

177. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2021 were approved as a correct record and the Chair authorised to sign them.

178. PETITIONS

No petitions with more than five hundred signatures had been received for discussion at this meeting.

179. WARD CONCERNS

A Ward Concern was presented by Councillor Roger Crouch for Twickenham Riverside Ward. This ward concern related to Garfield Road pocket park, situated beyond Twickenham Library and near the Waitrose store. He considered that while the trees had doubtless been attractive when replanted, the park now looked forlorn. It was an area noted by the police for anti-social behaviour.

As this Administration was committed to investment in Twickenham, with the expected riverside scheme and pedestrianisation of Church Street, Councillor Crouch wished to see the positive effect of this initiative extended to the rest of the town, and other entrance points not overlooked. In 2013 a consultation had been undertaken on the area and in 2014 the Poet in the City arts organisation had produced ideas for the park, which were not pursued. He suggested that there was opportunity to make the pocket park appealing by indicating navigational routes into the town, enhancing biodiversity through introducing diverse planting and colour, removing unnecessary walls and bushes and using the open space for Library readings.

Councillor Crouch further suggested that public art could be used at this park and throughout the Borough to commemorate the Pandemic period to remember those who had lost their lives and appreciate NHS staff and other key workers. He considered that local schools and community organisations could be involved in deciding the form which this would take. He concluded by explaining that he had raised his ward concern at this committee because of the finances required and because responsibility for the pocket park was shared between the parks and the highways departments.

In discussion, it was suggested that as some pocket parks had been adopted by Friends' Groups, this could be an option for this park. It was thought that the Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sport would be interested in the concerns raised. It was noted that the Twickenham Business Improvement District (BID) had also responded positively to Councillor Crouch's suggestions.

The Chair stated that the concern should be considered initially by Parks Officers, who would involve ward councillors in those discussions.

180. TWICKENHAM RIVERSIDE: UPDATED COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER REPORT

The Programme Manager (Special Projects) introduced the report and explained that all the land interest for the scheme must be vested in the Council. Instead of registering the entire Embankment as expected, the Port of London Authority (PLA) had made an application to the Land Registry to register the southern part of the land, leaving the Northern Embankment to be registered by the Council and included in the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). The report also considered appropriate exemptions to deal with the Public Open Space (POS) in the CPO process. Where POS was to be built upon and therefore lost, new POS would be provided. Existing POS being kept as such in the new scheme would need to be preserved and maintained as such. The scheme was exactly the same as previously presented and negotiations with the Twickenham Riverside Trust were not affected as the lease footprint the Council was negotiating also remained the same.

In discussion, the Committee heard that the land provided for the Gardens was considered to be one coherent and central space but set across multiple levels. The central space would consist of terraced gardens and be more accessible than the current gardens as it would offer multiple level access points into the space, providing more access points for the area. The access points and levels would provide new connection and viewpoints with the river, which would not be interrupted by parking and the roadway. The scheme remained the same as was consulted upon with residents and the space available within the scheme, to be used as open space, would also remain the same. For this report, the description of POS was being demonstrated for compliance for the purposes of the CPO. The PLA had registered the Southern area of the Embankment as they had historic evidence of ownership. For the Northern area, it was considered that the Council would have the better historic claim as the land was part of Richmond House and legal advice was being taken on whether registration was the better option or risk was mitigated by including the land in the CPO process. If land designated as such was continuing as POS, it was better to have all the land vested in the Council for the development of the whole site. There was no intention to criticise any existing management of POS, but a categorisation to satisfy Section 19(1)(aa) and part of the explanation for the holistic scheme. The Council was as confident as it was possible to be, when the decision lay elsewhere, that the CPO would be accepted.

In closing the discussion, the Chair announced that a report on the costs and benefits of the scheme would be presented to the next meeting of the committee. The Chair put the recommendations to the vote and they were carried by a majority.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the update given in this report be noted, further to the report and recommendations that were approved by this Committee on the same matter at the meeting on 28th June 2021, and in addition to the resolutions made at that meeting, it be resolved to:**
 - a) include the additional interests in the Compulsory Purchase Order as detailed below (land parcel 13 and crane oversailing rights of land parcel 14),**
 - b) authorise the Director of Environment, in consultation with the Managing Director of the South London Legal Partnership, to make minor adjustments to finalise the areas of Category 1, 2 and 3 open space land detailed below in finalising the CPO and Order map, and in applying to the Secretary of State for a certificate pursuant to section 19(1) of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981, and to update the draft Statement of Reasons to reflect the approach to open space set out in this report.**

181. HAM CLOSE: IN PRINCIPLE USE OF COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER POWERS

The committee noted that Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP) had selected a developer partner. This was an 'in principle' request, not a full resolution, as RHP did not have the power to bring forward a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). Officers advised that the report followed from the

2018 decisions of Cabinets, taken by the current and previous Administrations.

