

PEOPLE & PLACES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2020 commencing at 5.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Collins (Chairman)

Cllr. Pett (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Dr. Canet, Cheeseman, Perry Cole, Coleman, P. Darrington, Dyball, Foster, Hudson, Parkin and Raikes

Cllrs. Dickins, Griffiths and Grint were also present.

60. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Committee held on 16 June 2020, be approved and signed as a correct record subject to a spelling correction on page 26, Minute 58, fourth paragraph, first bullet point, that 'load' should read 'loan'.

61. Declarations of interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

62. Actions from Previous Meeting

There were none.

63. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder reported that Silver Sunday was being conducted as a week of special events to celebrate older people and had started on 4 October 2020. With the help of the voluntary sector and businesses, there was a range of events planned to improve the wellbeing of older residents, including activities that were available digitally and online. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council were supporting the 'Every Step Counts' Silver walks between them, and the Chairman had been helping deliver the Silver Sunday celebratory packs which contained an activity book (crosswords, quizzes or Sudoku), a card made by children from local primary schools, a booklet with help and guidance in keeping active with exercise and tips, as well as some free gadgets to help keep them safe.

Sevenoaks District Council, Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge and Kent Sport had produced a series of gentle exercise videos with Sue Larken, otherwise known as 'Pop-Up Sue', and these videos were aimed at older people with limited mobility to stay active whilst at home. There were three videos for different abilities, a chair-based programme, a standing workout and exercises set to music.

She also advised that a 'Certificate of thanks' had been sent out to all volunteers who had helped during lockdown as part of Care for our Community, signed by herself the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Council. It was a small gesture for a great deed and had been received very positively.

The Portfolio Holder also reported that the Police were targeting anti-social behaviour that had been on the increase in the District over the past four months. The Police and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) had been targeting hotspots, and their visibility was having a positive effect. Community protection warnings and notices (CPNs) had been issued and she believed the message that the behaviour would not be tolerated was getting out there. Speed checks were also being carried out within the District.

64. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit committee

There were none.

65. Budget 2021/22: Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)

The Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer - Finance & Trading, presented the report which set out updates to the 2021/22 budget within the existing framework of the 10-year budget and savings plan. The report presented no identified growth or savings items, and requested suggestions from Members, before finalising the budget for 2021/22.

Informed by the latest information from Government and discussions with Cabinet, it was proposed that the Council continued to set a revenue budget that assumed no direct funding from Government through the Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus. This would result in the Council continuing to be financially self-sufficient. To achieve this aim and to ensure a balanced budget position over the next 10-year period would be more challenging this year due to the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The budget process would be shorter with the Council's budget set at the November Council meeting instead of the February Council meeting. This should enable any changes to be implemented with effect from 1 April 2021 and minimise the period of uncertainty for staff.

The annual budget gap included in the report was £826,000 which was largely due to Covid-19. No growth or savings proposals had been identified in the report for this Committee but Members were asked for their suggestions in order to contribute to reducing the budget gap, and their recommendations would be considered by Cabinet as part of the process to set a balanced 10-year budget. By addressing the issues this year, the Council would once again be in a strong financial position that other councils would aspire to.

Members discussed suggestions that the Council could run its own lottery to help fund groups it currently grant aided, and that the council owned golf course could be hired out for functions/networking events.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) it be noted that there were no growth or savings proposals identified in Appendices F & G to the report;
- b) consideration be given to asking Officers to explore the following suggestions for income
 - i) a community lottery; and
 - ii) hiring out the the Council owned Lullingstone Golf Course for functions and business networking events.

66. Dunton Green Annual Report 2019-20

The Community Safety Manager presented the report which provided an overview of the Dunton Green Community Development project 2019-20. It outlined the main findings from the community consultations that had taken place along with an overview of the projects implemented and the additional funding received. The project had concluded on 31 March 2020 but Officers were still able to offer a support network

Members congratulated the Community Safety Manager and her team on the project's success and supported it as a good model to be rolled out as recommended to areas such as Edenbridge.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

67. Community Plan 2019 - 20 Annual Report

The Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer People & Places presented the annual report for the first year of the Sevenoaks District Community Plan 2019-22 which had been completed and progressed against key success measures for each priority within the plan.

Action 1: The Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer People & Places to find out and circulate information on the progression of the Bradbourne Lakes landscape improvements commencement date.

Members applauded the efforts of all involved in keeping to the community plan objectives despite the challenges of COVID-19 and lockdown.

In response to a question on road safety blackspots, the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer People & Places advised that Kent Fire & Rescue Service had been asked to collate the figures for further investigation.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that the Community Plan 2019-20 Annual report be noted.

68. Sevenoaks District Community Grants Scheme - End of Year 2019/20

The Community Safety Manager presented the end of year reports for the 2019/20 Community Grants.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That the outcome of the Community Grants awarded for the year 2019/20, and the impact of Covid-19 on some of the projects/works supported, be noted.

69. Sencio Community Leisure - Supporting the Recovery of Leisure in the District

The Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer People & Places presented the report which set out a request from Sencio Community Leisure for financial assistance to mitigate current financial difficulties related to the impact of the Coronavirus outbreak and subsequent recovery period.

To date, the District Council had agreed the following support:

- released the Management Fee of £26,950 for the whole year up front; and
- provided a 6 month payment holiday on Council loan repayments up to the end September 2020, equating to £44,000 for the quarter. The terms of which, defers payment of the loan without penalty for late payment. (In 2018, the Council provided Sencio with a loan of £600,000 repayable over ten years at a rate of 6% interest. The current outstanding loan repayment is £546,186.37).

Government COVID-19 health and safety guidelines and restrictions had limited business recovery. With the further restrictions that had recently been put in place it was highly unlikely that the government was going to lift social distancing measures in the short to medium term which would continue to limit business recovery.

Members considered Sencio's Recovery Plan, attached as Appendix A to the report. It was noted that the Council had requested Sencio provide its income and expenditure for the previous two years and its revised estimated income and expenditure projections for each centre and the golf centre up to December 2022 as a matter of urgency.

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Given the extraordinary circumstances of recent months, Sencio had requested ongoing assistance with its cash flow challenges and implications resulting from lockdown. Sencio had formally asked the Council to consider extending the current payment holiday on Sencio's loan repayments to the Council by a further 6 months to March 2021.

At her discretion the Chairman invited Councillor Grint to address the Committee. He expressed concerns and suggested that Cabinet be advised to include a condition requesting Sencio to seek professional advice from insolvency practitioners and to share that advice with the Council. It was confirmed and noted that the Council did have Councillor representation on the Sencio Board. It was further noted that there was to be a Sencio Board meeting the week after this meeting, where the matter could be raised by the Councillor representative. The Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer People & Places commented that Sencio's auditors had recommended that the Board seek legal advice, but not bring in an insolvency specialist at this stage.

Concern was expressed regarding the deliverability of Sencio's Recovery Plan, dated July 2020, and Sencio's current financial status to support recovery. In response to the concerns raised the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer People & Places advised that, if Members were minded, officers could be tasked with finding out the financial implications for Sencio and the Council should the request be agreed at Cabinet.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) Sencio's request for an extension to the current payment holiday on their loan repayments to the Council by a further 6 months to March 2021, be supported; and
- b) Officers be requested to explore the financial implications of COVID-19 for the delivery of leisure services in the Sevenoaks District to both Sencio and the Council.

70. Work Plan

The work plan was noted with the following additions: a Silver Sunday Update to the meeting in December 2020; and the Community Safety Action Plan and Community Grants reports, added to the March 2021 meeting.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 6.32 PM

CHAIRMAN