

Ashford Borough Council: Trading and Enterprise Board

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board held on Microsoft Teams on the **23rd February 2021**.

Present:

Cllr. Bell (Chairman)

Cllrs. Clokie, Feacey, Pickering.

Cllr. Ovenden (Observer).

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2(c) Councillor Clokie attended as Substitute Member for Councillor Shorter.

Apologies:

Cllr. Shorter.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Buchanan, Wedgbury, White.

Director of Finance and Economy, Head of Finance and IT (in her Capacity as Director of A Better Choice for Property Ltd), Head of Environment and Land Management, Commercial Development Manager (A Better Choice for Property Ltd), Accountancy Manager, Member Services Manager (Operational).

228 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 22nd September 2020 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

229 Commercialisation Strategy – Quarter 3 Update

The Head of Environment and Land Management introduced the report which gave an overview of progress to date on the setting up of a performance management strategy for the overarching Commercialisation Strategy. It outlined achievements and gave an update on the service led projects the strategy supported. The report also explored the next phase of work required to sustain revenue streams and embed the strategy into longer term ambitions, through the promotion and championing of commercialisation and, ultimately, culture change.

She advised that there had been discussions over the possibility of selling the model, as there did appear to be a gap in the market, particularly as far as Local Authorities were concerned, and this would continue to be explored.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Environment and Land Management advised that they would do all they could to ensure the model did not become over bureaucratic. Staff were currently not finding that the case and the tools in place, such as the hub, were helping in terms of being able to share best practice and learn lessons across projects. The aim had always been for the process to be slick, but there had been some up front work required to get a solid structure in place. It was important to have a good reporting structure and a process for monitoring achievements against the targets that they had set for themselves. With regard to having a 'suggestion box' for staff to feed in to, she advised that in the remote working era this was being facilitated by an electronic portal that did the same thing.

Some newer opportunities had arisen in recent months including social lettings and a facilities management company for newer developments. These projects were both in their infancy and would be explored further, along with a few others. One of the areas that was already being looked in to was the Lifeline service and the opportunities to expand this more widely into other areas. They had moved to a digital portal which would allow them to look at additional healthcare products. Digitising Lifeline would potentially allow for the offer to be expanded.

Resolved:

That the report be received and endorsed.

230 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

That pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item, as it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure of exempt information hereinafter specified by reference to Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act, where in the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

231 A Better Choice for Property Limited – Company Update

The Commercial Development Manager for A Better Choice for Property Ltd introduced the confidential report which updated the Board on the Company's business activities to the end of January 2021.

He answered Members questions on the content of the report and the rental levels set by the Company. Officers clarified the arrangements for repaying the loan facility to the Council and Members commented how the Company appeared to be offering a good return on investment.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact Member Services
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