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11 March 2014

S U M M O N S

MEETING: Policy and Organisation Board
DATE: 19 March 2014
TIME: 6.00 pm
PLACE: Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Gosport
Democratic Services contact: Sharon Dalrymple-Bray

LINDA EDWARDS
BOROUGH SOLICITOR

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Mayor (Councillor Beavis) (ex officio)
Chairman of the Policy and Organisation Board (Councillor Hook) (ex-officio)

Councillor Hook (Chairman)
Councillor Burgess (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor CR Carter	Councillor Langdon
Councillor Chegwyn	Councillor Philpott
Councillor Forder	Councillor Ronayne
Councillor Lane	Councillor Wright

FIRE PRECAUTIONS

(To be read from the Chair if members of the public are present)

In the event of the fire alarm sounding, please leave the room immediately. Proceed downstairs by way of the main stairs or as directed by GBC staff, follow any of the emergency exit signs. People with disability or mobility issues please identify yourself to GBC staff who will assist in your evacuation of the building.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

- If you are in a wheelchair or have difficulty in walking and require access to the Committee Room on the First Floor of the Town Hall for this meeting, assistance can be provided by Town Hall staff on request

If you require any of the services detailed above please ring the Direct Line for the Democratic Services Officer listed on the Summons (first page).

NOTE: Please note that mobile phones should be switched off for the duration of the meeting.

AGENDA

PART A ITEMS

RECOMMENDED
MINUTE FORMAT

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Members present are required to declare, at this point in the meeting or as soon as possible thereafter, any disclosable pecuniary interest in any item(s) being considered at this meeting.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE BOARD HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2013

4. DEPUTATIONS – STANDING ORDER 3.5

(NOTE: The Board is required to receive a deputation(s) on a matter which is before the meeting of the Board provided that notice of the intended deputation and its object shall have been received by the Borough Solicitor by 12 noon on Monday, 17 March 2014. The total time for deputations in favour and against a proposal shall not exceed 10 minutes).

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS – STANDING ORDER 3.6

(NOTE: The Board is required to allow a total of 15 minutes for questions from members of the public on matters within the terms of reference of the Board provided that notice of such Question(s) shall have been submitted to the Borough Solicitor by 12 noon on Monday, 17 March 2014).

6. HIGH STREET IMPROVEMENTS

PART II

To request a financial contribution to enable delivery of a comprehensive scheme of High Street improvements in Gosport Town Centre.

Contact:
Lynda Dine

Ext no: 5231

7. ERNST YOUNG – ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2012/13

PART II

To consider and approve the Annual Audit Letter for 2012/13

Contact:
Julian Bowcher

Ext no: 5551

8. GOSPORT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

PART II

To request approval for a financial contribution of £5,500 to Gosport Community Association (the 'Association').

Contact:
Ian Lycett

Ext no: 5201

Policy and Organisation Board
19 March 2014

9. COCKLE PONDS, WALPOLE PARK

PART II

Report to follow

Contact:
Ian Lycett

Ext no: 5201

10. ANY OTHER ITEMS

Which the Chairman determines should be considered, by reason of special circumstances, as a matter of urgency.

11. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

Part II

To consider the following motion:

Item No.	Item	Paragraph no. 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act	
12.	ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SHARED PARTNERSHIP	The report holds information that is likely to disclose exempt (personal) information, within Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, to members of the public, and further that in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	PART II Contact Officer: Ian Lycett Ext: 5201

**A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND ORGANISATION BOARD
WAS HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2013**

The Mayor (Councillor Beavis) (ex-officio), Burgess (P), Chegwyn, Carter CR (P), Hook (Chairman) (P), Lane (P), Langdon, Philpott (P), Ronayne (P) and Wright (P).

16. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from The Mayor and Cllr Langdon.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

18. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE BOARD HELD ON 26 JUNE 2013

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Organisation Board held on 26 JUNE 2013 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

19. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

20. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

PART II

21. CITIZEN ADVICE BUREAU PRESENTATION

Consideration was given to a presentation by Anita Muff, Manager of Gosport Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and Richard Mackay, Chair of Trustees, updating the Board on services provided to the Community

Members acknowledged the contribution that CAB made to supporting volunteers and residents of Gosport

A Member asked for clarification with respect to two points mentioned within the presentation:

- a) providing legal advice; clarified general information provided to customers
- b) 'building relationships with district judge'; clarified can act as Mackenzie Friend but no rights to enter courts therefore building relationships with judges for agreement to enter court room

Further questions were answered by CAB that had been put forward by Members post presentation;

- a) does CAB have a business plan and if so how would this look if there was an increase or decrease in funding for e.g. £5,000? In response to this question the CAB Chair of trustees shared that there is a business plan which is centred on building the portfolio of volunteers and adjusting accommodation to provide further interview rooms. He continued his response by identifying that the impact of a decrease in funding would result in a reduction of

numbers of people the service currently supports. In the event of an increase in funding there was the potential of increasing staff levels and if there was a substantial increase there was the potential of the development of their building to accommodate customer demand and additionally provide an outreach service.

