



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Thursday, 23 November 2023

19:00 - 22:19

Council Chamber

Minutes

Membership

Councillor Catherine Braun (Chair)

* Councillor Beki Aldam
Councillor Gordon Craig
Councillor Stephen Davies
Councillor Nick Hurst
Councillor Steve Hynd
Councillor Lindsey Green
*Absent

Councillor Natalie Bennett (Vice-Chair)

* Councillor Robin Layfield
Councillor Keith Pearson
Councillor Steve Robinson
Councillor Mattie Ross
Councillor Ken Tucker
Councillor Chloe Turner

Officers in Attendance

Chief Executive
Strategic Director of Resources
Corporate Director (Monitoring Officer)
Democratic Services & Elections Manager
Senior Economic Development Specialist

Interim Director of Transformation & Change
Property Manager
Senior Policy and Governance Officer
Head of Community Services

SRC.029 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Aldam and Layfield.

SRC.030 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

SRC.031 Minutes

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the meetings held on 5 October were approved as a correct record.

SRC.032 Public Questions

Public questions were submitted by Mr Steve Willetts. They were answered by the Chair, Councillor Braun. Refer to the [recording of the meeting](#) and [Agenda Item 4](#).

Supplementary Questions were asked and answered, details can be found [published here](#).

SRC.033 **Member Questions**

There were none.

SRC.034 **Kingshill House Dursley**

The Property Manager introduced the report and confirmed that a previous report had been considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee in April 2023 where it was noted that a Community Asset Transfer was no longer feasible. She advised that delegated authority had been agreed for the Head of Property Services to enter into negotiations with a view to agree heads of terms for a new lease.

The Property Manager reported that the short-term support provided to Kingshill House had enabled it to continue to operate, run a varied programme of events and were now expected to have a surplus cash flow by the end of the year. Kingshill House had acknowledged the help and support from the Council.

It was confirmed that terms for a new 5 year lease had been offered, however the Trust was seeking a 10 year lease so that it could secure alternative funding and develop strategic collaboration with other local bodies. The Council had taken legal advice in relation to S.123 Local Government Act 1972 and were prepared to grant a 7-year lease, further information had been set out in the legal implications. Furthermore, the Trust had stated it would not be able to take on full responsibility for all repairs but instead offered to complete routine repairs and maintenance. The recommendation was for Council to take responsibility for the roof structure and allocate additional budget for ongoing maintenance at £50k per annum. The trust would continue to be responsible for all internal repairs and decoration.

Councillor Hurst asked whether the 7 year lease would have any impact on long-term investments that they may have wished to make. The Property Manager advised that the Trust originally requested a longer lease to improve their chances of finding funding for building improvements however this was not necessary if the Council agreed to the additional maintenance responsibilities.

In response to questions from Councillor Robinson, the Property Manager confirmed that the cottage had been refurbished and the income from the lettings goes back into the running of Kingshill House. The Property Manager also advised that the money for repairs and maintenance would allow the Council to make the necessary repairs.

Councillor Davies asked whether the Council had been aware that the Trust had not previously carried out their duties under the full repairing lease and asked for assurance that they would be keeping up with the interior decoration going forward. The Property Manager advised that the Trust had completed a lot of work over the years however due to its Grade II* status there were large costs to ensure its continued maintenance. She confirmed the interior of the building was in excellent condition and they would ensure this was closely monitored going forward.

In response to a question from Councillor Green the Property Manager provided further information regarding the clause which would allow either party to walk away should there be an item of significant expenditure. She confirmed that if there were unexpected catastrophic costs then the clause would allow either party to walk away from the lease and consider alternative options including whether to keep or dispose of the building.

Councillor Pearson asked how much would be put aside for annual repairs and maintenance. The Property Manager confirmed that the annual sum would be £50k.

The Monitoring Officer provided guidance regarding the Landlords and Tenants Act following questions from Councillors Pearson and Green. She confirmed that if a tenant agreed in advance for the lease to be excluded from the Security of Tenure provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 Part II then at the end of the lease they would not be entitled to automatic renewal.

Councillor Pearson queried where the annual £50k budget for repairs and maintenance would be sourced. The Strategic Director of Resources advised that the Council had an existing repairs and maintenance budget which they would be looking to increase. He highlighted the Council's role as a freeholder of the building made them liable for repair costs in the absence of a new lease.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Bennett.