In discussion, the committee heard that failure to support RHP with these CPO powers could jeopardise the whole development at Ham Close while agreement would help to develop new homes.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the information given in this report be noted.**
- 2. That it be agreed in principle that the Council will use compulsory purchase powers pursuant to section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to acquire the land and any rights within the area described in the report and shown on the plan attached to this report, the Council being of the view that compulsory acquisition of the land may be necessary in order to secure the delivery of the Scheme and to bring forward its benefits in a timely way.**
- 3. That Officers be authorised to carry out preparatory work for the use of its compulsory purchase powers, including, subject to the 'In Principle' decision being made, serving statutory requisitions for information on land owners and appointing land referencing agents (if considered necessary) to thoroughly investigate all land interests, appointment of other consultants as required for the potential CPO (either by the Council directly or with RHP), the preparation of a Statement of Reasons and all other necessary documentation.**
- 4. That officers be authorised to enter into an indemnity agreement with Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP) under which RHP will reimburse the Council for all costs incurred by it in connection with preparing and making of a CPO, including the acquisition costs of those interests which are still to be acquired, will be detailed in the further report to this Committee setting out the justification for making a CPO.**

182. FUNDING OF TEMPORARY SPORTS FACILITIES AT THE REEC PROJECT

It was noted that the REEC Project had been complex with many partners involved including the college and the school. The school had been handed over in 2018. The proposed site with Haymarket had fallen through and this has had an impact on the sports hall site. While planning options were being examined, a viable option had been identified for the sports hall for a period of up to three years. This would enable a permanent solution to be put in place.

The committee further noted that funding would be made available through the Capital Programme.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the general update provided by this report on the progress made on the REEC project and the impact on the delivery of the school sports hall be noted.**
- 2. That funding of £415,000 be approved, to be added to the Education capital programme as detailed in the report for the supply of a temporary sports hall for the Richmond Upon Thames school, fully funded from ESFA Basic Need allocations.**

183. ECONOMIC RECOVERY UPDATE

The Assistant Chief Executive introduced the detailed paper which provided an update for the committee and described several programmes. These included employment support activity and business support, which had received positive feedback. Grants had been provided to customer-facing businesses and there were positive signs of recovery on the High Streets. Some 5,800 residents had been subject to furlough. It was expected that some would lose jobs when this initiative ended and there was the threat of insolvency for some businesses as grants stopped. This meant that there was a strong case for continuing the recovery measures. The Strategic Recovery

Task Force would include many businesses and partners and provide an overview. There would be ongoing work with St Mary's University, new workspace expected to be provided in the York House Annexe, continuing work with the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to understand the further requirements for the High Streets in the Borough.

The Business and Growth Lead Member added that the recommendations included support for the Richmond (Be Richmond) BID ballot.

In discussion, the Committee heard that Officers were seeking to cross-reference all businesses already helped and analyse any gap in grant-funding as any business suffering an impact in the Pandemic had been able to access grants. It was hoped that any sector specific issues would be identified through the analysis. Access to grants applied to service providers and the businesses occupying their space. The Council was likely to be sympathetic to businesses continuing to be impacted. There had been an effect on BID levy payments. Be Richmond were confident that they could take matters forward through the ballot. For creative industries and artisan workspaces, there was a challenge as the sector tended to be looking for below market rents which was not always attractive to landlords. Space was limited in the York House Annexe for this type of business, but officers would continue to look at this and other suitable spaces. It was noted that although there was a high level of start-up businesses nationally, local data was not clear. Support had been increased for such businesses and 200 pre-start had been helped over the last year.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the achievements delivered through the economic recovery measures agreed by this committee in September 2020 as set out in paragraphs 4.2 to 4.21 be noted.**
- 2. That the creation of a £38,000 Kick Start top up budget be agreed to enable Kick Start placements in the Council to be paid at the London Living Wage (paragraph 4.8)**
- 3. That the grants and business rate reliefs provided to local businesses and the £1.03m remaining in the Additional Restrictions Grant for further allocation (paragraph 5.8) be noted.**
- 4. That the approach to economic recovery as set out in paragraph 6.10 be noted.**
- 5. That it be agreed to run an open call to identify an operator partner for the Council to manage York House Annex as an innovation and enterprise hub (when it is no longer required for Council purposes) and subject to the agreement of the Assistant Director for Property Services as set out in paragraph 8.7**
- 6. That it be agreed to Richmond Council supporting Be Richmond Business Improvement District's renewal as referenced in paragraph 9.7 and submitting a positive vote in the renewal ballot.**
- 7. That it be agreed to the Council taking the steps outlined in paragraph 9.7 to meet the statutory requirements in enabling the renewal ballot to take place and to delegate to the Assistant Chief Executive any associated actions required.**

184. CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND FUNDING REVIEW

The Director of Resources introduced this annual update report which also captured the capital outturn for 2020/21, included new agreed projects and revised cashflows. It included the £1million for decarbonisation of the council's operational buildings and the £5 million SEND provision agreed with the Department for Education.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the capital programme and the changes being proposed be reviewed.**
- 2. That the revised capital programme and its funding be approved.**

185. Q1 QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT

The Committee decided to consider this item alongside the Corporate Quarter 1 Budget Quarterly Monitoring 2020/21 Report (Minute 186).

RESOLVED:

- 1. That it be noted that the current projected underspend on the services for this committee is £0.548 million before COVID-19 related budget, costs and income are taken into account. A further underspend of £4.478 million is projected for Central Items.**
- 2. That the Committee's forecast impact of COVID-19 costs be noted.**
- 3. That the position on the Capital programme be noted.**

186. CORPORATE Q1 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2021/22

The Committee decided to consider this item alongside the Q1 Quarterly Monitoring Report (Minute 185).

The Director of Resources advised that the layout of the report was similar to the previous year with Covid costs shown separately and expected to be just under £1 million. The latest projection for non-Covid expenditure showed an overall underspend of £3.5 million. There continued to be a forecast overspend in Children's Services, in particular for children in care and looked after, where there had been increases in numbers and the costs of placements.

The Covid effect on Council Tax collection and Business Rates was still being quantified. There were continuing risks arising from Covid effects on income forecasts, particularly in leisure services. Social care costs and the general economic recovery also continued to be a factor.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That it be noted that the current projected underspend on the General Fund overall is £3.498 million (excluding COVID-19 costs) but that the net COVID-19 costs are expected to be £931,000.**
- 2. That the Council's forecast impact of COVID-19 costs be noted.**
- 3. That the position on the capital programme be noted.**

187. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Lead Member for Finance and Resources stated that the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) reflected the SEND funding settlement considered by this committee on 16 March 2021. It also included £7 million of Covid costs, which had been grant funded for the current year, but this could not be guaranteed for subsequent years. There was also ongoing uncertainty on Council Tax and Business Rate collection. Council funding remained uncertain for the longer term and how this would evolve, under the new leadership in the responsible Government department, was unclear at this stage. The Administration remained committed to delivering the Council's priorities which were outlined within the MTFS. Financial resilience was important, and efficiencies would be sought where they did not impact adversely on service provision. Reserves would be used prudently to smooth the impact over time and there was an assumption that the funding gap would remain within a 2.99% Council Tax increase. He concluded by stating that the Council's finances remained stable and well placed to manage any uncertainty.

In discussion, the Committee heard that the initial procurement and commissioning review had concluded and this would lead to specific workstreams to be completed within the next year. Other boroughs had derived significant efficiencies from a similar review. In examining the Council's

estate, there would be some short-term gains arising from learning for ways of working during the Pandemic, but this required a longer view beyond one year. Major capital schemes being reviewed included the Twickenham Riverside Scheme this year, and in the future, there would be projects to consider the Old Town Hall and library, schools and leisure facilities.

The Chair called the vote on the recommendations and these were carried by a majority, with two abstentions

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the update to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the further work to be undertaken in the lead up to setting the 2022/23 Council Tax be noted.**
- 2. That Council be recommended to approve the Medium Term Financial Strategy including the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy.**

188. RICHMOND CORPORATE PLAN KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR RESULTS FOR QUARTER 1 (Q1) 2021/22 AND KEY PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS PROGRESS UPDATES

The Assistant Chief Executive advised that RAG ratings had been reinstated for these regular reports.

