

Decisions effective from the 9th May 2024 unless they are called in or are recommended to the Council for approval

Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **25th April 2024**.

Present:

Cllr. Ovenden (Chair);
Cllr. Campkin (Vice-Chair);

Cllrs. Barrett, Betty, Harman, Hayward, Wright.

Apologies:

Cllr. Nilsson, Walder, Gathern, Michael, Deputy Chief Executive.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Bell, Chilton, Dean, Gauder, Hicks, Spain, C Suddards.

In attendance:

Chief Executive; Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer; Communications Officer, Democratic Services Manager.

400 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Spain	Made a Voluntary Announcement as a member of the 'Bring Back Euro Trains' Steering Group.	403

401 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 21st March 2024 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

402 Leader's Announcements

The Leader wanted to acknowledge the Freedom of the Borough Ceremony that had taken place the previous evening where the Council had awarded the honour to two very deserving recipients – Mrs Jo James OBE and Mr Gerry Clarkson CBE. It had been a great evening and the Leader wanted to thank all involved in arranging and attending the event.

403 Draft Borough Plan 2024-28

The Leader introduced the report which presented the draft Borough Plan – providing the overarching strategic vision and objectives to guide the Council's Cabinet in planning its work programme over the next four year period. The draft plan also set the performance framework to ensure that the Council was on target to achieve its objectives. It had been developed over the past year and had three themes – Planet, People and Places. The report proposed that the draft plan now be subject to a public consultation to further inform its development before being adopted later in the year.

Some Members commented that whilst they understood the plan was going out to public consultation, it did seem quite general and lacking in detail and ambition. Specific reference was made to the lack of mention of the emerging plans for a town centre market, the Ashford Parks Foundation or the role of the Bring Back Euro Trains group. It was also considered that elements such as green corridors and the Odeon project could be expanded upon further and there was concern about the suitability of some of the success measures in the plan and how these would actually be measured. A Member hoped that the consultation would really target businesses and the growth agenda. Further support for small start-ups should be a key focus.

The Leader advised that there had been various open consultation workshops for all Councillors so it was a little disappointing that such comments were being raised at this stage. As a new Administration they had deliberately not been 'heavy handed' with this plan. They had inherited the previous Corporate Plan, with a number of projects underway that needed to be continued so they had started off with quite a light touch. They were in a position where they were working year to year at the moment, through no fault of their own, but this made planning over a four year plan quite difficult. There was an intention going forward to more closely align both the Council's Borough Plan and Local Plan so that the two plans worked better together to deliver what this Borough needed. They were listening and would be receptive to the comments made this evening and any others coming forward during the upcoming public consultation process. It was hoped that such feedback could feed in to both this plan and the Local Plan, and ongoing reviews of both, as they moved forward.

Another Member advised that they had been contacted by a resident in their Ward with a petition against the use of glyphosate for weed killing. He asked for clarity on the Council's position on this as there was no mention in the Borough Plan. The Deputy Leader advised that, reluctantly, it was something that the Council did currently use and would continue to in the short term. They were looking at financially viable alternatives, but it would take time to properly explore and identify those.

Resolved:

That the draft Borough Plan 2024-2028 be approved for a public consultation.

404 Disabled Facility Grant Policy

Item Withdrawn.

405 Civic Events Advisory Committee – Notes of 6th March 2024

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Committee had held a good and positive first meeting on 6th March. One of the items discussed at the meeting had been the arrangements to mark the 80th Anniversary of D Day on 6th June 2024 and the best way to do this within limited resources. Councillor Hayward gave an update on the Council's plans, which had already been discussed with the Chair of the local branch of the Royal British Legion.

The Portfolio Holder reported that at 9am on the 6th June there would be a D Day 80 flag raising ceremony at the Civic Centre. This would be followed by a D Day 80 Commemorative Ceremony at 11am in the Memorial Gardens which would also mark the re-installation of the Floral Spitfire in the gardens. This event would be hosted by the Mayor, with the service being led by the RBL Chaplain Rev. Dr Sue Starkings. The Council was planning to have a Primary School choir perform and also for some Secondary School pupils to read out the specially written D Day 80 School Poem. In the evening, from 9.15pm there would be a D Day 80 Beacon Lighting in Civic Park. The Mayor would announce the lighting of Ashford's Civic Memorial Beacon and read out the International Tribute.

D Day Educational activity sheets would be sent out to all Primary Schools in the Borough, with a special focus on the Ashford area. These were particularly aimed at Key Stage 2 pupils, but they would also be shared with Secondary Schools. In addition the Council had created a D Day 80 webpage and would be encouraging local Parishes and villages to advise them what events they were organising so they could be included and promoted in a central directory on the Council's website and via social media. All of this would be outlined in a Leader's Briefing Note which would be issued in the coming days.

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Civic Events Advisory Committee held on the 6th March 2024 be received and noted.

406 Schedule of Key Decisions to be Taken

Resolved:

That the latest Schedule of Key Decisions as set out within the report be received and noted.

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