Councillor Bennett was pleased to see the progress that had been made and encouraged Members to support the Trust.

Councillor Pearson debated whether it made financial sense and advised that he would abstain.

Councillor Ross highlighted the difficulties of ensuring the upkeep of a Grade II* listed building. She advised that it was a great community venue and was therefore fully in support.

In response to a request for clarification over the financial information the Property Manager confirmed that if approved, they would need to make a budget provision for ongoing maintenance. They estimated that £50k per annum would be sufficient however it could be higher in some years and lower in others. This would be in addition to the £100k.

Councillors Davies, Robinson and Hurst raised concerns however agreed that on balance they would support the recommendations.

Councillor Turner acknowledged the large costs associated with maintaining heritage buildings and advised that it was the Council's responsibility, she confirmed that she was in support of the recommendation and hoped that it would be a core pillar of the arts strategy.

Councillor Craig advised that he believed that the best way forward was to grant the lease but advised the Council to look seriously at what could be done with the building to minimise the ongoing costs.

Councillor Braun informed Members that she had taken part in meetings with the trustees and had spoken with the Chair of trustees about the huge amount of work they had been doing during the past year in order to develop a really effective programme, look very closely at their budget and think ahead strategically. She highlighted the importance of the services provided by Kingshill House to people in Cam, Dursley and surrounding areas across the south of the district. She advised that she was pleased to support the recommendations and encouraged all members to vote in favour.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried with 11 votes in favour and 1 abstention.

RESOLVED To approve the grant of a new lease of Kingshill House to Kingshill House Ltd on the terms set out at Appendix A of this report.

SRC.035 Procurement Strategy - 2023 - 2028 and Annual Social Value Update

The Senior Policy and Governance Officer introduced the report which set out the actions taken to produce the updated Procurement Strategy. She explained they had carried out self-assessments against the National Procurement Strategy and the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion in terms of how they included equality in the procurement processes. The assessments, along with the themes that were identified in the National Procurement Strategy, had been used to help develop the new strategy. The 4 procurement aims were identified as:

1. Value for money.
2. Supporting the local economy.
3. Developing capacity and skills in relation to procurement, contract management and necessary processes.
4. Supplier relationship management and how the Council manages risk and fraud in procurement and contract management activities.

The Senior Policy and Governance Officer drew Members attention to the action plan included in Appendix 1 which included a suite of performance indicators and measures. She provided a brief update on the Social Value Policy and confirmed that there had been 7 contracts that had included social value as part of the evaluation process. The Council would only be able to start calculating the amount of social value provided once a contract had ended.

Councillor Turner asked how Members would be updated with the validated social value figures. The Senior Policy and Governance Officer confirmed that this information would be brought back to Committee once it was available. In response to a further question from Councillor Turner the Senior Policy and Governance Officer advised that the Social Value Policy was due for renewal next year and they would then reconsider the level of social value that they wanted to incorporate into contracts and could look at increasing this.

In response to Councillor Davies the Senior Policy and Governance Officer advised that they had a programme of training planned for Officers in 2024 which would begin with risk management, there would also be a further 2 rounds of procurement training starting with the new procurement strategy and a further session planned for the new Procurement bill that was expected to come into force in October 2024. She also confirmed that training would be provided to Members as part of their induction after the elections in May 2024.

In response to Councillor Robinson the Senior Policy and Governance Officer advised that the Council had a duty to act in an equal and non-discriminatory manner to all potential suppliers and therefore could not exclude any suppliers from taking part in the procurement process. Officers could however use Social Value to look at how they evaluate contracts to try and keep spending local where possible.

Councillor Green suggested that market analysis should have been included to see what was planned to be spent against various categories and how that compared with the past. She queried whether the strategy went far enough to achieve its aims. The Senior Policy and Governance Officer advised that they would be producing a forward plan for procurement where they would work with budget holders to look at spending in the coming year and review contracts. She confirmed that they would be looking at market dynamics and would be trying to identify key suppliers.

In response to a question from Councillor Green regarding the meet the buyer sessions, the Senior Policy and Governance Officer advised that there was more work that they needed to do with suppliers to ensure they understood the purpose of including social value.

