

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 9 MAY 2022 - 1.30 PM



**PRESENT:** Councillor D Mason (Chairman), Councillor A Miscandlon (Vice-Chairman), Councillor G Booth, Councillor D Connor, Councillor S Count, Councillor A Hay, Councillor M Purser, Councillor R Wicks and Councillor F Yeulett

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor M Cornwell and Councillor M Humphrey

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Amy Brown (Head of Legal and Governance), Peter Catchpole (Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer), Jo Evans (Private Sector Housing Officer), Dan Horn (Acting Assistant Director), Phil Hughes (Acting Assistant Director), Jaime-Lee Taylor (Creativity and Cultural Development Officer), and Niall Jackson (Member Services)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor C Boden, Councillor S Hoy, Councillor S Tierney

## **OSC47/21 PREVIOUS MINUTES.**

The minutes of the meeting of 7 March 2022 were confirmed and signed.

## **OSC48/21 UPDATE ON PREVIOUS ACTIONS.**

Members considered the update on previous actions and made the following comments:

- Councillor Wicks expressed the view that the figures provided for the Levelling Up funding were disappointing compared to the needs in Fenland and stated that £24,000 seemed awfully low based on the need of the area. Councillor Mason agreed with Councillor Wicks point and informed the panel that he had recently written to the MP stating that the levelling up funding was not at the level it should be and stated that he would be following this up with the MP. Councillor Count noted that they had been provided with a technical answer but that it would be useful to get a comparator against the neighbouring authorities such as Cambridge City and Huntingdonshire. Councillor Booth identified that they had only listed one fund in the response which did not provide the full picture and agreed that a fuller response with comparators would be more useful. He stated that he was hopeful that this could be tied in with the visit from the Mayor. Councillor Miscandlon supported the points stating that it would be useful to know what the neighbouring authorities were receiving and stated that the levelling up fund was supposed to make areas level.

## **OSC49/21 PROGRESS ON HOUSING ENFORCEMENT POLICY**

Members considered the update on the progress on Housing Enforcement Policy. Dan Horn, Jo Evans and Councillor Hoy were welcomed to the meeting.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Miscandlon thanked the team for their report stating that it was very comprehensive and deserved merit.
- Councillor Booth made the point that Members had previously asked to receive tracked change documents and wanted officers to continue doing so. He stated that the principles on when to take enforcement action may be more useful as one appendix at the back for presentation as they seemed to be repeated throughout the policy.

