

Cabinet

Monday, 8 October 2018

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr David Turner (Chair)
Cllr John Knight (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Julia Burgoyne
 Harold Craske
 Sandra Garside
 Derek Shelbrooke

Note: Councillors: John Burden, Lee Croxton, Leslie Hills, Shane Mochrie-Cox and Narinder Singh Thandi were also in attendance.

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| David Hughes | Chief Executive |
| Stuart Bobby | Director (Corporate Services) |
| Nick Brown | Director (Environment & Operations) |
| Kevin Burbidge | Director (Housing & Regeneration) |
| Melanie Norris | Director (Communities) |
| Daniel Killian | Assistant Director (Operations) |
| Lauren Wallis | Committee Services Officer (Minutes) |

125. To sign the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2018 were signed by the Chair.

126. To declare any interest members may have in the items contained on this agenda. When declaring an interest a member must state what their interest is.

No declarations of interest were made.

127. Delegated Decisions - Cabinet Members

No decisions other than those already circulated had been made.

128. Purchase of the long leasehold interest in Wickes, Stuart Road, Gravesend

Further to a meeting of the Property Acquisitions Cross Party Working Group on 17 May 2018, the Working Group considered all the documents in relation to the purchase of the Wickes unit including the surveyor's report, the financial analysis and the independent valuation report and the Group gave its approval for the purchase to proceed on the terms agreed. The Director (Corporate Services) advised that the purchase had been concluded in July 2018. The interest which had been purchased was the long leasehold interest of 999 years from 24 June 1988 which included an option to purchase the freehold for £1 from March 2020.

Following a question from the Chair, the Director (Corporate Services) set out possible risks which included that the property was let to a 'good' tenant and as such was relatively secure. It was noted that the Council's own investment balances had a yield on 0.5% and the yield from the Wickes investment was 6% and the Council had sought to diversify its investment portfolio as much as possible to mitigate such risks.

The previous use of the site as a waste tip was raised and Members were advised that this accounted for 5% of the site and had been located towards the south west end. The Council's Environmental Services had not had an issue with the site.

The Cabinet noted the report which was for information only.

129. Additional Resources - DSO Management

The Director (Environment & Operations) advised that Members had been keen to reduce the Council's reliance on external contractors within the DSO Building Management Team and a Topic Review in 2016 had supported this approach and had recommended an increase in the establishment to accommodate more work in-house. However, there were a number of significant changes that needed to be completed before recruiting additional staff such as a fundamental review of how the craft workers were paid, the introduction of a dedicated IT system to manage the workload more efficiently, new and updated policies to be clear about what work the Council would and would not undertake as a landlord and a process to recharge tenants where wilful neglect or damage of the property could be evidenced. This work had now been completed which meant that the DSO Building Management Team were providing a high quality service whilst being more competitive than its current contractors. Whilst external contractors would always be required to assist the service in specialist works and any fluctuations in workloads, approval was being sought to recruit an additional 25 craft workers over two phases. Given the significance of the increase, a Cross Party Member briefing session had been held at the end of September and support for the approach outlined within the report had been unanimous. The Assistant Director (Operations) added that an increase in establishment would enable the Council to undertake more work in-house, not just on day to day responsive repairs but on the capital and planned work programme too. Kitchen and bathroom replacements could be completed significantly cheaper than a contractor whilst providing a better quality service. Recruitment to the additional posts was not perceived to be a problem as similar existing positions had been advertised and recruited to recently and the response had been good as the Borough Council was considered to be a good employer with competitive salaries. Officers were also working with HR with a view to taking on more apprentices.

Resolved that:

- (a) the phased recruitment of 25 additional craft workers for DSO Building Management be commenced over two phases with Phase 1 of the recruitment process to start immediately; and
- (b) authority be delegated to the Director (Environment & Operations) to recruit the additional craft workers detailed in Phase 2 of the proposal in consultation with the Lead Member for Environment and the Section 151 Officer, following the review of Phase 1 after six months of being fully operational.

130. Minutes of the meeting of the Gravesham Joint Transportation Board held on Wednesday, 12 September 2018

The Cabinet considered and noted the minutes of the Gravesham Joint Transportation Board meeting held on 12 September 2018.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm