

LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING 19 JANUARY 2023

Members Present: Paul Osborn (Chairman) Calvin Horner
David Andrews (Vice Chairman) Ross Houston
James Asser Heather Johnson
Ken Ayling Christopher Kennedy
Susan Barker Graham McAndrew
Nicholas Bennett Gordon Nicholson
John Bevan Suzanne Rutland-Barsby
Janet Burgess Terry Wheeler
David Gardner John Wyllie
Lesley Greensmyth
Steven Heather Clive Souter (Deputy for Mike Garnett)

Apologies Received From: Josh Blacker, Nesil Caliskan, Mike Garnett, Mary Sartin, Marshall Vance, Abdul Wahid, Holly Whitbread

Officers Present: Shaun Dawson - Chief Executive
Beryl Foster - Deputy Chief Executive
Dan Buck - Corporate Director
Jon Carney - Corporate Director
Keith Kellard - Head of Finance
Julie Smith - Head of Legal
Victoria Yates - Head of Human Resources
Michael Sterry - Senior Accountant
Paul Roper - Head of Project & Funding Delivery
Stephen Bromberg - Head of Communications
Sandra Bertschin - Committee & Members' Services Manager
Lindsey Johnson - Committee Services Officer

Also present: James Newman - S151 Officer (London Borough of Enfield)
Laurie Elks - member of the public

Part I

19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

20 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2022 be approved and signed.

21 PUBLIC SPEAKING

Laurie Elks addressed the meeting, including:

- it had been incredibly difficult to get capital funding assigned to countryside and landscape projects over many years;

- capital funding through contortions of S106 monies had been allocated for the Middlesex Filter Beds project but this had yet to be delivered and the filter beds had been dry for over 2 years which was unsatisfactory;
- Walthamstow Marshes was a great open space close to Low Hall and every Park Plan since 1986 had included the proposed connection of these two sites. The impression was that this would never happen due to lack of funding;
- the capital receipt for sale of Mile & Langley Nursery was being used for venue improvements and borrowing for the Ice Centre redevelopment. Members were asked to commit any future capital receipts to countryside projects;
- projects such as the Wildlife Discovery Centre, East India Dock Basin and St Pauls Field were welcomed but more could be done and officers should be instructed to focus on countryside projects which would align with the objectives in setting up the Regional Park;
- it was unlikely that the youth hostel type accommodation proposed for the Waterworks site would provide a revenue stream.

In response it was advised:

- for the youth hostel accommodation at Cheshunt the Authority had entered into an arrangement which provided a future revenue stream which was working well and it was proposed to apply a similar principle at the Waterworks; and
- delay to the Middlesex Filter Beds project had been frustrating but it was hoped to progress soon to see the return of water to the site.

The Chairman noted the request for capital funding for open spaces projects but commented that the major sports venues did require considerable capital investment.

22 2023/24 REVEUE BUDGET AND LEVY

Paper A/4329/23

The Chief Executive gave a presentation including:

- summary of budget position 2022/23 and 2023/24;
- budget challenges 2023/24;
- outturn 2022/23 and draft budget 2023/24;
- addressing the budget deficit;
- savings and additional income;
- levy proposal for 2023/24;
- summary budget 2023/24;
- general reserves;
- medium term financial forecast;
- longer term income and savings initiatives;
- longer term major investment schemes; and
- conclusions and recommendations.

The S151 Officer advised:

- over half the initial £3.2m budget deficit was being met from internally generated savings and additional income, with the proposed levy increase meeting about a quarter of the deficit with a small contribution from reserves;
- this year was unlike any other so all levers had to be used and reserves would have a part to play;
- reserves were projected to drop below the policy level of £3-4m but there was a plan to replenish over the medium term;

- most London boroughs would be using one-off funding to balance their 2023/24 budgets in light of the economic climate; and
- a reserves policy of £3-4m was considered appropriate for the Authority.

The Chairman remarked that the proposed budget struck the right balance between savings and efficiencies, use of reserves and the levy. The proposed levy could be considered as an energy surcharge as utility costs represented approximately half of the proposed levy increase. An increase to the levy was required to meet the extraordinary costs being faced by the Authority but it was hoped to return the levy to a downward trend as soon as possible.

