
Regeneration and Property Committee

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 6 July 2023 from 7.00 pm - 8.24 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Monique Bonney (Chair), Hayden Brawn, Ann Cavanagh, Shelley Cheesman, Simon Clark, James Hall, James Hunt (Substitute for Councillor Roger Clark), Mark Last, Peter Marchington, Richard Palmer (Substitute for Councillor Sarah Stephen), Mark Tucker, Mike Whiting and Ashley Wise.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Billy Attaway, Martyn Cassell, Deborah Hardy, Joanne Johnson and Kieren Mansfield.

OFFICER PRESENT (VIRTUALLY): Philippa Davies.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (VIRTUALLY): Councillors Elliott Jayes and Tony Winckless.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Roger Clark, Sarah Stephen and Chris Williams.

183 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

184 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor James Hunt Declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest with respect to Item 6 (Beach Hut Policy) as he owned a beach hut.

185 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 8 March 2023 (Minute Nos. 773 – 784) and 17 May 2023 (Minute Nos. 25 – 26) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct records.

Part B Minutes for Information

186 **Reactive and Planned Maintenance Term Contract**

The Buildings Manager introduced the report and summarised the results from the tender process for the Reactive and Planned Maintenance Term contract. The report sought the Committee's approval to award the contract to Company C which had the highest score for quality and cost.

Resolved:

(1) That the Reactive and Planned Maintenance Term Contract be awarded to Company C.

(2) That the Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property and the Interim Head of Planning, in consultation with the Chair of Regeneration and

Property Committee and the Head of Mid Kent Legal Services, be authorised to complete the required contract.

187 **Beach Hut Policy**

The Head of Environment and Leisure introduced the report which outlined the draft Beach Hut Policy 2023 for any suggested amendments before it went out to public consultation. The Policy also included future development plans in two phases and sought approval to proceed with Phase 1. He said there was a slight change to recommendation (2) in the report to read; *'That the Tender of the additional beach huts (12 at Minster Leas and 14 at Leysdown Coastal Park) be agreed and that delegation be given to the Head of Environment and Leisure and Director of Resources, in consultation with the Chair of Regeneration and Property Committee to award the contract subject to remaining within the allocated capital budget (£120,000)'.*

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- It was good to see a policy for the beach huts come forward;
- could beach huts be installed on the sea defence walls on Sheerness beachfront?;
- facilities on existing sites needed improving;
- 28 days was too long for a sale or transfer for a beach hut and could it be reduced to 5 days?;
- £30 charge was needed to be placed on the waiting list;
- pleased to see that Phase 1 was being proposed, but concerned that residents of beach huts were not consulted on the proposed future developments;
- more thought needed to go into where the beach huts for Phase 2 would be placed to ensure they were not too close to current beach huts;
- could the wording on page 18, 2.13 of the licence in terms of BBQ areas be changed to be clearer on where beach hut users could have a BBQ?;
- could officers look into short-term leases for residents so it became more affordable for people in the borough to rent beach huts?;
- the date that payment was collected needed to be clearer in the licence;
- could officers consider the option for owners of beach huts could be used to sub-let, as this would mean the beach huts all year round?; and
- thought that 5 clear working days was long enough for people to sell or transfer their beach huts.

The Head of Environment and Leisure responded to say that officers had considered the placement of beach huts along Sheerness beach front but they struggled with vandalism to other assets already in that area, so it was not yet a suitable location to place beach huts. He added that the policy discussed that a specialist BBQ area could be implemented at various sites for people to have a BBQ and that he would update the beach hut licences to reflect the condition that this would only be in a specific location if provided. Members felt this should not be included.

With regards to the 28 days for a resident to accept a sale offer, the Head of Environment and Leisure said that this was in place to allow residents enough time to consider and accept the offer if they were away and involved substantial costs for the purchaser. He recommended that if Members wanted to change the length of time someone was given to accept an offer that it should be a minimum of 14 days. He added that officers had considered the option of short-term leasing some beach huts to

residents by including a weekly charge in this year's fees and charges and that the best approach would be to trial one beach hut at a time at each location. He said that page 21 of the policy already referred to this.