The Strategic Director of Resources confirmed in response to Councillor Green that with regard to value for money they looked at equality, efficiency and effectiveness to ensure that they were spending on the right things to deliver the right services.

The Senior Policy and Governance Officer responded to a question from Councillor Hynd and confirmed that the Council was not obligated to evaluate social value for contracts below £75k.

Councillor Hurst asked whether there was any evidence that applying national procurement criteria was costing the Council more money for its contracts. The Senior Policy and Governance Officer advised that there was no evidence to support that however they would be requesting feedback from suppliers.

Proposed by Councillor Turner and seconded by Councillor Hynd.

Councillor Pearson confirmed that he was in support of the recommendations and hoped that the Officers could ensure the new strategy was followed.

Councillor Davies shared concerns regarding previous procurement activities and the declining local spend. He asked Officers to remain vigilant.

Councillor Hynd stated that this was one of the core policies which would resonate strongly with residents as it was about how the council spent tax payers money. He advised that residents would expect the council to support the local economy and local businesses.

Councillor Turner highlighted the success of social value which in the first year had managed to drive over £3million in local economic benefit and £120k of social value.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED To

- a) **Approve the Procurement Strategy 2023 - 2028; and**
- b) **Note the annual Social Value Update.**

SRC.036 Economic Development Priority Updates & Market Towns Vitality Funding

The Senior Economic Development Specialist provided a brief update on the economic development priorities within the Council Plan and highlighted information regarding the proposal to support the development of a Market Towns Vitality Fund. She drew Members attention to the proposal which aimed to look at how the Council was able to support market towns to become thriving once again, for residents, businesses and visitors. The proposal had come about as a result of a priority in the Council Plan and Economic Development Strategy.

The Senior Economic Development Specialist, in response to Councillor Braun, confirmed that the Tourism Officer was looking at how they managed filming requests which they

hoped to align with other local authorities in the South West. The Strategic Leadership Team would review any changes.

Councillor Turner asked whether they were doing enough to support businesses in their desire to access renewable energy. The Senior Economic Development Specialist advised that she would respond to Councillor Turner outside of the meeting.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Hynd.

Councillor Pearson confirmed that he fully supported the recommendations and any propositions that would help businesses get back into towns.

Councillor Green also offered her full support and advised that she looked forward to seeing the proposals for the Market Town Vitality fund.

Councillors Robinson, Craig and Braun echoed comments made and offered their full support.

Councillor Hynd advised that they all shared the same vision but that it would take some investment. He stated that the next decade would be one of transition and Council needed to have a strong vision in mind.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED To

- 1. Note the progress being made on the economic development priorities established in the Council Plan.**
- 2. To support the development of proposals for a Market Town Vitality Fund, to be presented to this committee in February 2024.**

The Chair, Councillor Braun adjourned the meeting for a short break.

SRC.037 Financial resilience and Community Funding (Crowdfunding)

The Interim Director of Transformation and Change provided an overview of crowdfunding including a demonstration of how it worked in practice on the Cotswold District Council (CDC) website. It would help to empower communities to take action and reduce the reliance on government funding. If the recommendations were agreed, the Council would partner with a vendor who would provide an online platform to curate opportunities and provide support for the sponsors of the initiatives. As projects were set up there would be a facility that automatically identified if they matched to businesses that were potentially interested in co-funding. The vendor would assist with all aspects of publicity and the platform would curate the pledges and opportunities.

The Interim Director of Transformation and Change outlined the next steps, they would agree a contract with the third party they had selected and they would then draft the operating model which would include how members would be involved, the activation strategy and how to configure the platform. He confirmed that further information would be brought back to Committee in March to set out the operating model.