- b) how is the current funding utilised? Members were advised that the current funding supports use of the building, administration resources, training volunteers and a substantial proportion to staff salaries.

A member gave suggestions centred on the potential of providing an outreach service with no additional costs via staff delivering at other organisation venues; however it was explained that this had historically been unsuccessful due to an insufficient number of visitors and therefore it would not be making the best use of staff time.

A Member asked what opportunities CAB had in reducing duplication of the administration service between GVA and CAB, such as reception staff and venue. It was explained there would be difficulties in sharing reception space and staff with GVA due to the physicality of escorting customers through non confidential spaces.

Anita and Richard were thanked for their comprehensive presentation and further appreciation was shown for the previous invitation, to all Gosport Borough Councillors', to attend the annual general meeting; the Chairman noted that accounts can be seen at the AGM and recognised the invitation as "open and honest".

22. FINAL ACCOUNTS 2012/13

Consideration was given to a report by the Borough Treasurer which asked Members to consider a summary of the outturn position 2012/13 and approve the Statement of Accounts for 2012/13.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) The Statement of Accounts for 2012/13 at Appendix G were approved.
- b) The accounting policies contained within the Statement of Accounts were approved.
- c) The outturn position contained in the report and appendices were noted - including
 - a. The capital programme slippage detailed in appendix D were noted
 - b. The write offs approved under delegated authority at Appendix E were noted
- d) The letter of Representation at Appendix F was approved.

23. BUDGET STRATEGY 2014/15

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Treasurer on the Budget Strategy 2014/15. The Board was requested to consider the strategy for the preparation of the General Fund Budget and Capital Programme for the next financial year in light of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2013-2018, which was approved by the Board in June 2013, and the current national and local financial situation.

A Member asked for a date when Members can expect to receive information on the settlement. The Borough Treasurer explained that consultation on the new homes bonus was still on-going so it was unlikely a final figure would be known until at least December 2013. The Borough Treasurer continued by saying that early indications suggest a worsening position.

A Member put forward a request for the reduction in the revenue support grant over the three previous years.

RESOLVED: That

- a) the Council's current financial position was noted and the Budget Strategy set out in Section 2 and Appendix A that will be used in the preparation of the budget for the 2014/15 financial year were approved.
- b) The Borough Treasurer will provide a document to Members showing the reduction in revenue support grant for the last three years.

24. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW 2012/13, PROGRESS REPORT 2013/14, & PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Treasurer on the Treasury Management Annual Review 2012/13; Progress Report 2013/14, and Prudential Indicators. The Board was informed that the annual treasury report was a requirement and covered the treasury activity for 2012/13 together with a review of 2013/14 to date. The report also included the Prudential Indicators for 2012/13 in accordance with the requirements of the Prudential Code.

The Vice Chair gave thanks to the author of the Progress Report.

RESOLVED: That the Borough Treasurer's report was noted; and the 2012/13 Prudential Indicators approved.

25. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no other business items.

The meeting ended at 18:50.

CHAIRMAN

Board:	Policy & Organisation Board
Date of Meeting:	19th March 2014
Title:	High Street Improvements
Author:	Chief Executive
Status:	For Decision

Purpose

To request a financial contribution to enable delivery of a comprehensive scheme of High Street improvements in Gosport Town Centre.

Recommendation

That the Board agrees to a supplementary capital estimate of £60,540 to enable the delivery of the scheme of works detailed at Section 2 of the report.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 A report was presented to the Council's Economic Development Board on 19th June 2013 advising Members of a successful funding bid to the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) to support a range of streetscape and signage improvements in Gosport Town Centre. The report provided detail of the potential programme of works and identified a number of sources of external match funding, giving a total project value of £171,000.
- 1.2 Following public consultation on design proposals, a further report was presented to the Council's Economic Development Board on 27th November 2013. This provided feedback on the streetscape design proposals, preferred colour palette, and style and materials for street furniture. Approval was given for the implementation of works and indicative budget allocations, with £115,500 of external funding identified as available for painting, decluttering, purchase of new fittings and associated installation. Other elements of the project include the new Wayfinding signage system and community public art project, with smaller allocations for professional fees and replacement of heritage interpretation boards.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 Since the report to Economic Development Board in November 2013, design proposals and CAD drawings have been finalised and a project manager appointed to oversee the contracting and implementation of all streetscape improvement works.

