

CABINET

MONDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2023 - 2.00 PM



PRESENT: Councillor C Boden (Chairman), Councillor Mrs J French (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor A Miscandlon, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor C Seaton, Councillor S Tierney and Councillor S Wallwork

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mrs D Laws

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

CAB1/23 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held 11 September 2023 were approved and signed subject to the following amendment:

- Councillor Miscandlon asked that it be noted under minute reference CAB21/23 that he had said 'it is no good the Police abdicating their responsibility', rather than 'advocating'.

CAB2/23 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Members considered the Statement of Community Involvement report presented by Councillor Boden.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to approve the Statement of Community Involvement.

CAB3/23 REVIEW AND REFRESH OF PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDERS (DOG FOULING AND DOG CONTROLS)

Members considered the Review of Public Spaces Protection Orders report presented by Councillor Murphy.

Councillor Mrs French said she welcomes this review as she receives many dog fouling complaints and hopes that the renewal of this Order will help stop some of the irresponsible dog owners.

Proposed by Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Miscandlon and AGREED to note the consultation responses and approve the renewal to the Public Spaces Protection Order for a further period of three years.

CAB4/23 LEISURE CENTRES

Members considered the Leisure Centres report presented by Councillor Miscandlon.

Councillor Mrs French asked Councillor Miscandlon if there is any intention to provide these buildings with solar panels in the future. Councillor Miscandlon replied that it is proposed to provide solar panels on at least two, if not three of the leisure centres, and a generous contribution has been received from Sport England to do that.

Councillor Tierney said he is pleased that this is being considered ahead of time, it is hard to overestimate the importance of leisure centres to local people, particularly in respect of swimming provision where there is no competition. Keeping ahead of the game on planning to keep the centres maintained, operational and effective is a good idea.

Proposed by Councillor Miscandlon, seconded by Councillor Wallwork and AGREED to authorise officers to proceed to procure the services required to develop the information detailed in 6.1 and to delegate to the Leader of the Council and Section 151 Officer to determine the funding source for these works which will cost approximately £100,000.

CAB5/23 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (SPF)

Members considered the UK Shared Prosperity Fund report presented by Councillor Benney.

Councillor Miscandlon commented that he fully supports this, the younger generation are missing out on job training and apprenticeships. This is the way forward and it will encourage companies to recruit apprentices and further the education of young people in the district.

Councillor Boden said that Fenland has one of the worst records for skills in the country and the Council must take advantage of every opportunity to give everyone the chance to increase their skills and the skill level of the area.

Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to the allocation of the SPF Investment in Business budget for 2024-25.

CAB6/23 RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND (REPF)

Members considered the Rural England Prosperity Fund report presented by Councillor Benney.

Councillor Mrs French said she welcomes this report as it is a great opportunity for local businesses to get involved and help in these difficult times.

Councillor Boden said that the reason for putting all the money into business growth this year was because the money was received late in the day but with an obligation to spend a certain proportion of it in 2023/24. It was impractical to find community and place projects to do that whereas the Council had all the contacts needed to put money into business growth. That is why the community and place side will take place in 2024/25 and the money spent will be evenly divided between business growth and community and place.

Councillor Miscandlon referred to section 1.14 of the report and asked if there are any plans to extend Project 3 to the other market towns within Fenland Councillor Benney said that he did not know but would come back to Councillor Miscandlon with an answer. Councillor Miscandlon added that this is a good project that should be encouraged across the district; there is an aging population with a considerable number of skills under their belt who could benefit from this. Councillor Boden commended that the funds are limited; Whittlesey has already benefitted from money in Project 2, but it would be appropriate for money to be spread evenly around the district.

Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Seaton and AGREED for 2024-25 that the REPF monies should be allocated equally between Business Growth and Community/Place and used as described in the report in sections 1.8 to 1.14.

CAB7/23 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS OF RISK OF HARM POLICY

Members considered the Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk of Harm Policy

presented by Councillor Wallwork.

Councillor Miscandlon said it is important for the Council to proactively adopt a policy that is seen to be working; this is a good policy that will help the people of Fenland, so he fully supports it.

Councillor Boden said he liked the concept of the report card, particularly given the relevance of paragraph 1.6. It needs emphasising that whilst this Council does not have responsibility for investigating abuse, all employees, councillors, volunteers, and voluntary service providers have a clear responsibility to act when suspecting anyone may be at significant risk of harm or abuse.

Councillor Hoy asked if there is a similar policy to protect staff and ensure they are safeguarded in their roles. Paul Medd, Chief Executive, responded that Councillor Hoy is referring to potential physical or verbal abuse towards staff. There are policies covering these; internally there is the disciplinary procedure but there are also policies concerning the conduct of abusive customers.

Proposed by Councillor Wallwork, seconded by Councillor Miscandlon and AGREED to adopt the Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Harm Policy.

CAB8/23 WISBECH PAVILION LEASE AGREEMENT

Members considered the Wisbech Pavilion Lease Agreement report presented by Councillor Murphy.

Councillor Tierney said looking at this from an FDC perspective it seems an obvious solution. The original purpose was for it to be a community facility; it was never meant to be a highly commercial centre given its size and location and would be difficult to run as a profit-maker for any private company. Whilst FDC does not want the endless commitment of money, it does want to ensure it is managed effectively for the public so a partnership between the town and district councils is the ideal way forward.

Councillor Mrs French asked why, if the landlord is paying peppercorn rent of £1 a year, Fenland District Council is taking responsibility for insurance. Councillor Murphy replied that the insurance is for the building itself which is owned by the Council whilst anything within the building is looked after by Wisbech Town Council. Councillor Boden added that in the interest of the community, Fenland District Council can likely obtain cheaper insurance than the Town Council.

Proposed by Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Benney and AGREED to confirm that Wisbech Town Council and Fenland District Council should enter a 35-year lease for the management of the pavilion in Wisbech Park and instruct officers to put the necessary legal agreement in place, and to a lease at a rate of £1 p.a. be included in the above agreement, noting that this is below market rate but is typical of agreements of this type of facility.

(Councillor Hoy declared for transparency that she was involved in this at town council level brokering the deal so would not vote on this item but would answer any questions).

(Councillor Tierney declared that he had sat at a town council meeting and voted on this item from a different perspective, but he would still vote as he was not biased and could look at this from a different council's perspective).

(Councillor Wallwork declared that she had previously voted on this item at town council level but can take an unbiased view and vote on this item).

CAB9/23 WISBECH HIGH STREET UPDATE

Members considered the Wisbech High Street Update report presented by Councillor Seaton.

Councillor Seaton advised that he could now provide an update in respect of 11-12 High Street. Turley the consultants are working on a report now and should have a draft for the options needed for funding providers in time for the December cabinet.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to note the current position in relation to the 24 High Street construction project in Wisbech High Street and note information regarding the property at 11-12 High Street.

CAB10/23 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Boden presented the draft 6-month Cabinet Forward Plan for information.

CAB11/23 POTENTIAL PROPERTY ACQUISITION OPPORTUNITY (CONFIDENTIAL ITEM)

Members considered a potential property acquisition opportunity presented by Councillor Seaton.

Members asked made comments, asked questions and received responses.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Miscandlon and AGREED to approve the continuation of without prejudice negotiations in relation to a proposed property acquisition opportunity subject to the availability of DLUHC funding.

(Members resolved to exclude the public for this item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).

3.09 pm

Chairman