The following answers were given in response to questions from Councillors:

- There were two options if bidders did not meet their target within the agreed time frame, the council could agree an extension to the time frame or monies could be refunded to those who had pledged.
- There were no concerns raised by CDC regarding value for money and had raised upwards of £800k over 3 years.
- The contract hadn't been finalised and therefore the detail around options to terminate was not yet available.
- The total investment by the Council, including how it would work would be considered as part of the operating model and would be up to the council to decide.
- The platform and service would be purchased from a vendor who was a subject matter expert with a team of people that could verify projects against key criteria. This included ensuring they had a plan in place to deliver the project should they receive funding.
- How the matchfunding was used would be part of the operating model, they would look to design a fair process for when the council would contribute and include information about the criteria that would be applied.
- The difference between a paid for crowdfunding platform and other initiatives such as Just Giving and the Lucky Severn Lottery was that the vendor had a team of experts who engage with the people who were wanting to run the projects. They would provide advice to those people on how to effectively publicise these projects.
- They were not expecting a requirement for any additional resources for the role.
- The Strategic Director of Resources confirmed that they would provide further reports regarding the Lucky Severn Lottery and would add to the KPIs for this committee to ensure it was recorded in Ideagen. Since it had been running, which has been a couple of years, it has generated £103k for good causes. It had also paid out £26.6k in cash prizes. The council received a residual pot of around £25k and they were proposing to use a large proportion of that for the match funding.
- The Head of Community Services advised that the Council offered community grants however for the last couple of years they had been hugely oversubscribed in terms of the number of applications. The crowdfunding platform would help to widen the arena and allow communities to get involved in worthwhile projects. The platform would help the Council to fund more projects with a smaller amount of match funding.
- The company they looked to partner with had approximately 50 other local authority partners.
- The purchase would include a branded microsite, an activation packaged which helped to build community participation, fully integrated grant funding with built in digital grant agreements, automatic project matching to funds, verification checks and Gift Aid integration.
- At any project initiation 5% of the funding requested would be added to the value of the target, so they would need to fund 105% in order to cover costs.
- The procurement for Spacehive would be carried out using the G-Cloud platform. The 2 suppliers on the platform were evaluated however Spacehive was the preferred supplier based on a number of points including its clear pricing model.
- Spacehive claimed an 85% success rate which was significantly higher than industry standard which was one of the reasons that the Council wanted to purchase a platform and not try and carry out a similar initiative without support.
- £35k per annum would go towards the licence fee and £100k would be used for match-funding. The decisions about how to spend the match-funding would be made by the Council as part of the next steps.
- The Policy which would be considered by Committee in March would include information about what projects could be funded and whether this included staffing costs e.g. a fixed term contract.

- They would be looking to bring a further report to the March Committee which would include how the council measured the success.
- The Strategic Director of Resources advised that the £100k didn't have to cover 1 year of funding. This was a decision that would be considered as part of the next steps and they also needed to look at how they allocated some of the Lucky Severn Lottery funding.

The Interim Director of Transformation and Change agreed to provide further information outside of the meeting on the following topics:

- Availability of a mechanism to ensure investments were spread fairly across the District.
- Whether Spacehive would be able to provide preliminary advice to organisations wishing to apply.

Proposed by Councillor Hynd and seconded by Councillor Turner.

Councillor Turner commended the results seen at CDC however raised concerns regarding the support required for communities to bring projects forward.

Councillor Davies expressed a wish to support the project however debated its value for money and raised concerns regarding the allocation of the £100k budget.

Councillor Davies proposed an amendment for an additional recommendation in the decision box as follows: **c) A detailed proposal will be brought back to committee in March 2024.**

Councillor Craig echoed Councillor Davies concerns but confirmed if detailed analysis surrounding the purchase was due to be completed then he would be happy to support.

Councillor Braun suggested a minor change to the amendment wording as follows: **c) That a detailed proposal on the operation of the scheme will be brought back to Committee in March 2024**

The amendment was agreed by the proposer and seconder.

Councillor Hurst debated that the proposal needed more scrutiny and he was therefore likely to abstain.

Councillor Hynd stated that Stroud District Council would not be a pioneer council as crowdfunding was already being used in councils across the country and was shown to be successful. He took confidence from the success rates that were quoted which represented real value for money and the 85% success rate quoted, contrasted with the openly available crowd funder site rates which normally averaged around 20-25%.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried with 8 votes in favour and 1 abstention.

- RESOLVED**
- To agree the purchase and implementation of a Community Funding solution provided by Spacehive**
 - To allocate a sum of £100k p.a. from Council reserves for a council match funding pot; and**
 - That a detailed proposal on the operation of the scheme will be brought back to Committee in March 2024**

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL d) **To agree to include the contract sum of £35k in the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2024/25.**

The Chair asked members if they wished to continue the meeting given that the time was approaching 10pm and in accordance with the Councils' Constitution section 3 paragraph 6, members would need to vote in order to continue the meeting.

