

**Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet
held on Monday, 17th October, 2022
from 4.00 pm - 4.49 pm**

Present: J Ash-Edwards (Chair)
J Belsey (Deputy)

R Cromie	S Hillier
R de Mierre	R Salisbury

Absent: Councillor N Webster

Also Present: Councillors R Bates, R Clarke and J Dabell

The Leader welcomed Paul Owens, Co-Founder and Director and Rachel Kuhn, Associate Director from BOP Consulting.

1. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY MATTER ON THE AGENDA.

None.

2. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from Cllr Webster.

3. TO CONFIRM MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2022.

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

4. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS THAT THE LEADER AGREES TO TAKE AS URGENT BUSINESS.

None.

5. CLAIR HALL: REPORT OF INVESTIGATION OF INVESTMENT OPTIONS FOR THE SITE.

Rafal Hejne, Interim Head of Organisational Development introduced the report which set out the options for the site following receipt of the report from BOP, the Council's lead advisor on the project. He reminded the Cabinet that the Council had agreed a data driven approach and had set up a steering group as recommended in the report. He noted that it is difficult to deliver projects of this nature in the current economic climate and he thanked the experts who helped shape the final recommendations in the BOP report.

The Leader thanked the Interim Head of Organisational Development and welcomed the report, he highlighted the robust evidence-based approach. In response to a

question Rachel Kuhn, Associate Director of BOP advised the responses of the experts on the success criteria of the project had been very positive, the success criteria were achievable, and they were appreciative of the work the Council had undertaken to date.

The Cabinet Members thanked BOP for providing some case studies in their report and raised several questions.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parking requested more information on the current state of the sector and future predictions due to the current economic climate, asked for more details on the use of an independent cultural anchor tenant, broker and property agent. Paul Owens, Co-Founder and Director of BOP confirmed the cultural sector was still feeling the effects of the pandemic, was in survival mode and the Cultural Recovery Fund has helped to make up for box office losses. He noted that people look for cultural experiences closer to home. The Interim Head of Organisational Development confirmed an estate agent or broker would be required to have experience or access to expert knowledge of working with the leisure/cultural sector.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Net Zero asked what the key risks were for a project as large as the Clair Hall site. The Associate Director confirmed the economic climate would make obtaining funding challenging. There had been changes since the report had been published with much funding going to existing facilities. She confirmed some commercial investors are more optimistic, but they are still cautious. To mitigate the risks the Council would need an organisation that understands the market and complete their due diligence on potential bidders. It was noted that it would be essential for the Council to keep up to date on what was happening in the district and the region.

In response to questions on the key risks of a project as large as the Clair Hall site and about the flexibility of the space provided, the BOP's Associate Director confirmed that a key is that a chosen organisation must have an ability and the autonomy to respond quickly to the community needs; BOP thinks an independent organisation are equipped to be more flexible. Careful consideration and due diligence around the interested partners should result in a successful, focused organisation running the site. There need to be agreement around the primary use of the high-quality spaces with a good design but also it is necessary to ensure space can be used in many ways; flexible hiring policies are important and good staff and programmes to engage with the public. She noted it was an asset to have groups already associated with the site.

The Cabinet Member for Planning noted his initial caution when the project commenced but he was now more confident on the future of the site. He queried how the site would be managed by the operator to attract visitors and ensure its viability when current disposable income was fragile. The Associate Director confirmed the evidence base shows how the arts and cultural organisations have performed in difficult times. The operator would have to demonstrate an affordable strategy, how they would get people in through programming, marketing, and would need a good track record. A prospective operator may already run facilities, must demonstrate their funding source and the security of long-term funding. Due diligence at the planning stage should confirm these details.

In response to the question around the specialist help required tfor model three using a mix of partners was essential as commercial agents can reach parties across a much wider area. The Council could potentially progress models one and three at the

same time and an agent could subcontract the cultural element to ensure long term viability.

In response to the Leader's questions, the Associate Director advised the strengths of the project are the prime location of the Clair Hall site and the district clearly had an active community who are interested and connected with the site. She noted the model one wasn't just a 'lick of paint' and the substantial investment was required for model one to deliver the success criteria.

The Cabinet Member for Planning queried whether it was viable for local groups to take over the refurbishment and management of the site at no cost to the Council. The Associate Director advised it would be a huge challenge but not impossible and in the current climate it may be difficult to raise the funding. Progressing models one and three would not prevent one or more groups from taking the site on, she confirmed there are organisations that would support groups undertaking such a venture.

The Deputy Leader confirmed the Council is keen to build on the work of BOP and a further report would be brought back to the Cabinet towards the end of the year, the future facility must be flexible and encourage use by the cultural sector.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Net Zero confirmed the Council's aim to provide a quality leisure and cultural space and requested that the criteria be strengthened to emphasis a net zero design.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parking confirmed the need to retain the steering group.

The Interim Head of Organisational Development noted the update would be completed as quickly as possible with work on the brief to bring more detail to the success criteria. He confirmed a cultural anchor tenant would run the site in a way to meet the needs of the local community and the criteria could be weighted to deliver a balanced approach.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services noted the case studies had landmarks and destinations in the local community which provided many cultural offers; she asked if it was realistic ambition for the Clair Hall site. The Director advised the case studies show the beneficial economic ripple effect of local cultural activities, providing a destination for many diverse visitors throughout the day, and the site could be the future hub of the town.

In response to a question, the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that as a landowner and body that manages estates, the Council must respect the local planning laws like other developers, the Mid Sussex Design Guide is a supplementary planning document and must be taken into account for any application.

The Leader thanked BOP for their report and work to date, which has been very helpful to develop the evidence base. The Council has cautious optimism and has good models for the site to take forward to the market.

The Leader noted that no Member wished to speak further and moved to vote on the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

The Cabinet:

- (i) Noted BOP's final report and carefully considered their recommendations.
- (ii) requested officers commission a specialist broker/agent to develop a briefing pack (as outlined at para 34-36). This will include the process the Council should adopt to progress the preferred models to maximise the opportunity to secure an appropriate cultural anchor tenant / partner for the site.

6. PERFORMANCE MONITORING FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2022/23.

Kathryn Hall, Chief Executive introduced the report and noted the debate at the Scrutiny Committee meeting for Leader, Deputy Leader & Housing and Customer Service at the meeting on 21 September 2022.

The Deputy Leader highlighted that he had attended the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and thanked the committee members for their comments. He noted the positive feedback from the Food Waste Trial for 3,000 homes in the district, current recycle rates are ahead of the target and he hoped the data will indicate the effect if the trial is rolled out across the whole district. He confirmed that 96% of fly tipping is cleared the same day, where the Council is responsible for collecting it on public land; he thanked the Council's contractor Serco.

The Leader acknowledged the importance of the Food Waste Trial, and as no Member wished to speak further, he moved to vote on the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

Cabinet noted the Council's performance in the first quarter of the year, identifying any areas where further reporting or information was required.

The meeting finished at 4.49 pm

Chairman