In response to questions, the committee heard that the employment service was in its establishment phase and so a full evaluation was not yet available. The definition of 'engagement' was registration for two sessions, and some found moving to new employment sectors could be challenging. There was interest in training and services for the older demographic. Job fairs and other recruitment efforts were being planned over the next months. For Workmatch, vacancies were logged on the website. As well as residents, employers also needed to be engaged. Therefore, the service needed to ensure that there were sufficient vacancies available for job-ready staff. It was considered that fifty vacancies available at any one time would meet the demand.

For corporate complaints, the committee heard that the emphasis was currently on Phase one complaints as the main investigation stage, to ensure that responses were dealt with promptly. The new case management system being installed next year would ensure richer data on complaints in terms of trends and themes. Therefore the 50% target for response to Stage 2 Corporate Complaints within 15 working days, which some Members of the committee considered as lacking in ambition, would be reviewed and revised upwards in future with the embedding of the new process and supporting technology.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Finance, Policy and Resources performance against KPIs in Appendix A be noted.**
- 2. That progress on priority programmes / projects (by exception) set out in Appendix B be noted.**
- 3. That no area of performance be recommended for consideration as part of the Policy and Performance Review Board's 2020/21 workplan on this occasion.**

189. CORPORATE COMPLAINTS REPORT FOR 2020-21

The Head of Resident Engagement introduced the report and stressed the importance of encouraging feedback on services, including complaints. The volume of complaints received in 2020-21 was consistent with the previous year. The 301 complaints should be seen in the wider context of interaction with residents whereby one area, Customer Services dealt with more than 200,000 telephone calls and 63,000 emails in the same period. She acknowledged that the past year had seen some services closed during the Pandemic which could have affected the numbers of complaints received. One key benchmark was the fifteen cases investigated by the Ombudsman

where 67% were upheld, a lower percentage than many other Councils and where Richmond was performing better or in line with nearest neighbours.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the report and associated appendices be reviewed and noted.**

190. VOLUNTARY SECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPACITY BUILDING SERVICES

The Vice-chair and spokesperson for Communities, Equalities & the Voluntary Sector praised the voluntary sector in Richmond as being a lifeline to many both before and during the Pandemic. Richmond upon Thames Council for Voluntary Service (RCVS) had been a central component and he thanked Katherine Williamson and her team for their efforts to get the best for residents and contribution to the thriving voluntary sector. He advised that the consultation undertaken had been adapted as it took place during the Pandemic and the report shone a light on the Council Compact and partnership in dealing with key stakeholders in the voluntary sector. The report outlined the stabilisation needed for the voluntary sector as it emerged from the Pandemic.

In discussion, the committee endorsed the thanks given to RCVS and noted that RCVS were pleased with the approach taken by the Council, which put local needs at the centre, in this instance.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the outcome of the consultation programme with the voluntary sector and key stakeholders on local priorities be noted.**
- 2. That the summary service outcomes be noted and the refreshed service design as described in this report be agreed.**
- 3. That the Direct Award to Richmond Council for Voluntary Service of £217,624 per annum for four years from 4 January 2022 to 3 January 2026 be agreed.**

191. COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMME

The Vice-chair and spokesperson for Communities, Equalities & the Voluntary Sector stated that the aim of this programme was to reach those in the community which the Council did not always hear from. It was apparent that some did not find it easy to make their views known and the pandemic had hindered the ability of the Community Engagement Team to reach out as expected over the past eighteen months. This report therefore sought to extend the programme.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That it be agreed that the Council's Outreach Programme is extended by a further two years and be expanded to include engagement of a further Community Engagement Officer.**
- 2. That it be agreed that the Outreach Programme focuses on engaging residents who are covered by the nine protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act, 2010 and additionally those who are financially insecure. This work will be focused with the priorities being agreed with colleagues in Adults Social Services, Public Health and Achieving for Children.**

192. ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CASE REVIEW (COMMUNITY TRIGGER)

The Interim Head of Community Safety introduced the report and advised that the revised process had been approved by the Community Safety Partnership. He advised that Case Review provided an opportunity for anyone, who had been a victim of multiple incidents of anti-social behaviour but felt that the response was inadequate, to seek a review of the actions undertaken.

In response to questions, the committee heard that information about this process was published on

the website with clarity on how a review could be accessed. There would also be engagement with Partners including Registered Social Landlords and the Police Liaison Groups. This process was independent of others and would arise when an issue had not been otherwise resolved satisfactorily.

