

**A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND ORGANISATION BOARD
WAS HELD ON 6 FEBRUARY 2018**

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

28. APOLOGIES

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

29. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 27 September 2017 be signed as a true and correct record.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hylands declared a pecuniary interest in the additional item Discretionary Rate Relief.

31. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

32. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

33. REVIEW OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY CULTURE & TOURISM SERVICES

Consideration was given to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive updating members on the outcome of the review of the Planning and Economic Prosperity Culture and Tourism (EPCT) services and seeks Members' approval for a new management structure for these service areas.

The Director of HR, Legal and Performance at Portsmouth City Council introduced himself to the Board. He advised that he had been asked to undertake the review, of two important services provided by the Council, by the Chief Executive.

The Board was advised that the review undertaken was thorough and that time had been spent in both departments and discussions had been undertaken with staff before reaching the recommendations in the report.

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The Board was advised two services were fortunate to have dedicated staff that were knowledgeable and had helped to see the service areas through challenging times as there had been a number of staff changes within Development Control and limited resources available to the Economic Prosperity team.

The challenges presenting the Council within the areas reviewed were detailed in the report at 2.4 and it was advised that proposals would allow for proper visibility and ownership from Council staff and would allow good services and activities to be delivered under the ownership of Council officers.

The Board was advised that regeneration and the work required around the local plan required additional resources and that a gap had also been identified in the provision of applying for external funding opportunities which could be a great benefit to the Borough.

The Council's events and destination promotion had been provided using limited resources and the proposed structural changes would allow greater ownership of these areas.

The proposals were to merge the services and appoint a Head of Planning and Regeneration; the proposals would also create an Economic Development and Regeneration Manger. The proposals included growth to the Economic Development and Regeneration team in the form of a funding officer and there were also proposals for growth within the Planning Policy Team. The finance for the proposed posts had been agreed and there was a degree of recycling of posts that had been deleted to support this.

Members welcomed the proposals and recognised that existing staff had been included within the review and praised the performance of the staff in place working with limited resources. Members paid tribute to their dedication and effort commending particularly the recent Business and Employment Fair held at Gosport Leisure Centre.

Members welcomed that additional staff in these areas would, in turn, boost the economy of the Borough

A Member welcomed the appointment of an external funding officer and advised that they hoped that they would explore the opportunities available through the Armed Forces Covenant.

Members welcomed the proposals to improve the services of Economic Development, Tourism and the Event Management as it was felt that the Borough had a great history of over 800 years, including a vital role in the D-Day embarkations and that Gosport was often left out of the commemorations of this important event.

Members hoped that investigations could be made in to re-establishing a better relationship on Harbour events, similar to the Portsmouth Harbour Economic Development Forum which had worked well with the Millennium Project.

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In answer to a Member's question, the Board was advised that the Economic Development Manager and the External Funding Officer would be externally recruited posts, as would the Principal Planning Officer and the Planning Officer in Planning Policy.

The Tourism and Project Officers were already in place and no one had been required to reapply for their jobs.

A second Project Officer would be appointed. One of the project officer posts would be to oversee all of the Council's projects including both those on Council land, and on other sites such as Haslar, which were also a corporate priority.

The existing Events Officer post would be retained to bring together and coordinate the various events undertaken by the Council, currently delivered by various departments.

A Member reiterated the importance of the reintroduction of a lead officer for Economic Development and Regeneration, to support and promote the town and welcomed the benefits it would bring to the Borough. They also welcomed the use of a dedicated officer with expertise in applying for external funding.

Members acknowledged that the Borough had significant heritage and museums and hoped that the knowledge of the Officers could help to support and make the most of the Borough's assets. Members also welcomed the use of expertise to support the redevelopment of the Bus Station site.

In answer to a Member's question, it was clarified that it was anticipated that the External Funding Officer's role would be self-sustainable from the income generated by the post holder.

Members reiterated that they welcomed the proposal and looked forward to the results the new teams would achieve for the Borough and congratulated the officers on the report.

Members commended the work of the Tourist Information Office and welcomed that it was still an available service within the Borough. They advised that they welcomed the opportunity for the Council to work more closely with them. It was acknowledged that the remit of the Office had changed and that they played an excellent role in promoting the Borough to the Borough residents.

Members acknowledged that the Borough was host to the incredibly successful Heritage Open Days and had been the first Borough to offer these. The Tourist Information Centre was valuable in the support of this event.

Members reiterated the importance of supporting and preserving the Borough's museums and heritage.

Members were advised that the process for the recruitment for the new roles would begin immediately if the proposals were agreed by the Board and that discussions had already been ongoing between Portsmouth City Council Officers and the Head of Planning and Regeneration to explore working more closely together on destination marketing for both Portsmouth and Gosport.

Members unanimously agreed to the proposals.

RESOLVED: That the Board

1. Notes the outcome of the review as set out in the sections below
2. Approves the creation of a new service - Planning & Regeneration, with the proposed structure shown at Appendix B of the report
3. Approves the creation of the following new posts:
 - Head of Planning & Regeneration
 - Principal Planning Officer (Policy)
 - Planning Officer (Policy)
 - Economic Development & Regeneration Manager
 - Funding Officer
4. Approves the deletion of the following existing posts:
 - Head of Planning Services
 - Principal Economic Development Officer (vacant)
 - Admin Officer (vacant)
5. Approves the increase in Planning Fees in line with government regulations

34. ANY OTHER ITEMS

The Board was advised that there was an additional item for consideration on Discretionary Rate Relief.

35. DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

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

By reason of special circumstances, the Chairman determined that the following item be considered at this meeting notwithstanding the fact that the item had not been available for public inspection in accordance with the provisions of Section 100B(4)(a) of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Treasurer requesting consideration be given to proposed amendments to the Council's Discretionary Revaluation Rate Relief policy to ensure that Local Businesses can receive the maximum amount of relief possible under the scheme over the next 4 years.

The Board was advised that to date, the Council had only allocated £31,000 of the £118,000 pot for discretionary rate relief for 2017/18.

The Board was advised that the review proposed would help small business both in 2017/18 and 2018/19 and that if the amended policy was approved it was intended to initiate immediate payments so that approximately g £100,000 of the available funding would promptly be utilised. The proposals were to reduce the qualifying increase from 10% to 5% and to increase the amount of relief awarded to 65%.

In answer to a Member's question, the Board was advised that the proposed extension to include businesses in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight would mean that businesses would now be eligible to apply for the scheme if they had businesses in multiple locations within the County, whereas previously only businesses located solely in Gosport could apply.

In answer to a further question the Board was advised that 21 businesses had claimed rate relief to date and that details of the businesses could be provided if requested. The Board was also advised that the 21 businesses would also benefit from the amended proposal, if approved.

RESOLVED: The Board approves:-

- (i) Amendments to the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy
- (ii) The extension of the temporary discretionary public house rate relief to 31st March 2019

36. ANY OTHER ITEMS

There were none.

CHAIRMAN

Concluded at 18.45