- 2.2 Furniture options have been researched and quotations sought from a range of suppliers to establish the costs of providing new seating, litter bins and cycle stands. Appendix A to this report provides images of the furniture range selected, guided by the feedback from the public consultation.
- 2.3 Quotes have been sought for all site works associated with painting, removals and installation, and a preferred contractor selected.
- 2.4 The total cost of implementing a comprehensive scheme of improvements through the High Street, in line with the agreed design principles, is £176,040.
- 2.5 With £115,500 of external funding secured for streetscape improvements in the High Street, there is an opportunity for the Council to make a capital contribution of £60,540 and enable the full scheme to be implemented. This will provide for improvements to be made throughout the High Street, significantly enhancing the environment by upgrading the quality and appearance of the streetscape.
- 2.6 A capital contribution would be in addition to the presently approved capital programme and therefore requires approval of a supplementary capital estimate – the financing costs of which can be met from within the Council's existing budgets.

3.0 Risk Assessment

- 3.1 A programme is in place to ensure completion of works by the end of May 2014, assuming no delays due to adverse weather conditions. Approval has been secured from external funders for the carry forward of unspent funds in accordance with the agreed programme.
- 3.2 Improving the environment of the Town Centre was identified as a priority of over 80% of respondents to the Town Centre Survey undertaken by the Town Team. The implementation of this scheme of improvements in full will deliver a range of significant improvements, enhancing the experience and perceptions of existing users and making the Town more attractive to new users and businesses.
- 3.3 Without the proposed financial contribution by the Council it will not be possible to implement the scheme in full.

Financial Services Comments:	Paragraphs 2.4 to 2.6 refer
Legal Services Comments:	None
Service Improvement Plan	Contributes to CXU/EPTC/068/074

Implications:	
Corporate Plan:	Contributes to PR1/003; PR3/003
Risk Assessment:	See Paragraph 3.0 of this report
Background Papers:	Report to ED Board 19 th June 2013 on Town Centre Streetscape Improvements Report to ED Board 27 th November 2013 on High Street Improvements
Appendices/Enclosures:	Appendix A – Images from Selected Furniture range
Report Author/Lead Officer:	Lynda Dine

APPENDIX A

IMAGES FROM SELECTED FURNITURE RANGE



Topsit 3-seater Pagwood modular benches/seats, all with side welded armrests and root fixed.

Laser-cut frames, Pagwood slatted seat and backrest surface, frame galvanized and RILSAN polyamide coated.

Pagwood is a vandalism-resistant composite wood material. Frames: anthracite grey.

All with anti-graffiti coating.

Matching Sheet steel 90l bins in Anthracite grey with Pagwood inserts.

Includes ashtray and anti-graffiti coating.

Zenith Cycle Stand. Steel with plastic coated finish in Anthracite Grey. Root fixed.

48mm tube with fully welded crossbar for additional strength and locking opportunities. Aids visually impaired

AGENDA ITEM NO. 07

Board:	POLICY & ORGANISATION BOARD
Date of Meeting:	WEDNESDAY 19TH MARCH 2014
Title:	ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2012/13
Author:	BOROUGH TREASURER
Status:	FOR APPROVAL.

Purpose

To consider and approve the Annual Audit Letter for 2012/13

Recommendation

To approve the Annual Audit Letter for 2012/13

1 Background

- 1.1 The external auditors, Ernst and Young, presented the Annual Audit letter for 2012/13 to Standards and Governance Committee on 16 January 2014.
- 1.2 The letter was reviewed and noted prior to final approval by Policy and Organisation Board and is the subject of this report.

2 REPORT

Annual Audit Letter – key points

- 2.1 Financial statements - an unqualified audit opinion was issued on 27 September 2013.
- 2.2 Value for money conclusion – an unqualified value for money conclusion was issued on 27 September 2013.
- 2.3 Report to Those Charged With Governance – the Audit Results Report was issued to the Standards and Governance Committee on 12 September 2013.
- 2.4 Whole of Government Accounts - there were no issues to report.
- 2.5 Annual Governance Statement – this complied with guidance and there was nothing to report.
- 2.6 Use of audit powers – there was nothing to report in the public interest or take formal audit action on.

- 2.7 Audit certificate - the closure of the 2012/13 audit was certified on 27 September 2013.