After being put to a vote, the Motion was carried.

RESOLVED To continue the meeting beyond 10pm.

SRC.038 **Improving Customer Service through a better customer interface**

The Strategic Director of Transformation and Change highlighted the key sections of the report which included the work in relation to the website and an update on work as a result of the Fit for the Future programme. Works to upgrade the software which supported the websites was already in progress and fully funded in line with the IT strategy to help reduce the risk of a cyber attack. The Strategic Director of Transformation and Change advised that the £50k funding requested would be used to help improve the customer experience associated with the 4 websites. This included ensuring they were compliant with latest accessibility guidelines. The £50k funding requested would be spent on expert assistance. They were also looking for £1k for the hosting charge associated with the Gloucestershire Building Control Partnership website and the Local Strategic Partnership website.

The Strategic Director of Transformation and Change provided an update on the customer contact centre and confirmed that a case management system would be used to process queries from start to completion.

Councillor Green asked whether the servers would no longer be needed if they were moving to cloud based systems. The Strategic Director of Transformation and Change confirmed that they would be able to reduce the number of servers needed but that this would not result in a material cost reduction.

In response to a question from Councillor Craig, the Chief Executive advised that the Contact Centre was about answering as many calls as possible at the first point of contact. She confirmed that calls would be triaged first and that more complex enquiries would need to be answered by specialists.

The Strategic Director of Transformation and Change clarified that they were looking to upgrade the platform of the website and the interface in which members of the public would use the and were not looking to purchase a Content Management System.

Proposed by Councillor Hynd and seconded by Councillor Bennett.

Councillor Davies was pleased to see a move towards the Cloud.

Councillor Braun believed that it would help to build IT resilience and ensure that the Council had an effective website.

Councillor Hynd emphasised that it was an essential infrastructure spend.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED To

- a) **Approve the continued development of the website strategy (as specified in section 2.4); and**
- b) **Agree an allocation of £51k from the Repairs and Replacements Reserve for the upcoming development of the website**
- c) **Note the ongoing Fit for the Future work associated with improving the customer experience.**

SRC.039 Extension of Berkeley Car Park

The Strategic Director of Resources provided an introduction outlining the proposed Berkeley Car Park project, maps and photos were included in the Appendix. The garage site was with the HRA therefore they would first need to move it to the general fund and compensate the HRA with the full market value. If committee agreed to the recommendations, Council would need to consider the capital sums before applying for planning permission and undertaking appropriate consultation with the public.

Councillor Davies asked for further clarification regarding the valuation. The Strategic Director of Resources confirmed that the garages were valued at £112k which was the full market value.

Proposed by Councillor Natalie Bennett and seconded by Councillor Green.

Councillor Green stated that it would make a huge difference to Berkeley and the surrounding areas.

Councillor Braun advised that she had been in touch with the Chair of Berkeley Town Council who was very keen to see the project progress.

Councillor Craig thanked the Officers and hoped that it would help to improve the problems with parking in the area.

Councillor Bennett echoed comments from Councillor Craig and advised that she had had discussions with Officers to ensure that there would be enough disabled parking provided in the car park.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

**RECOMMENDED To
TO COUNCIL**

1. **Appropriate the SDC Garage Site from the Housing Revenue Account into the General Fund**
2. **Add to the Capital Budget the required sums for completion of the project to extend the public car park - subject to the grant of planning permission**
3. **Delegate Authority to the Strategic Director of Communities to make the appropriate parking orders as required.**

SRC.040 **Member / Officer Reports (To Note)**

a) Performance Management

There were no questions.

b) Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee (GEGSC)

There were no questions.

c) Regeneration and Investment Board

There were no questions.

d) Canal Update

There were no questions.

SRC.041 **Work Programme**

Councillor Davies asked whether there could be an item included on the Local Plan for the next meeting in February. Councillor Braun advised that this would be considered outside of the Committee to ensure that any updates were provided to the most appropriate committee.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the path of expenditure on the Local Plan was within the hands of the inspectors, she hoped that they would have a clearer picture in time for the next committee. She confirmed that if there was going to be any significant expenditure incurred they would need to come back to the Committee.

RESOLVED To note the Work Programme.

The meeting closed at 10:19pm

Chair