

REPORT OF CABINET

(Meeting held on 4 May 2022)

1. SHAPING A VISION AND PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OF TOTTON (MINUTE NO 83)

The Cabinet considered the first step to shape the future of Totton, by endorsing the approach to the development of a vision for the town, the principle of producing a Regeneration Plan and the governance arrangements to deliver the ambitions outlined throughout the Cabinet report.

The way town centres are used has changed considerably in the past decade. With the increased popularity and dominance of online shopping, changing habits of customers, and the unprecedented impact of COVID-19, has meant that our town centres face significant challenges and need to adapt to these circumstances. Communities have different aspirations for their town centres and the role they need to play as the heart of a community.

Work now needs to progress on Shaping the Vision for Totton through a community led engagement exercise. This work will create a narrative about the evolution of Totton from the Place it now is to the Place it evolves to. This will seek to meet the aspirations of, and create opportunities for, existing and future communities. A consultant team will lead on carrying out the work, broken down into the following phases:-

- Research
- Engagement
- Translation
- Testing
- Reporting

A final report will then bring together the basis of the future regeneration plan, planned for adoption in early 2024.

There is budgetary provision as agreed in the Medium Term Financial Plan and Annual Budget 2022/2023. The initial consultancy work will be funded from this source, with a dedicated role to support the day-to-day work to move the project forward. This role will work closely with other teams across the Council and will work within a new team responsible for regeneration across the District.

The Cabinet would like to reiterate that the residents of Totton will drive the priorities and delivery of regeneration through extensive engagement.

2. ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS AND MAY 2023 ELECTIONS (MINUTE NO 84)

The Cabinet, having noted the preparation of the significant programme of work underway to deliver the changes arising from the Electoral Review, new elections legislation and the 2023 elections, is recommending to Council.

The changes arising from the Electoral Review of the New Forest District come into effect for the May 2023 elections and significant work is necessary to implement these changes and ensure the new Council can move forward from 2023 with appropriate governance arrangements.

The Elections Bill received Royal Assent in May 2022 and will introduce changes to the way in which elections are administered, most significantly the introduction of voter identification in Polling Stations. Some of these changes will require implementation ahead of elections held in May 2023.

To expediate the securing of additional resources, the Section 151 Officer, in agreement with both the Chief Executive (also the Returning Officer) and the Council's Monitoring Officer, has used his delegated authority (Section 1.3 Financial Regulations) to suspend Financial Regulations and approve this supplementary budget requirement. This being reported to Council, as required, by virtue of this report.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1. That the preparation of the significant programme of work underway to deliver the changes arising from the Electoral Review, the introduction of new election legislation and the 2023 Elections and supporting governance arrangements, be noted; and**
- 2. That the Section 151 Officer has exercised his authority to set aside financial regulations and establish a supplementary project budget, up to £177,000, to support urgent additional temporary resources necessary to deliver this extensive programme over the next two years.**

3. FINANCIAL MONITORING – 2021/22 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN (MINUTE NO 85)

The Cabinet noted the provisional outturn figures for the General Fund, Capital and Housing Revenue Account.

Financial monitoring is an important feature in the management of the Council's finances as it gives an opportunity to reflect on variations as against the latest set budget and reflect on the impact that these variations may have over the period covered by the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

The report shows the Council to be in a strong financial position as it moves forward into the post COVID era.

At the Cabinet meeting, it was confirmed that the Corporate Affairs and Local Economy O&S Panel would shortly consider a report which will include an update on the Hardship Fund. This will detail the allocation of funds in the previous financial year, provide clarity on remaining balances and how the Council might spend any remaining funds.

All councillors should continue to encourage residents that are struggling with the cost of living, including Council tax, to visit the Council's website where information and signposting to support is available, or to speak to the Council or Citizen's Advice New Forest, who can also provide support.

4. COMMERCIAL PROPERTY OPPORTUNITY (MINUTE NO 86)

The Cabinet, having considered the recommendations of the Property Investment Panel, approved the purchase of the commercial property as detailed in the Exempt Appendix to the Cabinet Report. This approval is subject to final due diligence and verification, to be authorised by the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Investment and Corporate Services.

This opportunity delivers on the ambitions of the Council's Commercial Investment Strategy, by securing benefits to local businesses and communities within the New Forest and to also generate revenues for the Council.

**COUNCILLOR E HERON
CHAIRMAN**