

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Ray Morgan, declares a disclosable personal interest (pecuniary) in Item E – Management Arrangements arising from it relating to his employment with the Council. The interest is such that Mr Morgan will leave the meeting whilst this item is determined.

Executive Summary

The Council is invited to consider the recommendations from the meeting of the Executive held on 19 November 2020. The recommendations of the meetings are outlined below.

EXECUTIVE – 19 NOVEMBER 2020

A. REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2021-22 EXE20-027.

The Executive received a report detailing the proposed discretionary fees and charges for 2021-22. Councillor Ashall, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Financial Planning and Policy, explained the proposed increases to leisure charges, community meals and Careline. It was noted that community meals charges had been frozen since 2017. Attention was drawn to Table 5.1 on page 16 of the agenda pack which summarised the proposed changes in fees and charges.

Discussion ensued on Government support received in relation to the leisure contract. The Executive was advised that Freedom Leisure had access to the Government's furlough scheme and had received rate relief where appropriate. In addition, the Council had received support from the Government in terms of loss of management fee income. Officers advised that it was unclear at the present time whether further support would be made available by the Government.

Following a question regarding community meals charges, the Executive was informed that no increase in cancellations had been noted due to affordability issues. Regarding Centres for the Community, it was noted that activity was taking place to ensure centres were being more widely used, such as hosting health visitor clinics and youth services.

Officers confirmed that existing registered disabled blue badge holders would be transferred onto the new parking system at no cost. It was noted that the £15 administration charge for renewals or new applications would apply for the full three year term of the disabled persons blue badge.

It was explained that the licensing and taxi service was currently running at a loss as the Council had chosen not to increase licence fees for several years. A modest increase in fees was therefore proposed.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That the discretionary fees and charges, as set out in Appendices 1 – 4 of the report, be approved.

Recommendations of the Executive

Reason: The regular review of discretionary charges ensures that the Council maintains its income base and generates additional resources for the provision of services.

B. NEXT STEPS ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME EXE20-125.

The Executive received a report which sought approval to recommend to Council the acquisition of 121 Chertsey Road for use as move-on accommodation for rough sleepers who had been accommodated during the Covid-19 pandemic and prevent their return to the streets. Councillor Harlow, Portfolio Holder for Housing, explained that the proposal would be funded by Government capital grant funding with the remaining balance raised through Council borrowing.

Discussion ensued regarding rent levels for the 25 studio apartments. The Portfolio Holder explained that as the intention was for clients to move-on to permanent accommodation, and the apartments were of a high specification, it was felt that the rent levels should not be set too low. It was noted that the Government had also provided revenue funding for a Tenancy Sustainment Officer and three Night Support Workers. Members also discussed the benefit cap and financing arrangements between the Council and Thamesway.

The Executive welcomed the proposed purchase of 121 Chertsey Road which would add to the Council's existing portfolio of temporary accommodation premises.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That (i) subject to the Government grant funding being secured, the acquisition of 121 Chertsey Road for use as move-on accommodation be approved at a total cost of up to £6.7 million; and

(ii) the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, be authorised to take all necessary actions to secure the grant funding and deliver the scheme.

Reason: To enable the Council to provide suitable move-on accommodation for rough sleepers who have been accommodated during the Covid-19 pandemic and prevent their return to the streets.

C. DRAFT INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2020-21 TO 2024-25 EXE20-031.

The Executive received a report which set out the draft Investment Programme 2020-21 to 2024-25. Councillor Ashall, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Financial Planning and Policy, drew attention to the considerable impact of the Covid pandemic on local government finances and advised that the Council faced a high level of uncertainty going forward. The Executive heard that it was unclear whether the Council would receive additional compensation from Government or whether Government support would continue into 2021/22. Councillor Ashall advised that a number of projects had been temporarily removed from the funded Investment Programme to protect the Council's reserves due to the impact of the pandemic.

Members discussed the proposal for the Finance Director to request a reduction in Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) borrowing rate. It was commented that the likelihood of success was unknown until conversations commenced with the Government on the matter.

Recommendations of the Executive

Following a question regarding We Are Woking, which had been placed on the list of temporarily suspended projects due to Covid, Officers advised that the aim of the campaign had been to promote and drive interest in the town. Although We Are Woking had previously included climate change promotion, it was noted that climate change was now promoted through Planet Woking. Members also discussed the Transit Site project and Victoria Square modelling.

Following a request for a longer summary to be made available at December Council concerning the Thameswey Energy Ltd additional funding requirement, Councillor Barker was invited to advise Councillor Ashall of the information that could be included.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the draft Investment Programme for 2020/21 to 2024/25 be received;
- (ii) Managers, Corporate Management Group and Portfolio Holders be asked to review the Programme for any further cost improvements including reviewing the projects, their costs and timing to achieve savings with the minimum impact on citizen outcomes;
- (iii) the Finance Director requests a reduction in PWLB borrowing rate, through the reduction of the margin applied by the government, to support the Victoria Square, Sheerwater and HIF regeneration schemes;
- (iv) Officers work with Surrey County Council to agree an acceptable use of additional Council Tax generated through the Long Term Empty premium to support climate change initiatives; and

RECOMMENDED to Council

That (v) the loan facility provided to Thameswey Energy Ltd for the expanded Poole Road Energy Centre be increased to £35.6m.

Reason: To agree the draft Investment Programme for consultation before submission for final approval to the Council in February 2021.

D. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2021-22 EXE20-028.

The Executive received a report which sought approval to recommend to Council the Calendar of Meetings 2021-22. The Council meeting on Thursday, 29 July 2021 was raised as it was in the summer holiday period. Officers confirmed that a Council meeting was required on the last Thursday in July on the basis that the current statutory deadline for Council approval for the Statement of Accounts was the end of July. The scheduled Council meeting on 29 July 2021 would maximise the time available for preparation of the accounts. The Executive was advised that in the event that the statutory deadline was changed, Officers would re-visit the Calendar of Meetings in light of requirements.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That the Calendar of Meetings 2021/22 be approved as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

Recommendations of the Executive

Reason: In accordance with Standing Order 1.2 of the Constitution, which states that “The date of the annual (Council) meeting and those of ordinary meetings shall be fixed by the Council in or about December of the preceding municipal year”.

E. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS EXE20-123.

[NOTE: In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Chief Executive, Ray Morgan, declared a disclosable personal interest (pecuniary) in this item arising from it relating to his employment with the Council. The interest was such that Mr Morgan left the meeting whilst the item was determined.]

The Executive received a report which sought approval to recommend to Council the proposed employment, on a part time basis, of the current holder of the post of Chief Executive as Project Manager in order to continue supporting the Council in the management of the Victoria Square project, following his retirement on 31 March 2021. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Azad, explained that it was proposed that the current Chief Executive would be employed on a rolling three-month mutual notice contract and would report to the new Chief Executive. It was confirmed that the new Chief Executive would have absolute responsibility for the Victoria Square project.

The Executive supported the proposal noting the importance for the Council to retain the invaluable knowledge and expertise of the current Chief Executive in respect of the Victoria Square project.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That the current Chief Executive be appointed as Project Manager from 1 April 2021 on a 22 hours per week contract at £62,145 plus pro rata Flexible Benefits of £4,130, subject to mutual notice of three months.

Reason: To support the Council in the delivery of the Victoria Square project.

The Council has the authority to determine the recommendations set out above.

Background Papers:	None.
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REPORT ENDS