3 Risk Assessment

- 3.1 The Annual Audit Letter forms part of the auditor's statutory role and should be reviewed and noted as part of the Council's governance arrangements.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 The Annual Audit Letter is attached for consideration and approval.

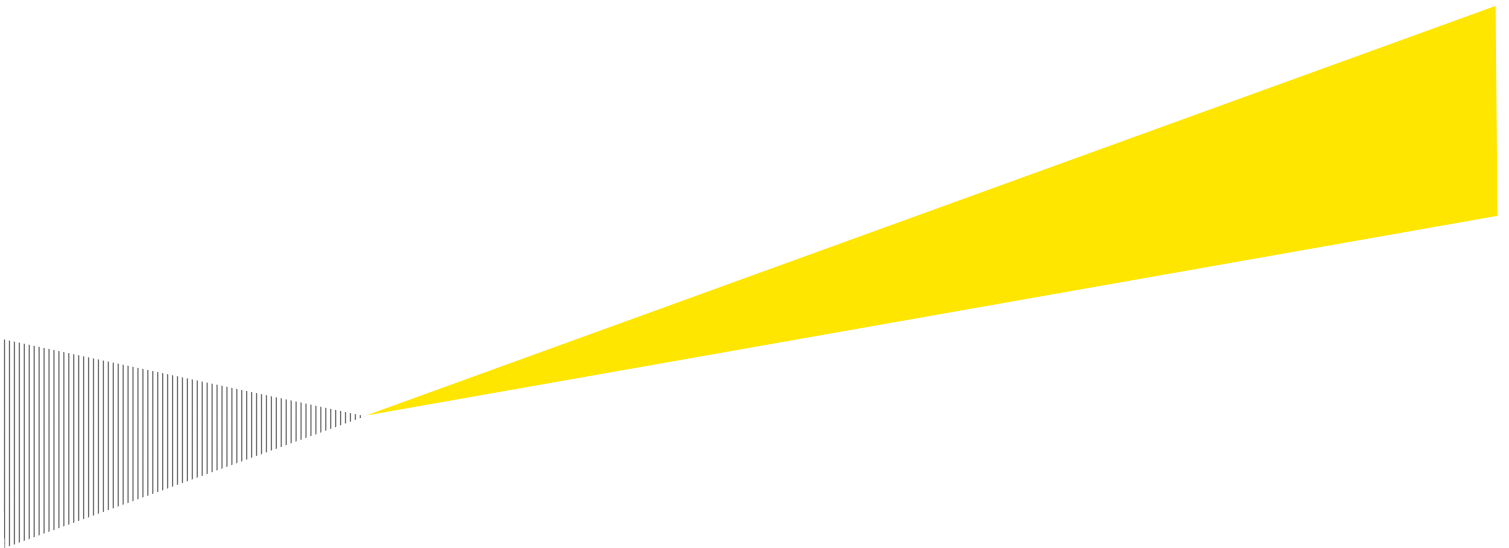
Financial Services comments:	None
Legal Services comments:	None
Crime and Disorder:	N/A
Equality and Diversity:	N/A
Service Improvement Plan implications:	N/A
Corporate Plan:	N/A
Risk Assessment:	Section 3
Background papers:	None
Enclosure:	The Annual Audit Letter (Ernst & Young)
Report author/ Lead Officer:	Julian Bowcher

Gosport Borough Council

Year ending 31 March 2013

Annual Audit Letter

October 2013



Building a better
working world

The Members
Gosport Borough Council
Town Hall
High Street
Gosport
Hampshire
PO12 1EB

17 October 2013

Dear Members,

Annual Audit Letter

The purpose of this Annual Audit Letter is to communicate to the Members of Gosport Borough Council and external stakeholders, including members of the public, the key issues arising from our work, which we consider should be brought to their attention.

We have already reported the detailed findings from our audit work to those charged with governance of Gosport Borough Council in the following reports:

Audit Results Report for the year ended 31
March 2013

Issued 4 September 2013 and presented to
members of the Standards and
Governance Committee on 12 September
2013

The matters reported here are the most significant for the Authority.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the officers of Gosport Borough Council for their assistance during the course of our work.

Yours faithfully



Helen Thompson
For and behalf of Ernst & Young LLP
Enc

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In March 2010 the Audit Commission issued a revised version of the 'Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies' (Statement of responsibilities). It is available from the Chief Executive of each audited body and via the [Audit Commission's website](#).

The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the Audit Commission's appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas.

The Standing Guidance serves as our terms of appointment as auditors appointed by the Audit Commission.

The Standing Guidance sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the Code of Audit Practice 2010 (the Code) and statute, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This Audit Results Report is prepared in the context of the Statement of responsibilities. It is addressed to the Members of the audited body, and is prepared for their sole use. We, as appointed auditor, take no responsibility to any third party.

Our Complaints Procedure – If at any time you would like to discuss with us how our service to you could be improved, or if you are dissatisfied with the service you are receiving, you may take the issue up with your usual partner or director contact. If you prefer an alternative route, please contact Steve Varley, our Managing Partner, 1 More London Place, London SE1 2AF. We undertake to look into any complaint carefully and promptly and to do all we can to explain the position to you. Should you remain dissatisfied with any aspect of our service, you may of course take matters up with our professional institute. We can provide further information on how you may contact our professional institute.

1. Executive summary

Our 2012/13 audit work has been undertaken in accordance with the Audit Plan we issued on 7 June 2013 and is conducted in accordance with the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice, International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) and other guidance issued by the Audit Commission.

The Authority is responsible for preparing and publishing its Statement of Accounts, accompanied by the Annual Governance Statement. In the Annual Governance Statement, the Authority reports publicly on an annual basis on the extent to which it complies with its own code of governance, including how it has monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of its governance arrangements in the year, and on any planned changes in the coming period. The Authority is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

As auditors we are responsible for:

- ▶ forming an opinion on the financial statements;
- ▶ reviewing the Annual Governance Statement;
- ▶ forming a conclusion on the arrangements that the Authority has in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources; and
- ▶ undertaking any other work specified by the Audit Commission.

Summarised below are the conclusions from all elements of our work:

Audit the financial statements of Gosport Borough Council for the financial year ended 31 March 2013 in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland)	On 27 September 2013 we issued an unqualified audit opinion for the Authority.
Form a conclusion on the arrangements the Authority has made for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.	On 27 September 2013 we issued an unqualified value for money conclusion.
Issue a report to those charged with governance of the Authority (the Standards and Governance Committee) communicating significant findings resulting from our audit.	On 4 September 2013 we issued our report for the Authority. We presented our report to the 12 September 2013 Committee meeting.
Report to the National Audit Office (NAO) on the accuracy of the consolidation pack the Authority is required to prepare for the Whole of Government Accounts.	We reported our findings to the NAO on 27 September 2013. There were no issues to highlight to the NAO.
Consider the completeness of disclosures in the Authority's Annual Governance Statement, identify any inconsistencies with the other information of which we are aware from our work and consider whether it complies with CIPFA / SOLACE guidance.	No issues to report.
Consider whether, in the public interest, we should make a report on any matter coming to our notice in the course of the audit.	No issues to report.

Determine whether any other action should be taken in relation to our responsibilities under the Audit Commission Act.

No issues to report.

Issue a certificate that we have completed the audit in accordance with the requirements of the Audit Commission Act 1998 and the Code of Practice issued by the Audit Commission.

On 27 September 2013 we issued our audit completion certificate.

2. Key findings

2.1 Financial statement audit

We audited the Authority's Statement of Accounts in line with the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice, International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) and other guidance issued by the Audit Commission. We issued an unqualified audit report on 27 September 2013.

Our main findings in relation to the one area of risk included in our Audit Plan are set out below.

Financial statement risks:

Risk of misstatement due to fraud and error

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Our responsibility is to plan and perform audits to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free of material misstatements whether caused by error or fraud. As auditors, we approach each engagement with a questioning mind that accepts the possibility that a material misstatement due to fraud could occur, and design the appropriate procedures to consider such risk. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ We undertook procedures required by auditing standards, and had no issues to report. |
|--|--|
-

We highlighted the improvement in the quality of the financial statements and working papers submitted for audit. There were very few amendments required to the draft financial statements. None affected the level of the Authority's reserves. The most significant of these related to the disclosure of cash within the balance sheet. This was shown as two separate elements: cash and cash equivalents of £4,660,000 and overdraft of -£1,005,000. The overdraft amount should be included within the main cash and cash equivalent balance as it relates to the same cash holding account. The cash balance was therefore amended to £3,655,000. There was no overall effect on net assets.

2.2 Value for money conclusion

We are required to carry out sufficient work to conclude on whether the Authority has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

In accordance with guidance issued by the Audit Commission, in 2012/13 our conclusion was based on two criteria:

- ▶ the organisation has proper arrangements in place for securing financial resilience; and
- ▶ the organisation has proper arrangements for challenging how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

We issued an unqualified value for money conclusion on 27 September 2013.

We did not identify any significant risks in relation to the value for money criteria and we set out our key findings in the table overleaf.

Area of focus:	Key findings:
Financial resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ You have sound financial plans which properly reflect both your priorities and the significant financial challenges you face. In year you under spent against budget despite the increasing demand for Authority's services and strengthened your financial resilience by increasing your reserves in excess of the amounts planned at start of the year.
Economy, efficiency and effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Overall, you are a low spending Authority when compared to your statistical nearest neighbours. You reacted promptly to the Comprehensive Spending Review forecasts in 2010 and have implemented a comprehensive programme to reduce costs and maximise income. You have adopted prudent assumptions in your financial plans and are taking action to reduce your cost base further while looking for new ways of service provision by working in partnership with others.

2.3 Objections received

We did not receive any objections to the Authority's 2012/13 financial statements from members of the public.

2.4 Whole of government accounts

We reported to the National Audit Office (NAO) on 27 September 2013 the results of our work performed in relation the accuracy of the consolidation pack the Authority is required to prepare for the whole of government accounts.

The Authority's submission falls under the thresholds for a full consistency check, therefore we were only required to review the consistency of the submission to the audited financial statements for:

- ▶ property, plant and equipment; and
- ▶ pensions liabilities.

We did not identify any areas of concern to report to the NAO.

2.5 Annual governance statement

We are required to consider the completeness of disclosures in the Authority's Annual Governance Statement, identify any inconsistencies with the other information of which we are aware from our work, and consider whether it complies with CIPFA / SOLACE guidance.

We completed this work and did not identify any areas of concern.

2.6 Use of other powers

We identified no issues during our audit that would necessitate using powers under the Audit Commission Act 1998, including reporting in the public interest.

3. Control themes and observations

3.1 Internal controls

As part of our audit of the financial statements, we obtained an understanding of internal control sufficient to plan our audit and determine the nature, timing and extent of testing performed. Although our audit was not designed to express an opinion on the effectiveness of internal of internal control we communicate to those charged with governance at the Authority, as required, significant deficiencies in internal control.

There were no matters that we identified during the 2012/13 audit that we concluded are of sufficient importance to merit being reported.

3.2 IT general controls

We reviewed the manage change and logical access controls in the Oracle E- Financials (General Ledger, Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable) and Resource Link (Payroll) systems. Management have agreed to implement our audit recommendations to formalise these processes to provide an audit trail. There were no significant issues that we need to report to you.

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AGENDA ITEM NO. 08

Board/Committee:	POLICY & ORGANISATION BOARD
Date of Meeting:	WEDNESDAY 19 TH MARCH 2014
Title:	GOSPORT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
Author:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Status:	FOR DECISION

Purpose

To request approval for a financial contribution of £5,500 to Gosport Community Association (the 'Association').

Recommendation

The Board approves a financial contribution of £5,500 to Gosport Community Association to assist with the restructuring of the Association.

1 Background

- 1.1 Members will be aware of the Gosport Community Association who run Thorngate Hall and the associated accommodation.
- 1.2 Hampshire County Council, through their Community team, have been providing active support to the Association over the past six months or so.
- 1.3 The Association have been experiencing a number of difficulties around management and staffing and also the accommodation which, because of its age and condition, is challenging.

2 Report

- 2.1 A new Board of Trustees has been recently appointed and with on-going support from Hampshire County Council, good progress has been made towards restructuring and putting the Association on a sound financial footing.
- 2.2 The Board of Trustees has made a number of difficult decisions and has implemented a package of measures that include a number of capital bids to help address the long-term issues with the fabric of Association's buildings, especially Bury House.
- 2.3 The Association do, however, currently face a £11,000 deficit in their finances for the coming twelve months and have asked both this Council and Hampshire County Council for assistance.
- 2.4 Hampshire County Council have already invested significant staff time in providing assistance to the Association but have offered to fund half the required amount £5,500 and this Council would do

likewise.

3 Financial Implication

- 3.1 The Council are being asked to provide the Gosport Community Association with £5,500 towards their rescue package. If approved this can be funded from savings identified within the current year's budget.

4 Risk Assessment

- 4.1 Hampshire County Council are confident that the new Board of Trustees are providing professional leadership to the Association and that a long term plan is being put in place that will ensure the future working of the Association.
- 4.2 Ongoing support to the Association will be provided by Hampshire County Council. The support of both Councils will assist the Association move forwards and will ensure this important community facility remains available.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The Gosport Community Association are a well-respected organisation within the community of Gosport.
- 5.2 Thorngate Halls and the theatre provide the venue for many of the Borough's main events, including the Council's Mayor Making and enable many local groups to meet, socialise and hold performances.
- 5.3 Hampshire County Council have been providing support, help and assistance to the Association and believe it is now on a much stronger footing.
- 5.4 A financial contribution from both Councils of £5,500 will enable the Association to move forward. Hampshire county Council will continue to work closely with the Association.

Financial Services comments:	As detailed in Section 3 of this report
Legal Services comments:	The Council has the power to make this Grant
Crime and Disorder:	Diversionary events are held here
Equality and Diversity:	Helps promote community cohesion
Service Improvement Plan implications:	None
Corporate Plan:	Development of community
Risk Assessment:	As detailed in Section 4 of this report
Background papers:	Nil

Appendices/Enclosures:	
Appendix 'A'	
Appendix 'B'	
Report author/ Lead Officer:	Ian Lycett

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9

Board/Committee:	POLICY & ORGANISATION BOARD
Date of Meeting:	WEDNESDAY 19 TH MARCH 2014
Title:	COCKLE PONDS, WALPOLE PARK
Author:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Status:	FOR DECISION

Purpose

To advise members of works required to the Cockle Ponds in Walpole Park and request funding be made available

Recommendation

The Board:

- i. Notes the proposed works as outlined in this report which need to be undertaken
- ii. Approves a supplementary estimate to the Capital Programme of £87,000 to provide the total sum of £136,900 to execute the works as outlined in Section 3 of this report.

1 Background

- 1.1 Members will be aware of the two Cockle Ponds within Walpole Park and the increasing number of mute swans that have made it their home.
- 1.2 The Ponds are in the ownership of this Council and the larger southern pond is used regularly by the Gosport Model Yacht Club who have their clubhouse and facilities within the ground floor of the café building next to the Ponds.
- 1.3 The Ponds are designated as part of Portsmouth Harbour as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and are part of the special protection area covering the Solent under EU legislation.
- 1.4 The Cockle Ponds are brackish lagoons and contain rare species of shrimp and sea anemone.
- 1.5 This Council has agreed to a management plan with Natural England for the Ponds and this includes the opening and closing of the sluice gate to ensure the correct balance of fresh and sea water is maintained.
- 1.6 Members will be aware that the sluice gate has recently been

replaced.

2 Report

- 2.1 The Council has been working closely with Natural England over the past twelve months to address the increasing problem of contamination, particularly in the smaller northern pond caused by the number and diet of the swan population.
- 2.2 The feeding of the swans by the public is very popular. Unfortunately the predominant food offered to the swans is bread which they do not digest sufficiently. This has caused the build-up of contaminated faeces on the bottom of the pond. This contamination is now leaking into the larger southern pond and is probably causing the smell which occurs in hot summer weather.
- 2.3 Due to the protected nature of the Ponds, the Council must take action to remove this contamination and to try to reduce the number of swans on the ponds and to discourage the feeding of the swans.
- 2.4 To complicate the situation, the walls surrounding the ponds and the central walkway which separate the two ponds are showing signs of collapse and again, due to the protected nature of the ponds, action must be taken to implement measures to secure the long-term stability to the structure of the ponds.
- 2.5 The proposed works can be separated into three elements:
 - i. Removal of contamination
 - ii. Structural repairs
 - iii. Reduction in swan population/feeding by public

Removal of Contamination

- 2.6 A method statement has been agreed with Natural England and tenders have been obtained for the removal of the water and contamination in the smaller northern pond. This will include the lowering of the water in the other pond at the same time to reduce the likelihood of cross-contamination and to reduce stress on the central walkway. Sufficient water will be retained to ensure the protected species are not harmed.
- 2.7 Tenders have been requested for this very specialist work. The lowest tender received for this work is £109,244.68. The tenders are based on an estimated removal of 100 tonnes of contaminated sediment. Should the amount to be removed exceed this, an additional charge of £35,000 per 100 tonne pro-rata will be made.
- 2.8 It is not possible to estimate the actual amount of contaminated sediment that will need to be removed, but it is hoped this will not exceed 100 tonnes.

- 2.9 Extensive negotiations and investigations have been underway to try and reduce this cost. Analysis has been undertaken of both the water and the sediment.
- 2.10 The analysis of the water indicates that it may be possible to pump the water directly to the adjacent Creek. To do this, however, a licence from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) will be necessary. An Application for this has now been made.
- 2.11 The analysis of the sediment has been inconclusive and does show some hydrocarbons which are of concern and the retesting of the sediment is now being undertaken.
- 2.12 It is hoped that it may be possible to either pump the sediment to the Creek or dispose of it to a non-specialist refuse tip, but this will depend on the conclusions of the retesting.
- 2.13 If it is possible to dispose of the water and sediment as indicated above, the cost of £109,244.88 will be reduced and this should be seen as a maximum cost.

Structural Repairs

- 2.14 A full investigation of the condition of the walls surrounding the ponds and to those of the central walkway will not be possible until the Ponds have been drained down and in the case of the northern pond, cleared of contamination.
- 2.15 This Council is a member of the Eastern Solent Coastal Partnership and the engineers from the Partnership are helping to prepare a suitable long term structural solution to the surrounds of the Ponds and walkway.
- 2.16 Some areas of the walkway surrounding the Ponds are currently fenced due to subsidence. These areas will be temporarily repaired to ensure public access is maintained safely and the Coastal partnership engineers will undertake a full inspection when the water levels in the Ponds are reduced and will also install monitoring equipment to help understand what is happening to the structure of the Ponds.
- 2.17 The two Ponds are currently joined by two pipes which are blocked. These run under the central walkway. As part of the proposed works, these pipes will be cleared and a regular check and cleaning regime introduced to ensure circulation between the two Ponds is maintained. If this is not successful, further measures may be needed to increase circulation. This would be the subject of a further report to this Board.

- 2.18 When the Coastal Partnership have completed their investigations and make recommendations regarding further structural works to the Ponds, these will also be the subject of a further report to this Board.

Reduction in Swan Population/Feeding by Public

- 2.19 Temporary “do not feed” signs and direct approaches to the public by officers requesting that the swans are not fed, have generally been ignored.
- 2.20 Permanent signage explaining the significance of the Ponds, their importance for the rare species that live in them and why feeding the swans is not a good thing, are being prepared and will be erected around the Ponds.
- 2.21 Discussions continue with Natural England regarding measures to discourage the swans and the installation of a small floating island on the northern pond has been suggested to encourage a pair of swans to nest. Swans are territorial and this would reduce the swans to just the breeding pair and cygnets in the summer. The removal of the contamination to the Northern Pond will mean that the island cannot be installed for the nesting season for swans this year. The island will be in position for 2015.
- 2.22 An increased cleaning regime is also to be introduced to the footpath areas surrounding the Ponds to collect the faeces and remove it.

3 Financial Implications

- 3.1 The cost of the proposals contained in this report will be:

	£
Drain down of both Ponds and removal of Contamination in the northern pond	109,244.88
Temporary repair to footways	27,654.00
Total to be funded by Gosport Borough Council	136,898.88
Permanent signage/artwork	4,500.00

- 3.2 The Council has to pursue possible grant aid for this work but, to date the only offer of assistance has been received from Natural England for who are funding the permanent signage and artwork (above).
- 3.3 The Capital Programme includes £50,000 in 2013/14 (item 16 – Cockle Pond Refurbishment) towards the initial estimated costs of £136,898.88 outlined above.
- 3.4 A supplementary estimate is sought for the estimated additional costs

of £87,000. The financing costs of which can be met from within the Council's existing budgetary projections.

4 Risk Assessment

- 4.1 The Council, as a responsible Authority should maintain the environment within the Cockle Ponds which are a Site of Special Scientific Interest under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and part of the Special Protection Area.
- 4.2 The works outlined in this report although significant, are the minimum necessary to ensure the protection of the Ponds. It is hoped to reduce this cost dependent on a successful discharge licence from the MMO and the results of the retesting of the sediment.
- 4.3 The Gosport Model Yacht Club have been fully consulted throughout the discussions regarding the works to the Ponds and the Club are satisfied that none of the proposed works will interfere with their Club or regatta activities.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The Cockle Ponds are a popular attraction for the residents and visitors to Gosport Town Centre.
- 5.2 The increasing colony of swans creates significant unhygienic mess around the Ponds and has, because of over-feeding of bread, severely contaminated the northern pond threatening the protected environment.
- 5.3 The proposals in this report look to de-contaminate the northern pond, increase water circulation between the Ponds and reduce the number of swans using the Ponds.

Financial Services comments:	As Section 3 of this report
Legal Services comments:	None
Crime and Disorder:	None
Equality and Diversity:	None
Service Improvement Plan implications:	None
Corporate Plan:	Planned action
Risk Assessment:	As Section 4 of this report
Background papers:	None
Appendices/Enclosures:	
Appendix 'A'	
Appendix 'B'	
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