

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Cabinet held on 18 November 2020

Present

Councillor Wilson (Chairman)

Councillors Inkster, Bains, Rennie, Turner, Hughes and Thain-Smith

18 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

19 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

20 Disposal of former landfill site known as Brockhampton West

The Leader introduced the item and gave some background to the site which had been unused since 1994. In March 2020 the sale of the land had been approved in principle and both internal and external advice had been sought in respect of assessing the offers received in terms of achieving best value.

He drew particular attention to Appendix 7 of the report which detailed the criteria for best value and supported the recommendation contained within the report.

Ms Brooks was in attendance to deliver a deputation on behalf of Havant Friends of the Earth and the Havant Climate Alliance which had been published and circulated in advance of the meeting.

Cllr Pike was in attendance to deliver a deputation as the former Cabinet Lead. He stressed the need for Cabinet to ensure that best value was achieved and urged that the decision be deferred to allow further work to achieve this and for the matter to be considered by scrutiny.

In respect of the urgency of the decision, he explained that this project had initially been brought forward to fund the implementation of the Regeneration Strategy. He did not believe that this was currently the case but recommended that the capital receipt be earmarked for regeneration.

He believed that there was scope for further work to close the bids received in order to achieve a higher sale figure whilst also delivering the same benefits.

He understood that the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy had a strong need for revenue funding and he didn't believe that the report sufficiently explored the options for how this site could be used as a revenue stream for the Council in order to help meet the future funding gap.

In respect of environmental improvements, he believed that a solar farm could be achieved, whilst also delivering a much needed employment site for the borough.

In order to discuss the exempt appendices to the report it was RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from part of the meeting because:

- (a) it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during that item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of the descriptions specified in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972 shown against the heading in question; and
- (b) in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

Cabinet entered exempt session at 1:23pm

The public session recommenced at 2.19pm

Cabinet, having learnt that all options for the site had been explored and that the market conditions for disposal were favourable, was supportive of the disposal of the site as detailed in the officer recommendation.

Whilst it appreciated that the capital receipt could not be ringfenced for regeneration, Cabinet requested that it instead be earmarked for regeneration. To this end, Cllr Turner proposed a motion that the following additional recommendation be added:

‘Cabinet recommends that the capital receipt raised is earmarked for future regeneration in the Borough.’

This motion was duly seconded by Cllr Inkster and following a vote was declared carried.

During the debate, Cabinet highlighted the amount of work and time that had been put into the project to date and the rigorous testing by Cabinet Leads of the advice given. Cabinet noted that the decision to dispose of the site had been made by Cabinet in March 2019 and that the decision being taken related solely to the method of disposal.

Cabinet acknowledged the benefits and opportunities of the recommendation, which included not just the capital receipt, but also the site being brought back to use for employment.

Concerns were however raised that the capital receipt could only be recommended to be earmarked for regeneration rather than ringfenced and that the proposals had not been considered by the relevant scrutiny board.

Cllr Wilson proposed the recommendation as set out in the officer report, with the additional recommendation proposed by Cllr Turner and agreed by Cabinet following a vote.

This motion was duly seconded by Cllr Turner.

Following a vote it was RESOLVED that Cabinet agreed:

- 1) the disposal of the land for best value in line with the outcome of the options appraisal carried out subsequent to the 20 March 2019 Cabinet Resolution and;
- 2) where 1 is agreed, the evaluation criteria (set out in Appendix 3 of this report) as the mechanism for selecting a preferred bidder and;
- 3) where 1 and 2 are agreed, the outcome of the evaluation process and the selection of the preferred bidder (set out in Appendix 4 of this report) as overseen by the Director of Regeneration and Place in line with the 20th March 2019 Cabinet Resolution and;
- 4) where 1, 2 and 3 are agreed, the instruction of the Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, to exchange contracts and complete the sale of the land to the preferred bidder in line with the terms set out in this report. (confidential Annex 1 and Appendix 2);
- 5) where 1, 2 and 3 are agreed, are agreed, the instruction of the Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, to procure suitable environmental insurance at the appropriate time to reduce future liability relating to contamination, in line with the Council's procurement rules; and
- 6) Cabinet recommends that the capital receipt raised be earmarked for future regeneration in the Borough.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.41 pm

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Chairman