RESOLVED that it be agreed that:

- 1. The Community Safety Service is authorised by the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to manage the ASB Case Review Procedure process in accordance with the policies and procedures set out within this report.**
- 2. The threshold for ASB Case Reviews and the procedures are as described in the report and the Appendix (section 5).**
- 3. The Council's Community Safety Service Lead acts as the Point of Contact for making an application for a ASB Case Review.**
- 4. To the ASB Case Review being referenced specifically in the Information Sharing Protocol (ISP) and any relevant Data Sharing Agreement.**
- 5. Cases will be reviewed and evaluated quarterly. This should include:**
 - (i) a relevant case study;**
 - (ii) the number of applications for ASB Case Reviews received,**
 - (iii) the number of times the threshold for a ASB Case Review was not met,**
 - (iv) the number of ASB Case Reviews carried out; and**
 - (v) the number of ASB Case Reviews which result in recommendations being made; and**
 - (vi) the number of requests for a review of an application decision and/or the number of times a review was carried out.**
- 6. The following information to be published on the Community Safety Service webpages:**
 - (i) the number of applications for ASB Case Reviews received,**
 - (ii) the number of times the threshold for a Review was not met,**
 - (iii) the number of ASB Case Reviews carried out; and**
 - (iv) the number of ASB Case Reviews which result in recommendations being made; and**
 - (v) the number of requests for a review of an application decision and/or the number of times a review was carried out.**
- 7. Improvement actions arising from operational experience of ASB Case Reviews will be reported to the CSP.**
- 8. The levels of demand created by ASB Case Reviews be noted and it be agreed that list of independent chairs for the ASB Case Reviews panels be drawn from across the CSP.**

193. LOCAL LAND CHARGES - HMLR TRANSITION PAYMENTS.

The Chief Executive advised that the report reflected a requirement to move to a standardised national system and the funds were provided for this purpose.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the ring-fencing of HMLR migration project transition payments received, with**

transfer to the LLC budget upon receipt be agreed.

194. ADDITIONAL BUDGET REQUESTS

The Director of Resources advised that the report before committee represented the budget variations requested from time to time. She then referenced an amendment that had been agreed at the Adult Social Services Health and Housing Committee meeting on 9th September 2021. This amendment requested the Finance, Policy and Resources Committee to allow £1 million of underspend from 2020/21 outturn, to be carried forward for the benefit of the Adult Social Services Health and Housing Committee. She suggested that this committee, in response, should consider any specific proposals rather than a general ring-fence of funds.

The Lead Member for Finance and Resources noted the request respectfully but considered that while all current demands on the budget were fully funded, there could not be a rush to ring-fence any underspend for a particular committee. Any proposals from the committee should be examined during the budget-setting process for 2022/23. In response to a question from the committee, it was stated that any underspend from last year would have been placed in reserves. Any urgent need to spend this year would be examined, but as £1 million was a significant sum, concrete proposals would be required for its allocation. This was better left to the usual budget development process.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the funding of those items listed in paragraph 3.1 from the central contingency budget or other sources as specified be approved.**

Committee	Date	Description	Capital	Revenue	Funding
Finance, Policy and Resources	20/09/21	Economic Recovery - Kickstart	£0	£38,000	Central contingency
Finance, Policy and Resources	20/09/21	Community Engagement Outreach Programme	£0	£26,000	Central contingency
Finance, Policy and Resources	20/09/21	Richmond Education and Training Centre (REEC)	£415,000	£0	ESFA Basic Need allocations
Adult Social Services, Health and Housing	09/09/21	Housing Association Community Ambassador Programme	£0	£12,900	Central contingency
Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports	07/09/21	Pavement Licence Charges	£0	-£2,500	Central contingency
Total Requested			£415,000	£74,400	

- 2. That the request from Adult Social Services Health and Housing Committee to allow £1 million of underspend to be carried forward for the benefit of that committee be considered and remitted, subject to clear proposals, for consideration as part of the Budget.**

195. FORWARD PLAN

It was noted that a report on the finance and value for the Twickenham Riverside Scheme would be added to the Forward Plan for publication on 1 October 2021.

RESOLVED:

That the current list of items, with the addition of a report on the finances for the Twickenham Riverside Scheme, on the Forward Plan for Committee business be noted.

CHAIR

The meeting, which started at 7:00 pm ended at 8:53 pm.