

## **Cabinet**

**Monday, 30 September 2024**

**7.30pm**

### **Present:**

Cllr John Burden (Chair)  
Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:            Deborah Croxton  
                                 Emma Morley  
                                 Karina O'Malley

Stuart Bobby	Chief Executive
Jamie Izzard	Director (Communities and Inclusive Growth) & Deputy Chief Executive
Sarah Parfitt	Director (Corporate Services)
Daniel Killian	Director (Housing)
Tom Reynolds	Director (Environment)
Andy Rayfield	Communications Manager
Chloe Taylor	Committee Services Officer (Minutes)

### **40. Apologies for absence**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Narinderjit Singh Thandi.

### **41. To sign the minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Tuesday, 09 September 2024 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

### **42. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

### **43. Delegated Decisions - Cabinet Members**

No decisions other than those already circulated had been made.

### **44. Arts Council England Place Partnership Funding Bid**

The Director (Communities and Inclusive Growth) & Deputy Chief Executive presented Cabinet with a report that outlined the details of the Arts Council England's Place Partnership funding opportunity and to seek the approval to submit a full application based on the proposals set out in the report.

The Director (Communities and Inclusive Growth) & Deputy Chief Executive advised the council had been invited by Arts Council England to submit a bid for a place partnership. This was a single pot of funding that would be allocated to a borough or a sensible geographical area - neighbouring areas, such as Medway have previously received the funding.

It was proposed that the bid be for a sum of £382,500, and whilst the bid did range up to £1m, further discussions with Arts Council England led to it feeling as though this figure was the right level for GBC. This would support a large programme of community events, such as The Fringe Festival and the Lights Festival. Currently, such events were funded by Arts Council England on an ad-hoc basis using a pot that all organisations were bidding for. This pot had diminished in recent years and the demand for the fund had increased, with the last two bids submitted by GBC having been unsuccessful.

The Place Partnership would allow the council to have a flexible pot over a three-year period that could support a range of uses and would allow the council to raise its profile as an arts and culture destination and to support the arts and culture strategy in its delivery of a vibrant and aspirational arts and cultural events programme. The council would be providing some match funding towards the programme which would come from the existing arts and culture budget already committed to such activities. As per the terms of the funding, the council would need to establish a consortium of partners that would lead the project in the form of an advisory group chaired by the portfolio holder – with all funding would be subject to GBC approval.

The portfolio holder for Community and Leisure noted that this funding would allow for additional events to be developed and will raise the council's profile. The place partnership approach would directly support the objectives within the corporate plan.

This project would be led by the council – at this stage, it had not been agreed who the members of the advisory group would be. There were various models that could be considered, and they would be explored with the Head of Arts and Culture to understand who the appropriate bodies would be to sit on that group. This would be developed alongside the process of submitting the bid. The Director (Communities and Inclusive Growth) & Deputy Chief Executive was of the view that it should represent bodies funding or delivering activities across the borough.

**Resolved** that Cabinet:

1. Give approval to submit a funding bid application for £382,500 to Arts Council England to develop a Place Partnership project as set out in this report and subject to:
  - a) The portfolio cabinet member taking the position of Chair of the Cultural Compact
  - b) Gravesham Borough Council branding to continue to be used
  - c) The arts and cultural team continuing to deliver as they currently do
2. Approved match funding of £67,500 over the 4 years of the project (£16,875 per annum) from existing budgets.

**45. St Andrew's Gardens Improvement works**

The Director (Communities and Inclusive Growth) & Deputy Chief Executive presented Cabinet with an update on the proposed hard and soft improvement works to St Andrew's Gardens, and to seek delegated authority for the Director (Communities and Inclusive Growth) & Deputy Chief Executive to procure an appropriate contractor.

The proposal was looking to spend £260,540 that the council received through section 106 funding from the charter development to relandscape the upper part of St Andrew's Gardens. Some of the key elements the council want to achieve through this project include creating a comfortable open space for the community, and to design out the current concerns around anti-social behaviour within that area. The tender for this project was due to go live within the week. The Director (Communities and Inclusive Growth) & Deputy Chief Executive flagged that they were unsure as to whether the section 106 funding was sufficient funding for the procurement process. However, they would be putting the figure into the public domain meaning those who bid would need to meet that funding level.

The council had been speaking with Lower Thames Crossing about potential funding for the town centre that may also support some of the works that were planned at St Andrew's Gardens. The funding would need to be spent in year, and as such, meant that they would need to move quickly – however, the funding had not yet been confirmed.

It was agreed that an additional recommendation be added that states if additional funding did become available, then the previously discussed and approved phases of the St Andrew's Gardens project would be implemented.

**Resolved** that, subject to the above:

- (1) Approved expenditure of £260,540 section 106 funding for the works as set out within the report.
- (2) Approved Delegated Authority to the Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Communities and Inclusive Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Operational Services, to contract an appropriate company to deliver to scheme.
- (3) Approved Delegated Authority to the Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Communities and Inclusive Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Operational Services, to deliver further works to St Andrew's Gardens, should further funding be made available by third parties.

#### **46. St George's Centre**

The Director (Communities & Inclusive Growth) & Deputy Chief Executive presented Cabinet with an update on the work to increase revenue, reduce landlord liabilities and to introduce a range of new uses and activation activity at the St George's Centre.

The St George's Shopping Centre was a key asset, owned by the council, that had its challenges, particularly throughout the covid period. Over the recent period, the council has focused on two areas: revitalising the town centre and to increase revenue. In terms of revitalisation, there was a new centre manager in place, who had brought forward creative ideas to animate the space. Over 1000 children had visited the pop-up beach over the summer and the artist pop-up space as well as the skate space had been well received.

Some of the more permanent repurposing of four units within the centre include a co-working space to create a community/business hub. This would be open to small businesses and community groups. Initial conversations with the potential operator for the site had been positive and they were hoping to be on site within the next month to understand how the space will be used.

In terms of revenue, the centre was almost at full capacity and the council were looking to reduce landlord responsibilities meaning that the liabilities will reduce on long-term empty units where the council currently play business rates and services charges.

The council were also looking at underutilised space as it was felt there was underused spaces particularly the user deck. There were ideas that were being looked at if the levelling up funding money was forthcoming.

Cabinet discussed the pathway from St George's, down to the pier and through to St Andrews, and noted the need for a clearer access route, and considered options for promoting the route.

A discussion took place regarding the wider town centre activities. The Communications Manager had been working hard to spread the message on Town Centre Grants that had recently been launched. The Town Pier was open again with the council working with Thames Clipper to offer the café and the arts and culture offer on a pop-up basis (Thursdays – Sundays).

The committee noted the report.

#### **47. Minutes of meeting of Gravesham Joint Transportation Board**

The minutes of the Gravesham Joint Transportation Board held on Wednesday 28 August 2024 were agreed.

#### **Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 8.11pm