

Commercial Services Cabinet Committee

Tuesday, 2 March 2021

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Lenny Rolles (Chair)
Cllr Sarah Gow (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Gurdip Ram Bungar
Jordan Meade
Leslie Pearton
Anthony Pritchard
Tony Rana
Tony Rice
Gurbax Singh
Denise Tiran

Sarah Parfitt Director (Corporate Services)
Lisa Nyon Assistant Director (Corporate Services)
Elizabeth Thornton Services Manager (Property & Regulatory Services)
Stewart McDonald Technical Meeting Co-ordinator
Lauren Wallis Committee Services Officer (minutes)

24. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

25. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 26 January 2021 were signed by the Chair.

26. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Lenny Rolles, Cllr Sarah Gow, Cllr Tony Rice and Lisa Nyon – Assistant Director (Corporate Services) all declared an other interest in Item 5 – Covid-19 Portfolio Update in that the report mentioned Rosherville Limited and all the above named Councillors and officer were Directors of the Board and Cllr Lenny Rolles was also Chair of the Board.

27. COVID-19 Portfolio Update

The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) presented the report which was for information only. The report provided an update on how the Council had responded to the Covid-19 pandemic and how the Council had managed to maintain delivery across its services. Section 2 and 3 of the report set out the services within the Commercial Services portfolio. Members were informed that Appendix 2 was not included on the report but had previously been presented to Members at a meeting held on 26 February 2021. In conclusion, it was noted that the effects pandemic would be around for some time to come and the Council would continue to be responsive to the community and its needs.

The following points were raised during discussion on this subject:

- Following a question on communications in relation to the Economic Stimulus package, the Director (Corporate Services) advised that a Communication Plan on each element of the package was being designed and shaped by the Economic Development and Communications teams.
- It was recognised that high street retail had been deeply affected by the pandemic and was also under pressure from digital retailers which had been accelerated by the effects of the pandemic. The Service Manager (Property Services & Regulatory Services) noted the national effect of the pandemic and online retailers and advised that the Council's regeneration proposals would bring people to live in the town centre. It was recognised that the town centre would have to diversify and officers were working with agents.
- It was difficult to predict the number of vacant retail premises whilst lockdown restrictions remained in place. Once shops etc were able to re-open officers would be able to accurately calculate the number of vacant premises in the town centre.
- It was noted that the Economic Stimulus package would add value and would have a positive impact on the town centre. In addition, the Chair noted that this information was part of a more substantive report that had been considered at the last meeting of Full Council. In addition, he thanked officers for all their hard work on the Commercial Services portfolio in supporting residents and businesses.
- Following a comment on how well the Council's Property Portfolio had held up over the last 12 months, Members were advised that a lead list was not maintained for potential acquisitions and every opportunity that became available was investigated and considered. In addition, agents were regularly consulted to find the correct opportunities for the Council.

Resolved that the report be noted.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 7.46 pm