- Councillor Hoy outlined the changes that had happened across the service in the past few years and how this was reflected in the policy. She informed the panel that they now have a different way of working after employing a further two officers through funding from controlling migration and that these new officers had been utilised for door knocking and taking action which had helped improve housing standards. Councillor Hoy explained that most of the work had been focused on Wisbech as this had been where the funding had been allocated and where the most work was required and that despite the fund running out they had wanted to keep the officers on and that this had been a reason behind introducing fining. She explained that the fines had been aimed at individuals who were breaking the law and needed to be fined and that the profits from this had then been used to fund the service, with the new approach working well with several fines having been served with no issues or problems. Councillor Hoy stated that they had not been served when they had not needed to be and that all tribunals had been successful up to date, with the team having all done a great job and she wanted to thank them for this. She explained that one big change had been the introduction of energy performance certificates and that they can now fine landlords that do not have these in place. Councillor Hoy informed the panel that the role of the Empty Homes Officer was also now reflected in the policy, with the policy having proven successful and hoped that it would continue to be.
- Councillor Hay stated that there was a team visiting households as part of the Ukrainian hosting scheme and asked whether this was impacting on the day-to-day work. Jo Evans explained that there had been around 30 visits so far and that Housing Officers had done extra hours outside of work for this so it had not impacted their normal role. Dan Horn explained that costs for the work being undertaken would be recovered from the Government scheme.
- Councillor Miscandlon asked whether there had been an increase in overall inspections due to Covid and whether the inspections were random or intelligence led. Jo Evans informed him that they worked using both but that they prioritised intelligence from organisations such as the Police and self-references from residents. Councillor Miscandlon asked whether they had seen an increase in the number of reports regarding landlords being negligent and blaming it on Covid. Jo Evans explained that the team had to understand that contractors were hard to acquire during Covid and that the electrical legislation change also resulted in a surge for contractors, which had meant that the team had been quite lenient in letting them hit compliance by 2021 if they could provide email trails to show that they could not get contractors due to Covid. She stated that there had been less property inspections during Covid due to the restrictions on entering properties but that this work had picked up as soon as they were permitted to.
- Councillor Mason asked whether the amount for the fines were fixed statutorily or whether there was a level of movement on the amount of fine allowed. Councillor Hoy explained that there was a matrix set out in the document depending on the level of severity and that this would be assessed when the officers served the fine. She informed the Panel that Dan Horn undertook the next check and that an extra test was in place to make sure the fine had been scored correctly. Councillor Mason asked whether the income was recycled back into service. Councillor Hoy confirmed that it was.
- Councillor Booth queried whether the policy report should fall under Licensing Committee going forward due to their experience of looking at similar policies. Councillor Hoy agreed that there was no reason as to why it should not go to Licensing Committee but that the item was on the work programme for Overview and Scrutiny. She stated that she was happy as long as the report was out there in the public domain to allow people to pass comment and make corrections as needed. Councillor Hoy explained that going forward she was keen to bring the subject of support to landlords before the panel to scrutinise whether there was more that they could do in this area, clarifying that landlords were providing a service and that private landlords were needed in Fenland. She noted the concerns regarding changes down the road for landlords, giving the example of HMO landlords who must pay the bills for the property and provide minimum standards of heat and stated that this can be hard due to the recent increase in energy costs causing some to struggle to pay the bills and then get

fined for not doing so. Councillor Hoy explained that they did not want to lose these landlords as this would result in extra people to house. She made the point that there were always unintended issues with policy making and said that they were keen to look at ways to mitigate these. Councillor Booth explained that the panel were not a decision-making committee whereas Licensing were but agreed that it would be valuable to look at support areas for landlords.

- Councillor Miscandlon asked what was being done to encourage landlords to come to Fenland. Councillor Hoy explained that they do a lot with speaking to landlords and assisting with property searching but they were working with a very small team. She said that ideas were good to hear along with any suggestions on how to implement them and stated that this was an area worth exploring.

**The update on progress on Housing Enforcement Policy was noted for information.**

*(Councillor Count left the meeting for the duration of the item due to a conflict of interest)*

## **OSC50/21   CULTURE STRATEGY**

Members considered the update on the Culture Strategy. Phil Hughes, Jaime-Lea Taylor and Councillor Boden were welcomed to the meeting.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Booth raised his concern that Councillor Seaton was not present as portfolio holder. He reminded the Panel that Councillor Mrs French was absent at the last meeting and stated that it was concerning that the appropriate portfolio holders were not attending. Councillor Boden explained that Councillor Seaton had a legitimate medical reason preventing his attendance at the meeting. Councillor Booth accepted this but reiterated the need to make the appropriate efforts to attend when possible.
- Councillor Yeulett questioned where Fenland District Council stood in the Culture Strategy and asked who was responsible for the overall delivery. Phil Hughes stated that it was not Fenland's job to deliver and that the role was to facilitate a network and link people together. Councillor Boden explained that there was not a top-down approach to imposing culture on Fenland, referring to previous comments made at the Combined Authority which described Fenland as a cultural desert and exclaimed that Fenland did not need culture imposed on the area. He stated that the aim was to encourage the growth of the current culture and for facilities to become more available. Phil Hughes informed the panel that Jaime-Lea was a local person and that the Arts Council were simply working as facilitators alongside Jaime-Lea.
- Councillor Miscandlon stated that he was encouraged by the expansion of the team and that it was heartening to see that Fenland were facilitating the growth of culture.
- Councillor Hay stated that there had been a visit from the Arts Council and a meeting with Wisbech Town Council, with as usual all the focus being on Wisbech and asked whether the other market towns were represented. Councillor Boden explained that there had been two meetings with one focused on Wisbech and another in March which covered the other market towns and rural areas. Councillor Hay informed them that Chatteris Town Council had known nothing about this and had not been given the chance to participate. Councillor Mason noted that Jaime-Lea had stated that she would be happy to organise a meeting with Whittlesey Town Council and that this would no doubt expand to the other areas if they approached her. Phil Hughes explained that Jaime-Lea and the Cultural Steering Group were all working together and if Councillors knew of any organisations in their areas they should get in contact with that group. Councillor Mason asked how they would get in touch and Phil Hughes commented that he would provide the details after the meeting.
- Councillor Wicks asked for clarification on the way forward questioning whether Jaime-Lea would be the point of contact for all organisations wanting to organise events and asked whether she would be the focal point for details of what will be out there for them. Jaime-

Lea stated that this was the intention, explaining that they currently had a group of 38 that was delivering a strategy and that they were in the early stages of building an action plan for that. She agreed that the biggest challenge was that people did not know what was going on and informed the Panel that they had just agreed funding for a website for the strategy to make it accessible and open for more people. Jaime-Lea stated that the current connections were who they had known to start with and that the group was open for more people to join and then showcase what is available on the website. She told members that she had a good relationship with the Communications Team at Fenland who had been helping share news through Fenland District Council's online platforms. Councillor Wicks stated that he was involved with a few organisations and asked if he could put them in contact with her. Jaime-Lea replied that she would be happy to receive anything creative or cultural.

- Councillor Booth noted that a lot of the talk so far had surrounded the towns, but that Fenland had a large rural area and an issue of rural isolation making it difficult travel to the towns. Regarding the website, he stated that they had previously found a lower uptake of internet usage rurally and asked whether they were looking into other ways to get the rural community involved, making the point that they should look at what they already know about within the Council and utilise that. He reminded them about the village newsletters and stated that these were a good tool for making people aware of what is happening.
- Councillor Count asked how they were going to measure success and what the outcomes would be. Jaime-Lea explained that this was quite difficult as the project was in development so they would be looking for a change over the time-period. She stated that they would show productivity through actions and moving forward, and that success would come down to more funded projects in the future. Councillor Count summarised that they would expect the arts funding to increase and that the project would end up being standalone once she was removed from the equation at the end of the two years.
- Councillor Count made the point that members had seen versions of this strategy over the years but that the projects were always transitional and came to an end without leaving a legacy. He asked what the views of aspiring to a heritage legacy through physical results like statues were and how this fell in and whether this was part of the networking. Jaime-Lea explained that this had been a common concern for herself and those she had spoken to. She had been thinking about this a lot and this was why she was trying to involve the communities to make sure that it was not just a two-year project.
- Councillor Purser stated that there were many hidden gems in Fenland and felt that this was what they were trying to emphasise. He noted the importance of likeminded people working together as there was so much negativity. Jaime-Lea agreed with Councillor Purser's comments and stated that it boiled down to promotion as despite there being a lot of special things already people were not sure about how to get involved or did not know about them at all. Councillor Purser replied that if people do not know about the opportunities in Fenland, then how could they bring this to the forefront. Councillor Mason noted that one possibility was through the magazines and that Councillors can help in that sense by signposting her to these.
- Councillor Booth suggested that they could put out an article in the local newsletters to raise awareness and get more people involved. He explained that he was a member of Parson Drove Village Hall, which had received quite a lot of money from the National Lottery for an extension and had been informed that there should be a fair amount of funding from the Arts Committee to explore the possibility of touring shows and asked how they can ensure that these local facilities are used. Jaime-Lea stated that the touring idea had come up a lot, with an arts company wanting to put on an event would automatically go to the largest towns. Due to the geography of the area, she agreed that the touring idea would work well. Jaime-Lea informed members that she works closely with the Chief Executive of Babylon Arts in Ely who were currently looking at funding for rural village halls and stated that this was something she could investigate more and pass on details if she could find anything that would work in that area too. Councillor Booth stated that his issue was also around paying for these things themselves as they can be too expensive to afford. He specified that if the Arts Council was funding this, then it needs to be built into any strategy going forward.

