

## Trading and Enterprise Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, on the **28<sup>th</sup> June 2022**.

### **Present:**

Cllr. Bell (Chairman)

Cllrs. Forest, Shorter.

Cllr. Ovenden (Observer).

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

### **Apologies:**

Cllrs. Feacey, Pickering.

### **Also Present:**

Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Customer, Technology and Finance (in her Capacity as Director of A Better Choice for Property Ltd), Interim Service Lead for Finance, Commercial Development Manager (A Better Choice for Property Ltd), Member Services Manager.

## **62 Declarations of Interest**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Minute No.</b>
Shorter	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a former member of the group which previously operated out of the site in question.	66

## **63 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **64 Commercialisation Strategy Update**

The Director of Customer, Technology and Finance introduced the report which updated the Board on the progress of projects currently being delivered and the

activities of the new Digital and Commercial Board which was formed in March 2022. She also updated on proposals to appoint a Commercial Officer to facilitate and drive new projects.

In response to questions, the Director of Customer, Technology and Finance advised that the Officer would be there to support managers and teams with new projects as well as monitoring and reviewing projects and best practice elsewhere to identify potential gaps and improvements. They would not be the lead on individual projects though and this would be left to those with the specialist expertise. Members considered there was still a need to properly embed commercialisation across the organisation and its culture, and they looked forward to that happening when there were more demonstrable success stories to focus on.

The Chairman said that in his view there needed to be more focus on “making money”. He understood commercialisation was also about “not spending money” and an element of invest to save, but he hoped future reports could focus on the figures involved in some of the early success stories such as green waste, as well as the potential income figures from emerging projects such as CCTV/Lifeline, installation of Electric Vehicle charging points etc. Another Member said it was important not to separate commercialisation from the Council’s Carbon Neutral agenda and he thought that all emerging commercial projects should be viewed through the lenses of “how can we make more money from this?” AND “how can we make this greener?”

**Resolved:**

**That the update be received and noted.**

## **65 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 items, 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.**

## **66 A Better Choice for Property Limited – Acquisition of Site**

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that this item had been deferred from today’s agenda. The valuation had only been received the previous day and the Council wanted to take time to digest the information and report back with firm recommendations. He proposed that an additional Trading and Enterprise Board

meeting be arranged during the next few weeks to consider this report. That approach was agreed.

A Member expressed some disappointment that the information had not been made available prior to this meeting. He also said he thought it was important that this Board received some sort of assurance of the Company's capacity and resilience to deliver this and other large schemes concurrently. The Director of Customer, Technology and Finance said that the Company was having an Away Day soon and would be looking at its business plan going forward and its capacity requirements. She said she would be happy to invite the Chairman of this Board along to that part of the day. The Commercial Development Manager (A Better Choice for Property Ltd.) advised that the appointment of an Operations Manager (as referred to in the next agenda item) would also assist in this work.

**Resolved:**

**That this item be deferred and brought back to a future meeting.**

## **67 A Better Choice for Property Limited – Appointment of Director and Operations Manager**

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the confidential report which sought to extend the appointment of the Company's External Director for a further three years. The report also proposed that the Operations Manager post be approved for permanent appointment. This role would replace the currently approved post of Property Manager.

A Member commented that he liked the way the 'Financial Implications' section of the report was explained and considered this approach should be carried over to other reports where possible.

**Recommended:**

- That**
- (i) the appointment of a further three year term for the External Company Director be approved.**
  - (ii) the appointment and Job Description (Appendix A to the report refers) of the Operations Manager be approved.**

## **68 A Better Choice for Property Limited – Drawdown of Equity Funding**

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the confidential report which sought endorsement of the drawdown of funding and subsequent share issue as detailed in the report, consistent with the approach adopted by this Board in September 2020.

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**Resolved:**

**That the drawdown of funding and subsequent share issue be endorsed.**

## **69 A Better Choice for Property Limited – Company Management Update**

The confidential report provided a portfolio update from the Company on its activities, income, void levels and arrears for the period August 2021 to May 2022.

The Commercial Development Manager answered specific questions on the current performance of the Company in terms of its current rental portfolio and the current market in Ashford.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted.**

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