

CABINET

6 MARCH 2018

PRESENT: Councillor N Blake (Leader); Councillors A Macpherson (Deputy Leader), H Mordue, C Paternoster, Sir Beville Stanier Bt and J Ward

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Strachan

APOLOGIES: Councillors J Blake and S Bowles

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January, 2018, be approved as a correct record.

2. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The Corporate Risk Register provided evidence of a “risk aware and risk managed organisation”. It recorded and considered significant risks that might affect the successful delivery of its statutory duties. The Register reflected the risks that were on the current radar for Strategic Board. The Audit Committee had a role to monitor the effectiveness of risk management and internal control across the Council and regularly reviewed the Corporate Risk Register. The Register was also reported to Cabinet to help inform the budget setting and monitoring process.

Members commented in particular about the two risks regarding Organisational culture and failure to manage a major partnership or a significant council contractor, and were assured that these would continue to be the subject of careful monitoring. It was recognised that further work still needed to be done to communicate the vision and direction of the ‘new’ organisation to staff, and to embed desired behaviours into the cultural norm. Significant performance issues with the street cleaning contractor were being addressed and a performance plan had been put in place with was being closely monitored. Having discussed the issues identified within the Register around recruitment to certain technical professions, it was,

RESOLVED –

That the Corporate Risk Register be noted and reported twice yearly to Cabinet for review.

NOTE: Councillor Mrs Ward, as a member of the Board of Aylesbury Vale Estates (AVE), declared a Personal Interest in this item insofar as it related to the operations of AVE.

3. NEW HOMES BONUS - PARISH GRANTS

The New Homes Bonus (NHB) was a national initiative whereby funding from the national revenue grant for local authorities had been top sliced and allocated to local councils in proportion to the number of new homes in their area. For every new home built and occupied in Aylesbury Vale, and for every long-term unoccupied property that was brought back into use, the Government gave the Council a NHB grant each year.

In December 2012, the Council had agreed to allocate a share of the NHB to Parish and Town Councils, to help alleviate the impacts of housing growth on local communities. 20% of the Government allocation had been set aside for the funding scheme, which equated to £1,228,000 being available in the 2017/18 round of funding. Additionally, a £284,686 underspend had been carried over from the last round of funding allocations. It had been agreed last year to establish an £80,000 budget for micro grants which meant that a total of £1,432,686 was available to allocate in this round of NHB grants.

The Informal NHB Grants Panel had met on 26 January 2018 to consider applications for funding from Parish and Town councils under the NHB grant funding scheme. The Panel had consisted of the Chairman of the Panel (Councillor Strachan), Councillors Lambert and Town, and Parish Council representatives John Gilbey and Nick Hierons (nominated by the Aylesbury Vale Association of Local Councils - AVALC). The Chairman of the informal Grants panel attended the Cabinet meeting to elaborate upon the Panel's considerations.

The Cabinet report set out the key criteria that applicants needed to demonstrate when applying for NHB grant funding. Awards could be for up to 100% of the scheme cost and could support both capital and revenue projects (with a life of less than 6 years).

Prospective applicants were required to submit a preliminary 'Expression of Interest' (EOI) form to identify whether projects met the criteria, to discuss other possible funding sources (including Section 106), and avoid abortive work for potential applicants. The deadline for applications had been 15 December 2017.

For 2017/18, ten EOI's or enquiries had been received and seven Parish and Town Councils had subsequently submitted applications for consideration by the Panel, to a total value of £333,448 (of the £1,432,686 of funding available).

The Panel had also considered requests from both Wing and Aston Clinton Parish Councils to ring-fence NHB grant funding awarded in previous rounds because of unavoidable project delays. In considering the applications the Panel members had recommended funding for all seven projects with awards totalling £225,098.

The Panel had also recommended ring-fencing the grants previously awarded to Wing (£208,000) and Aston Clinton (£500,000).

The level of funding recommended and the reasons for the recommendations were outlined at Appendices A and B (financial spreadsheet) to the Cabinet report.

Once the level of funding was agreed, funding agreements with the successful applicants would be finalised, which would include timescales for the delivery of the various projects, to be monitored by the Grants Officer, and against which phased grant payments might be made. Appropriate recognition of the support provided by the NHB funding scheme would also be sought through media publicity and appropriate plaques or signage would be required on the schemes that were funded.

RESOLVED –

That the recommendations of the Informal New Homes Bonus Grants Panel, be approved, as set out in the schedules attached at Appendices A and B to the Cabinet report.

4. CROWD FUNDING

Cabinet received a report seeking agreement to establish an Aylesbury Vale crowdfunding platform to enable local groups to secure capital funding for their local projects.

Crowdfunding was a relatively well-established and recognised method of raising funds for large projects. Funding was achieved by raising relatively small contributions from a large number of people to reach an overall set target. Spacehive, which had been identified as the preferred crowdfunding platform partner for the Council, had been established in 2012 and had significant experience in assisting local authorities with crowdfunding initiatives.

Spacehive would provide a single portal where people with project ideas could build support from their community, ensure their plans were viable, pitch for funding from residents and partners at the same time, and share the impact created. Spacehive would also provide training for council staff and local good causes, provide marketing support and help leverage funding from external organisations for crowdfunding projects.

According to a recent report from Future Cities Catapult, 10% of councils across the UK were now using civic crowdfunding to shape their civic spaces. As budget pressures continued to impact on all aspects of the council's work the development of a local crowdfunding platform would allow further activity for the council in an enabling role and complement the Vale Lottery scheme.

Crowdfunding was not just about money, it was much more than that. Crowdfunding helped build more cohesive, resilient and sustainable communities with tools to actively shape their local area. It was proposed in the Cabinet report that the platform was funded from the Vale Lottery's community fund.

The Cabinet report contained details of how a crowdfunding platform would complement the Vale Lottery and explained the various stages of how it worked from project identification, through viability assessment and verification, legal contract (to ensure the project was delivered if the fundraising target was hit), and on how the funding was raised. Crowdfunding for a project normally lasted up to 70 days and could typically expect to lever 3.5 times an initial investment. Funds were pledged to projects through one of two secure payment platforms; PayPal or GoCardless. When pledges were made, pre-approved payments were set up with PayPal or GoCardless and once the campaign target had been reached the payments were processed, sending the payment directly to the Project Delivery Manager. Spacehive did not hold any of the money collected by the Project Delivery Manager.

A dedicated and branded Aylesbury Vale webpage would also be set up to host projects with access to administer the funding, along with consultancy expertise and other support to promote the success and raise awareness of the project. Spacehive earned what was an industry standard 5% thus a project costing £10,000 would have to set and meet a target of £10,500 before pledges were called in.

RESOLVED –

That Spacehive Ltd be appointed to provide and operate a local crowdfunding platform on behalf of Aylesbury Vale District Council for an initial period of up to three years.