Member comments included:

- proposal from the Labour Group to increase the levy by 9.5% which would raise an additional £49K to restore funding for the Community Access Fund (CAF) with a small contribution to reserves;
- commendation to officers for the savings identified;
- the multiple references in Paper E/795/23 for a strong reserves policy and as previously highlighted by the external auditors the unsustainability of using reserves to fund budget deficits would support a prudent levy increase of 9.5% to maintain CAF funding with a small contribution to reserves;
- the unfortunate position the Authority finds itself in now in having to substantially increase the levy could have been mitigated if the Labour Group's past proposals for small increases to the levy had been implemented instead of delivering a 56% decrease in real terms;
- when setting future levies it should be recognised that there could be unexpected financial pressures and whilst not being profligate this should be accommodated to secure the Authority's sustainability;
- the London Borough of Waltham Forest had contributed £1m towards community programmes focused around the redeveloped Lee Valley Ice Centre and it appeared that the borough was subsidising the Authority's activities as some of this funding had been included in the proposed budget;
- poor public transport links within the London Borough of Waltham Forest meant that it would not be easy for all of the borough's residents to access the Ice Centre;
- the CAF supported the vision and objectives in setting up the Regional Park, to provide a lung for the residents of London, Herts and Essex;
- current users of the Regional Park were unrepresentative of the diversity of London residents and the CAF was a means of attracting those people to the Park and enabling low income residents to access the sporting activities available;
- there was huge potential to attract more people to the Regional Park who could then make return visits;
- the CAF was used to support school travel costs in accessing the Regional Park and by reducing the available funding this would have a detrimental impact.

The Chairman advised that the S106 agreement with the London Borough of Waltham Forest would be honoured in supporting community projects over a ten year period as requested by the borough. The redeveloped Ice Centre was a regional facility but its location would make it of great benefit to the residents of Waltham Forest.

Proposed by Ross Houston, seconded by Heather Johnson, levy increase of 9.5%:

Vote: 9 for (Labour Members and Liberal Democrat) and 12 against (Conservative Members)

Vote for recommended 9% increase: 12 for (Conservative Members and Liberal Democrat), 1 against (Nicholas Bennett) and 8 Abstentions (Labour Members)

- (1) **the proposed Levy increase of 9% for 2023/24 as recommended by the Executive Committee; and**
- (2) **review the medium term general reserves policy to allow a short term movement in the minimum level of reserves to below £3m was approved.**

23 PROPOSED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23 (REVISED) TO 2026/27 Paper A/4330/23

The Head of Finance introduced the report.

- (1) **the revised capital programme for 2022/23 (revised) to 2026/27 as set out in Appendix A to Paper E/793/23;**
- (2) **the proposed capital funding to meet the planned capital programme as set out in Appendix B to Paper E/793/23; and**
- (3) **the use of capital receipts to part finance the redevelopment costs of the Lee Valley Ice Centre as set out in paragraph 9 of Paper E/793/23 was approved.**

24 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2022/23 TO 2026/27 Paper A/4331/23

The Head of Finance introduced the report.

- (1) **the Capital Strategy as an overarching strategy document as set out in Paper E/794/23 and Appendices B-D attached as Annex A to Paper A/4331/23; and**
- (2) **the Prudential Indicators for 2022/23 to 2026/27 as set out in Appendix A to Paper E/794/23 attached as Annex A to Paper A/4331/23 was approved.**

Laurie Elks left the meeting.

25 HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY UPDATES Paper A/4328/23

The Head of Human Resources introduced the report.

- (1) **the Retirement Policy as set out in Appendix A to Paper E/788/22 attached at Annex A to Paper A/4328/23; and**
- (2) **the Early Payment of Pension Benefits Policy as set out in Appendix B to Paper E/788/22 attached as Annex A to Paper A/4328/23 was approved.**

26 DATA PROTECTION POLICY Paper A/4327/23

The Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Legal introduced the report.

- (1) **the draft Data Protection Policy attached as Appendix A to Paper A/4327/23 was approved.**

27 ACCESS TO INFORMATION POLICY

Paper A/4326/23

The Head of Legal introduced the report.

A Member proposed that requests in writing should be made to the Authority, not Myddelton House as currently detailed, in paragraph 5.2.

The Chairman advised that he had requested a review of access to meeting information procedures to enable interested parties to receive as much notice as possible of forthcoming key decisions.

(1) the draft Access to Information Policy attached as Appendix A to Paper A/4326/23 subject to amendment as above of paragraph 5.2 was approved.

28 NEXT MEETING OF THE AUTHORITY

It was noted that the next meeting of the Authority will be held on Thursday, 27 April 2023 at 2.00pm at Myddelton House, Bulls Cross, Enfield, Middlesex, EN2 9HG.

29 REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF MEMBERSHIP

The Chairman advised that 2 Members had requested an extension to their membership as they had not attended a meeting for 6 months.

Members declined the 2 requests for extension of membership.

Chairman

Date

The meeting started at 2.00pm and ended at 3.16pm