The Head of Environment and Leisure said that the payment date for the year was set out in the annual letters/invoices but he would look to update the licences for the future. With feedback from other local authorities, he did not suggest the option to sub-let as there had had been problems with people not following the correct policies and has caused many authorities issues with vandalism to beach huts. He referred to an incident that occurred at Herne Bay sea front that saw several beach huts being burnt down.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Draft Beach Hut Policy subject to the amendments as minuted to go out to public consultation, be approved.**
- (2) That the Tender of the additional beach huts (12 at Minster Leas and 14 at Leysdown Coastal Park) be agreed and that delegation be given to the Head of Environment and Leisure and the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Chair of the Regeneration and Property Committee to award the contract subject to remaining within the allocated capital budget (£120,000).**

188 **Forward Plan**

The Head of Regeneration, Economy Development and Property and Interim Head of Planning informed Members that an additional report was due in September 2023 called the Disposal of Minster Community Centre, New Road, Sheerness.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Forward Decisions Plan be noted with the addition of the Disposal of Minster Community Centre, New Road, Sheerness.**

189 **Future use of Swale House**

The Building Manager introduced the report which sought agreement to lease the first and part of the ground floor of Swale House to generate an income and mitigate the Council's costs in relation to provision of services and Business Rates.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- The recommendation sought officers to report back to committee when appropriate, but felt that more regular updates to the committee was needed;
- did officers expect to lease out all the space that was available?;
- hoped that if the Council could not find business to lease the available space that officers would invite charities to the available office space;
- there was no other town centre office space available, so SBC had an opportunity to create income; and
- agreed that offering office space to charities was a good option.

The Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property and Interim Head of Planning responded to say that it was officers' intention to keep the property market

under review to establish the best option for Swale House. She added that without properly advertising the rental space at Swale House, companies had already been in touch about the possibility of renting the office space and they hoped that all available space at Swale House would be let out. She added that if there was any office space left over that an option to offer it to charities would be explored by officers.

Councillor Mike Whiting proposed the following motion:

'That this committee agreed to delegate to the Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property the authority to appoint an agent to manage the letting of surplus office space on the ground and first floors of Swale House and bring a progress report to the next meeting of this committee.'

This was seconded by Councillor Mark Tucker and the Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- Wanted to make sure that the space was filled quickly so no potential income was lost;
- needed to consider an agent to help the Council understand how much floor space was available to lease out and the cost SBC could charge for the office space;
- what was the length of leases that officers were looking at offering businesses?; and
- could a clause be included in the leases offered to businesses around the sale of Swale House?

The Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property and Interim Head of Planning, responded to say that the ideal length of leases was three to five years and that appropriate break clauses would be considered.

The Chair proposed an amendment to the motion for a progress update report to be presented to a cross-party working group of the Regeneration and Property Committee by the end of November 2023. The proposer and seconder of the motion agreed the amendment. On being put to the vote the amendment was agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That it be agreed to lease the first and part of the ground floor of Swale House to generate an income and mitigate the Council's costs in relation to provision of services and Business Rates.***
- (2) That delegated authority be given to the Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property and the Interim Head of Planning in consultation with the Chair of Regeneration and Property Committee to appoint an agent to manage the letting of surplus office space on the ground and first floors of Swale House and bring a progress report to a meeting of a cross-party working group of the Regeneration and Property Committee by the end of November 2023.***
- (3) That officers continued to review the balance of operational requirements and surplus space and bring forward related recommendations as appropriate.***

The Strategic Programme and Assets Manager introduced the report which sought delegation to secure the transfer of the land, against the draft Heads of Terms set out at Appendix 2, subject to a variation to the relevant Section 106 Agreement, further due diligence and contract.

The Chair invited Members to make comments, which included:

- The Council has spent five years trying to get to this stage and was pleased to see that something was finally being progressed on the piece of land;
- residents had been let down by too many developers and authorities; and
- it was time that SBC gave residents what they deserved.

Resolved:

(1) That delegated authority be given to the Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property and Interim Head of Planning in consultation with the Chair of the Regeneration and Property Committee to secure the transfer of the land, against the draft Heads of Terms set out at Appendix 2, subject to a variation to the relevant section 106 agreement, further due diligence and contract.

191 Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no need to pass this resolution as the meeting did not go into confidential session.

192 Future use of Swale House - Exempt Appendix I

This item was not discussed.

193 Land at Great East Hall - Exempt Appendix 2

This item was not discussed.

Chair

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All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel