

**A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND ORGANISATION BOARD
WAS HELD ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2017**

Subject to Approval

The Mayor (Councillor Mrs Batty) (ex-officio), Councillors Allen (P), Bateman (P), Burgess (P), Carter, Chegwyn (P), Mrs Cully (P) Edgar (P), Foster-Reed (P), Hook (Chairman) (P), Hicks (P), Hylands (P), Jessop (P), Murphy (P), Philpott (P)

It was reported that in accordance with Standing Order 2.3.6 Councillor Mrs Hook had been nominated to replace Councillor Carter for this meeting.

17. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received from The Mayor and Councillor Carter.

18. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 28 June 2017 be signed as a true and correct record.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hylands declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in agenda item 10.

20. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

21. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

PART I

22. CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Treasurer seeking Board approval for the Capital Programme 2017/18 to 2020/21 and to recommend the programme to Council for approval.

In answer to a Members question, the Board was advised that the BMX track area was intended solely for racing and that an additional facility was being installed to allow for children as young as two to be able to train.

Members identified that there was funding in the programme for public conveniences and questioned whether this was to refurbish existing facilities, or whether there would be any provision to reopen facilities previously closed.

The Board was advised that the facilities at the Falklands Gardens had had to be closed urgently for Health and Safety reasons as their inappropriate use was a health and safety risk to both members of the public and contractors. Members advised that the Council was working hard with external agencies, including the Police to reopen them as soon as possible. This included looking at solutions that may mean the facilities would only be open in the day in the interim and installing lighting to prevent substance abuse occurring inside them.

Members commended the hospitality of local hostelrys and cafes in allowing members of the public to use the facilities and requested that all Members be informed should it be necessary to close facilities with such urgency in future.

Members were advised that the funds identified in the capital programme for public conveniences had not been allocated to specific facilities; as the funds may be required for refurbishments following vandalism. The Board was also advised that funds would not be spent on reopening closed toilets that had been subject to vandalism.

A Ward Councillor for Town advised that they had been kept informed on the situation regarding the toilets at the Falklands Gardens and also welcomed funding for the Seafeld Coastal Flood Erosion Scheme.

In answer to a Members question, the Board was advised that the type of Car Park machines had not yet been specified and that the programmed work for St Luke's Road was due to be carried out within the next year.

RESOLVED: The proposed Capital Programme 2017/18 to 2020/21 be recommended to Council for approval.

PART II

23. EY – AUDIT RESULTS REPORT

Consideration was given to the reports of the EY summarising the findings from the external audit 2016/2017.

Helen Thompson of EY was invited to address the Board and advised that the results report followed on from the Audit Plan reported to the Standards and Governance Committee in March and the Policy and Organisation Board in June

She advised that the audit was fundamentally completed with the exception of formally signing off the report. The Board was advised that there had been no objections from members of the public and therefore the audit certificate to certify the audit closed could be issued alongside an unqualified opinion of the true and fair position by the deadline of 30 September.

Members were advised that under the value for money sub-criterion, informed decision making, the shared management arrangements had been examined. No issues were identified that impacted on the proper arrangements the Council had to secure value for money in the use of resources and as a result the value for money conclusion for 2016/17 would be unmodified.

The Board was advised that there were no uncorrected misstatements. However, the audit regulations required the accounts to be published for 30 days including two specified weeks in July. Although the financial statements had been correctly published, the Annual Governance Statement was not made available until a few days later. Therefore the period for public inspection had been extended to include the complete 30 days for both the financial statements and the Annual Governance Statement.

The Board was advised that there had been some difficulty in acquiring required details from external valuers, but that it was no fault of the Council and the auditors acknowledged that Council officers had done everything they could to help acquire the information. The Council should consider this as part of the faster close deadline in 2018.

It was recognised that the deadline for reporting would be two months earlier in 2018 and the Board was advised that should the reporting process continue to include the report presentation to the Standards and Governance Committee, any report produced for the Committee would be less complete as a result of tighter timescales.

The Board was advised that there was no legislative requirement for the report to be presented to Standards and Governance Committee and that the constitution could be amended to provide for the report to be brought straight to the Policy and Organisation Board only.

Members recognised that the Audit report gave the Council a clean bill of health, and were advised that the Auditors were aware of the Local Government Ombudsman decisions, but that they did not affect the report.

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Mrs Thompson extended her thanks to the Council Officers for their support with the work.

RESOLVED: That the conclusions to date set out in the Audit Results Report be noted.

24. FINAL ACCOUNTS 2016/17

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Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Treasurer summarising the outturn position for the 2016/17 financial year and recommending the approval of the Statement of Accounts for 2016/17.

Members were advised that the Council's borrowing and investments were appropriate to its present financial position.

The Board was advised that the Treasury Management report highlighted the Council's position further and that the Council was under borrowed which was in accordance with current best practice.

A Member highlighted that there were large projects identified in the capital programme that were being funded in Lee-on-the-Solent and felt that the funds for these projects could have been redistributed to be used for the removal of Japanese knotweed on allotment sites. The Member's opposition to the use of Allotment funds for this was noted.

In answer to a Member's question the Board was advised that whereas previous guidance was to remove the knotweed progressively, that the advice regarding this had now changed.

Members were advised that the removal of knotweed had been agreed at the Community Board and that the Capital Programme also included projects for the ice rink, the leisure centre, the BMX track, the Cockle Pond at Walpole Park, the skate park and the Alver Valley amongst others.

In answer to a Member's question, the Board was advised that the Supplementary Planning Document for the Gosport Waterfront and Town Centre was covering the next 20 years and that the resurfacing of Walpole Road car park was necessary to ensure its ongoing serviceability.

A Member welcomed the removal of knotweed and recognised the benefit of its removal to local residents.

RESOLVED: That

- The accounting policies contained within the Statement of Accounts (Appendix F, page 21) be approved,
- The Statement of Accounts for 2016/17 at Appendix F be approved.
- The outturn position contained in the report and Appendices including
 - The capital programme slippage detailed in Appendix C
 - The write offs approved under delegated authority at Appendix D be noted; andThe Letter of Representation at Appendix E be approved

25. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW 2016/17, PROGRESS REPORT 2017/18, & PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Treasurer as the annual treasury report is a requirement of the Council's reporting procedures and covers the treasury activity for 2016/17 together with a review of 2017/18 to date. The report also includes the Prudential Indicators for 2016/17 in accordance with the requirements of the Prudential Code.

RESOLVED: That;

- The Treasury Management outturn report 2016/17 as identified in 2.2 be noted
- The latest Treasury Management position for 2017/18 as identified in 2.3 be noted
- The Prudential Indicators outturn report 2016/17 as identified in 2.4 be noted

26. DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

Councillor Hylands declared a disclosable pecuniary interest and took no part in the discussions or voting thereon.

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Treasurer detailing proposed additions to the Council's Discretionary Rate Relief Policy relating to Local Newspaper Relief, Public Houses Relief, Supporting Small Businesses Relief and Discretionary Revaluation Relief

Members were advised that the proposal was for the approval of four separate schemes funded by central government.

In answer to a Member's question, the Board was advised that the funded support for Public Houses was £1000 relief for one year.

Members were advised that all eligible premises had or would be written to, to advise them of the availability of the schemes.

RESOLVED: That the Discretionary Rate Relief Policies relating to Local Newspaper Relief, Public Houses Relief, Supporting Small Businesses Relief and Discretionary Revaluation Relief as detailed in Appendices A to D be approved.

27. ANY OTHER ITEMS

There were none.

CHAIRMAN

Concluded at 18.38