- Councillor Yeulett asked whether they were involving schools as they did a lot culturally already. Jaime-Lea stated that they had not worked directly with schools yet but that they had worked closely with organisations such as 20-20 productions to think about what they would like to see and had worked with the Young Fenland Cultural Consortium to look at how they can have their voice as part of the strategy going forward. She emphasised the need for child and teenage engagement and the need to bring them into what is happening as they were the future. Councillor Yeulett stated that schools were underused.
- Councillor Mason asked whether the Arts Council primarily supported existing projects. Jaime-Lea informed him that there was no definition for what the money could be spent on, they were simply looking to support Fenland and help amplify what was happening already. She informed them that there was a broader project from the Arts Council than just focusing on monetary help but when it did come to that they had two relationship managers available in Fenland to give 1-1 advice for anyone wanting to make applications.
- Councillor Miscandlon noted that senior schools had good facilities for productions which could be used and should be looked into.
- Councillor Wicks reminded the panel not to forget the primary schools, stating that they all have a heavy involvement in the Straw Bear Festival and play a key part in the whole makeup.
- Councillor Booth asked whether they had any contact with Cambridgeshire County Council as there was funding available there which may be accessible.

**The Culture Strategy was noted for information.**

## **OSC51/21 COMMERCIAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY AND INVESTMENT BOARD UPDATE**

Members considered the Commercial Investment Strategy and Investment Board Update. Peter Catchpole, Councillor Boden and Councillor Tierney were welcomed to the meeting.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Mason recognised that things had slowed down recently but it would be interesting to know what developments were likely to proceed in the next year. Councillor Boden replied that he could not give a definitive answer to that question as opportunities crop up unexpectedly, the Council had to be prepared to move quickly on the internal evaluation and with external assistance for assurance when making any decision to move forward. He informed the panel that they had agents to notify them of new opportunities when they present themselves. In terms of planned development over the following year, Councillor Boden advised they were developing the Elms in Chatteris followed by the Nene Waterfront in Wisbech and explained that both projects were being pushed forward together. He stated that lots of the preparation work had already been completed and that they were moving forward on these developments.
- Councillor Mason noted that any investment had many consultancy fees and asked where the Council stood regarding consultancy. Councillor Boden explained that they were constrained by being a public body despite having Fenland Futures Limited (FFL) set up as a subsidiary company and commented that this required them to go above and beyond what would be required by a purely commercial organisation. He clarified that with the two projects mentioned, there would be no external consultancy for a valuation if they were undertaken commercially but due to the Council being a public body, they were required to undertake this to show accountability and transparency. Councillor Boden made the point that with the transfer from the Council to its wholly owned subsidiary there were Section 151 legal obligations which could not be satisfied by using inhouse staff as it would not stand up to scrutiny making the use of external consultants absolutely necessary.
- Councillor Yeulett asked whether they had made a profit yet and, if so, how much it was. He also asked how they saw the Investment Board's activity progressing in the current economic climate. Councillor Boden explained that in Council terms they were not and never would be making a profit as they were not a profit-making organisation and in terms of

revenue, he informed the panel that, as of yet, they had not started any development and so were not producing any revenue. He explained that the company had not yet completed its first year and had made no sales so there had been no profit, it would show a loss in the first year and that this was always the case for any development company. Councillor Boden stated that the way that the Investment Board works and acts was not affected by the economic environment and that only the potential outcomes of the various opportunities would be affected and whilst it was quite certain that there would be a difficult economic time ahead it did also create opportunities for the Council. He said that the challenges with inflation and build costs had been identified, and that they knew how much leeway they had. Commenting on the housing market itself, Councillor Boden stated that as a development company they ultimately need to be able to sell the houses and flats built, with an integral part of the probability of the enterprise is how much the houses are sold for which relies on the local market and national financial situation. He admitted that they had little idea on what would happen over the next two years and found it hard to believe what the experts were saying as they got the predictions completely wrong during the Covid period when they stated that housing prices would fall significantly. He made the point that there is the need to be prepared for variations in either direction and explained that it would force them to pay more attention to sensitivity analysis and what would happen if the assumptions were wrong.

- Councillor Yeulett agreed that there would be volatility and asked whether they believed they would be adaptable enough to match that. He asked whether they knew when they would be able to provide a figure or indication of how they performed over the year and questioned whether they would be reporting this on an annual basis. Councillor Boden explained that the ability to rapidly adapt was one of the reasons why they set up FFL in the first place as it allowed decision making to take place quickly. He informed the Panel that there had been an informal meeting between FFL and Investment board which had been valuable as it allowed them to challenge the work done so far by the FFL board which would not have been possible in a normal official Council format. Councillor Boden stated that they were able to go into a lot of detail that was commercially sensitive and subject the directors to a robust challenge which was matched by their response. He stated that the directors were able to achieve what they had as they were not subject to the normal Council process and were able to proceed with what was requested and subsequently challenged allowing the process to move significantly faster. He surmised that they may need to maintain or increase their “fleetness of foot” as they need to be adaptable with the volatility especially as they do not know which direction it will be volatile in.
- Councillor Mason stated that the concern for the committee was that FFL had been set up to make a profit and that they wanted reassurance that they were on the right lines to do so. He stated that if they were not on the right lines then they would need a plan B. Councillor Boden explained that the company would produce annual accounts which will be on record at Companies House, but it would be several years before the company reached a financial profit but that the Council would benefit before this. He stated that FFL was effectively looking at means by which capital appreciation can be translated into a revenue benefit for the Council, which was achievable legally and had been done elsewhere in the country and that they were looking to ensure that they are gaining revenue benefit from something that will be a capital appreciation in the future.
- Councillor Hay identified that within the expenditure and commitments to date there were approximately £217,000 recharges of which £174,000 were for FCD and asked what the recharges were for. Councillor Boden explained that the recharges represent costs incurred by FDC officers working on FFL items and there was not yet a service level agreement in place but that there was one in draft which would be taken before the Investment Board in June and will be fully open for scrutiny and challenge. He stated that the document would make it clear how, why and by what method, costs incurred will be recharged to FFL, which not only covered officer time, but also many service recharges from various service areas. Councillor Hay asked whether the recharges would be allocated across the Nene Waterfront and Chatteris set ups. Councillor Boden informed her that there was no legal requirement to

do so as they were not being set up within FFL as separate accountable entities. He surmised that it was likely that they would end up setting up individual subsidiaries of FFL to achieve specific projects and create one legal entity for one project however the costs and recharges would stay with the overarching company.

- Councillor Count stated that he could not distinguish between the investments of the Commercial Investment Board and FFL, giving the example of the return of £230,000 on a commercial property in Wisbech stating that he thinks that this had not gone through FFL but was unaware as they had only been financed a certain degree so far. He stated that it would be useful to separate who is responsible for what and where the monies are. In terms of the example given above, Councillor Count commented that there was an indicative 6% return on that, but it was not very detailed around what that 6% is and concluded that it may be a gross profit that they receive every year from the property. He noted that there may be other fees that reduce this, but it was still better than anything else they would get. Councillor Boden stated that he was correct that the figure provided was the gross figure and that the net figure was significantly less than that and would be disclosed when appropriate. He agreed that it would be important to separate the investments held by FFL and FDC especially as the figures increased and stated that he would make sure that the distinction becomes greater as they move forward. Regarding the specific project mentioned Councillor Boden explained that this was undertaken by FDC by default as FFL was not ready on a legal basis to undertake the work at the time. He informed the Panel that it would be unlikely that the investment would be moved to FFL as it would be subject to stamp duty land tax making it foolish to transfer now. Councillor Boden stated that they would ensure the clarity of separation as part of transition of the Elms and Nene Waterfront as the land will be sold by FDC to FFL and they will need to ensure that this transition is clear and straightforward. He noted that both Fenland and FFL will need evidence that the transitions are legal.
- Councillor Count accepted that initial investments take a while to hit the breakeven point and that there may be opportunistic investments at certain times but stated that he would like to see minimum expectations in a multiyear business plan to give an idea of when they will hit the breakeven point and beyond. Councillor Boden agreed that it was a reasonable request but emphasised that the number of different opportunities made it difficult to find the breakeven point for the whole company. He explained that it was not until March that they had sufficiently detailed figures to even begin this process and some of the assumptions made were still challengeable meaning that they were not yet able to produce the figures as requested.
- Councillor Booth identified that FDC had contributed £3.8 million so far and that it was important to distinguish between the two as it could become a confusing matter. He identified that the reports so far were that FDC had contributed £355,000 and asked if this was correct. Councillor Boden informed the Panel that information regarding the Wisbech investment will be seen soon as the investment formed part of the 2021 accounts. Regarding the contribution, he explained that they needed to carefully separate the recharges and costs as most of the costs would have been incurred by FDC anyway such as time of officers. He stated that they were not additional costs to the Council but ones that had been taken out of the Councils books and been charged to FFL, which was completely legitimate, legal and in accordance with normal accounting practices. Councillor Boden stated that FFL have no money of their own, only money lent to them by the Council at a commercial interest rate. He explained that this was all designed to reduce the Councils costs and utilising them against the eventual capital profits from FFL and creating a revenue stream in terms of the interest all of which is being offset against the future capital profits which will be made on the developments. He stated that they were simply copying what had been done across the country which had been mostly successful.
- Councillor Booth expressed his disappointment that the Council did not have a loan agreement set up as of yet which would outline any returns but acknowledged that it should be in place by June. He asked whether there were any other areas that needed urgent attention regarding governance arrangements which may put the Council at risk should

anything go wrong. Councillor Boden stated that it would be extraordinary for something to go catastrophically wrong in the next month but agreed that it would have been good to have progressed logically but informed the Panel that they had opportunities that they wanted to take early on. He reassured Councillor Booth that they knew what the terms of the loan agreement would be, but it had not officially been agreed between FFL and FDC. Additionally, Councillor Boden stated that there was another important document needed regarding directors' liability as the directors were in the position as employees of FDC so should not be put at personal liability for FFL. Peter Catchpole informed them that FDC and FFL had legal advisors working on this and that they had draft agreements in all three of the areas. He explained that the next stage was for them to be taken to an FFL board before they were then taken to the Investment Board and the process should be complete by 13 June.

- Councillor Booth asked whether they had the appropriate insurances in place to protect FFL and FDC. Peter Catchpole confirmed that these were in place.
- Councillor Booth stated that with something like a LACTO it was a medium to long term investment with a 3-4 year period needed before they saw any returns and that the Council needed to recognise that. Regarding the separation of duty Councillor Booth recalled comments made in December 2021 on an investment opportunity in Whittlesey and he understood it the decision was going to be down to the Investment Board, and he questioned whether it should have been down to the FFL directors. Councillor Boden stated that this was not the only opportunity in the last 12 months, explaining the process taken when the opportunities arise, with firstly, the opportunity being discussed informally to see whether it is something that they could be interested in which would work financially and all too often there are problems underneath which could cause difficulty. He informed members that they were not completely risk adverse but risks that may be taken as a gamble for a commercial organisation cannot be taken under local government early on due to the use of public money and the lack of different projects to offset the risk against. With one investment they found a risk regarding a tenant break contract and whilst it was not unmanageable it was enough to make them feel uncomfortable and was not taken any further. Councillor Boden explained that the initial risk assessment is done without any external assessments to provide an initial evaluation on whether it should go ahead at all, and this does cause them to knock out certain opportunities early on.
- Councillor Booth asked where the separation was here as it appeared that there was a lot of informal work happening where legally the directors of FFL are the ones who should make decisions as the Investment Board was simply an advisory body. Councillor Boden confirmed that he was correct however they had not got as far as going to FFL or the Investment Board on the items that have been discarded. He explained that the one investment they did have which proceeded to completion was before FFL was properly set up, so it had to be put through FDC. Councillor Tierney added that if they got to the stage where directors were taking a decision that was very different to the advice given then something had been done very wrong. He stated that the process had been working well and that it would be unusual for the directors to make different decisions to the Investment Board.
- Councillor Yeulett asked whether the members of the two boards were different. Councillor Boden informed him that this was the case.
- Councillor Wicks asked whether FDC and FFL had received legal advice from two different parties. Peter Catchpole confirmed this was the case.
- Councillor Count identified that the loan facility made to FFL had to be made at a commercial rate which is set on risk analysis and asked for clarity on whether this would be paid as a lump sum or on a project-by-project basis. Councillor Boden answered that they were going down the company route and not the project route as FFL was wholly owned by FDC there was a potential reputational risk if the company is allowed to fail. However, as it was a completely new company with no history the availability of cheap finance in the outside world would not exist at all and it was not his intention to throw a large amount of money at the company all at once. Instead, he explained that the money would be provided



on a transactional basis when needed by FFL and the interest would be worked out on that basis. Peter Catchpole stated that the directors of FFL would not accept a lump sum and informed them that they would be looking at a cash flow in quarterly phases.

- Councillor Mason stated that it was good to hear that they were learning from other mistakes and hoped they were also learning from successes. He stated that the Panel would like to receive an interim report in 6 months due to the nature and the risk of the Investment Board and Investment Strategy.
- Councillor Boden emphasised that risk was what they were trying to avoid and that they were alert to danger. Councillor Mason noted this but argued that there was still a large risk.

**The Commercial Investment Strategy and Investment Board Update was noted for information.**

### **OSC52/21 TASK AND FINISH GROUP – PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORT**

Members considered the Task and Finish Group – Portfolio Holder Report:

- Councillor Mason explained that they were looking for three volunteers to examine the KPI's across the Council and stated that the makeup of the group would be two Conservative members to one independent in line with political proportionality. There was a debate over whether task and finish groups had to be politically proportionate, and Amy Brown informed the panel that whilst there was no requirement for the group to be politically proportionate the Council worked on a basis that these groups should be. There was a further debate about whether the group should consist of five members with two Independent Members wishing to be part of the task and finish group.
- It was resolved that the group would consist of 3 Members with the Conservative members being Councillor Connor and Councillor Miscandlon and Councillor Hay acting as a substitute where necessary. The independent members were left to decide who would be the main member and who would act as substitute between Councillor Booth and Councillor Wicks.

### **OSC53/21 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

Members considered the Future Work Programme:

- Members discussed the merits of bringing the Commercial Investment Strategy and Investment Board back in six months due to the nature and risk of the work that was being undertaken. It was noted that both the October and December meetings were fairly full, and it was suggested that an extraordinary meeting could be held in November. It was suggested that the meeting be held in closed session as most of the material was confidential and this would allow greater scrutiny from the panel. Amy Brown informed the panel that any meeting can be held in confidential session but that there was a preference to present the information in a transparent way. The panel resolved to leave the matter with Amy Brown to add something to the forward plan.
- Councillor Miscandlon stated that the Local Plan was moving forward and would be presented at Cabinet next week. Councillor Booth noted that this was still only in the consultation phase at the moment.
- Councillor Wicks suggested that it would be useful to invite the other housing associations to a future meeting now that there were more operating in the area.
- Councillor Booth stated that it had previously taken a while to get a response from Anglian Water and noted that there had been a lot of press recently regarding discharge into local rivers. Councillor Connor pointed out that they had been fined the previous week. Councillor Miscandlon reminded the panel that Anglian Water were not required to come before the panel. Councillor Wicks stated that the aspect of pollution had been raised at an IBD meeting that morning and that it was clear that there was a lack of capacity at the moment. He suggested that Anglian Water needed to make a better effort at integrating with planning to help prevent the problems caused by the right to connect. Councillor Purser explained

that the discharge and capacity problems were not just a problem for Anglian Water as it had recently been an issue across the Country. Amy Brown stated that she would make enquiries for Anglian Water to attend a future meeting.

3.38 pm

Chairman