

## Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **3<sup>rd</sup> December 2015**

### Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);

Cllr. Bell (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Clokie, Galpin, Heyes, Miss Martin, Shorter.

### Apologies:

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Michael,

### Also Present:

Cllrs. Britcher, Buchanan, Burgess, Chilton, Hicks, Link, Sims, Wedgbury.

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Legal & Democratic Services, Corporate Director – Operations, Principal Solicitor for Property and Projects, Head of Cultural and Project Services, Tourism, Heritage and Nature Conservation Manager, Principal Accountant, Head of Finance, Policy and Performance Manager, Housing Operations Manager, Communications Officer, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

## 233 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Clarkson	Announced an “Other Significant Interest” in respect of Agenda Item No.11 as he was the Chairman and Director of the Ashford Borough Council Better Choice for Property Company.	242
Shorter	Made a “Voluntary Announcement” as Director of Ashford Borough Council Building Company	242

## 234 Minutes

### Resolved:

**That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 12<sup>th</sup> November 2015 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **235 Urgency Provision**

The Chairman advised that in accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 he had accepted the late inclusion of an item entitled “Expansion of Short-Stay Accommodation Provision” as a matter of urgency and by reason of special circumstances, namely that the property concerned was currently on the market and the Council needed to act quickly to secure its purchase.

## **236 Leader’s Announcements**

The Leader advised that as this was the last meeting of the Cabinet before Christmas he wished to wish all Members and Officers a safe and enjoyable festive season.

## **237 Preliminary Draft Budget 2016/17**

The report set the scene for the Cabinet to consider its preliminary draft budget for 2016/17 and explained the important background and contextual information to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and next year’s budget. The budget was preliminary as at the time of publication there was no final statement from the Government about the Council’s levels of grant support for next year.

The Portfolio Holder referred to two Tabled Papers, one of which was a briefing note on the Comprehensive Spending Review and the second requested the Cabinet to approve the earmarking of the £77,000 saved from the Management Re-Structure to fund the costs related to the Devolution Agenda as covered in detail in the Comprehensive Spending Review Paper. The Portfolio Holder advised that following agreement by the Cabinet the Budget would be published for consultation with the Business Community, Parish Councils and staff prior to the final Budget being considered in February 2016.

### **Recommended:**

- That**
- (i) the Budget Context be noted.**
  - (ii) the preliminary draft budget for 2016/17 be approved, (noting that it was submitted before the Government’s announcement of the provisional grant settlement).**
  - (iii) the preliminary draft Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2016/17 be approved.**
  - (iv) the report be used as the basis for Budget consultation with the public, the business community, the Parish Councils and staff.**
  - (v) the preliminary draft budget as set out in the report should be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s Budget Task Group for formal scrutiny.**

- (vi) **£77,000 saved from the management re-structure be earmarked to fund the costs related to the Devolution Agenda.**

## **238 The Next Five Years: The Corporate Plan 2015-2020 (final version)**

The report sought approval of the final version of the Corporate Plan 2015-2020: The Next Five Years and to its publication.

The Chairman said that the Corporate Plan reflected the four key areas of the Administration's election manifesto and was based on the principles of Aspiration, Action and Achievement.

A Member referred to the section of the report on employment and said that she was pleased to advise that two Ashford Borough Council Apprentices had received awards as star pupils over the whole of Kent.

The Chairman also advised that information from the Office of National Statistics showed that the wage levels in Ashford were improving.

### **Recommended:**

**That the final version of the Corporate Plan 2015-2020 (and the accompanying appendix) be agreed and that it be published and made available in both printed and digital media.**

## **239 Council Tax Base 2016/17**

The report advised that the Council was required to approve the Tax Base which would be used to calculate the level of Council Tax for 2016/17. It was calculated with regard to the number of domestic properties (including a forecast for new properties) which were then converted into Band D equivalents. The Tax Base had been calculated at 43,750 Band D properties and was an increase of 1,385 (or 3.1%) of the current year's figures.

### **Recommended:**

- That
- (i) **the 2016/17 "Net" Tax Base of 43,750 Band D properties as set out in the Table below be agreed.**
  - (ii) **the distribution across parished areas of the proposed grants to Parish Councils to help compensate them for the negative impact caused by the Council Tax Support Scheme on Parish Councils' tax bases (Appendix D to the report refers) totalling £40,900 be agreed.**
  - (iii) **the possibility of further Cabinet and Council decisions being required before the end of January should any material change in**

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**the tax base be required as a consequence of any further relevant funding announcements from Government be noted.**

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**TAX BASE 2016/2017  
LOCAL TAX BASE (WHOLE/PART AREAS)**

LOCAL TAX BASE 2015/2016	WHOLE AREA	BAND D EQUIVALENT	NEW OCCUPATIONS	1.0% PROVISION	Less discounts Council Tax Support	LOCAL TAX BASE 2016/2017
		47,310.00	502.00	(426.60)	(5,020.40)	42,365.00
	<u>PARISH</u>					
550.90	Aldington & Bonnington	609.40	23.60	(5.80)	(47.40)	579.80
326.00	Appledore	378.70	0.00	(3.30)	(53.60)	321.80
676.80	Bethersden	755.20	15.00	(7.00)	(61.70)	701.50
1,078.40	Biddenden	1,173.70	7.60	(10.90)	(83.50)	1,086.90
143.10	Bilsington	161.20	0.00	(1.50)	(11.80)	147.90
1,038.10	Boughton Aluph and Eastwell	1,124.50	0.00	(10.50)	(70.10)	1,043.90
586.10	Brabourne	625.40	0.00	(5.90)	(29.40)	590.10
150.30	Brook	156.90	0.00	(1.50)	(3.20)	152.20
414.30	Challock	425.30	0.00	(4.10)	(15.80)	405.40
1,204.00	Charing	1,346.90	42.40	(12.80)	(118.20)	1,258.30
716.70	Chilham	785.10	28.30	(7.50)	(65.40)	740.50
92.70	Crundale (PM)	94.50	0.00	(0.90)	(1.10)	92.50
499.80	Egerton	534.00	0.00	(5.10)	(26.20)	502.70
173.80	Godmersham	182.90	0.00	(1.80)	(4.70)	176.40
2,307.00	Great Chart with Singleton	2,628.90	16.00	(24.50)	(200.20)	2,420.20
113.20	Hastingleigh	120.10	0.00	(1.20)	(4.20)	114.70
715.20	High Halden	775.00	0.00	(7.30)	(52.20)	715.50
276.00	Hothfield	348.90	0.00	(2.90)	(58.90)	287.10
102.00	Kenardington	117.20	0.00	(1.00)	(10.10)	106.10
4,076.50	Kingsnorth	4,456.80	181.30	(43.70)	(259.90)	4,334.50
124.10	Little Chart	129.00	0.00	(1.30)	(4.00)	123.70
627.9	Mersham and Sevington	675.00	0.00	(6.40)	(31.50)	637.10
107.2	Molash	116.30	0.00	(1.10)	(11.40)	103.80
104.2	Newenden	108.60	0.00	(0.90)	(4.50)	103.20
554.9	Orlestone	590.40	28.30	(5.70)	(53.10)	559.90
473.6	Pluckley	509.40	0.00	(4.60)	(36.00)	468.80
654.6	Rolvenden	728.70	14.10	(6.90)	(56.80)	679.10
326.3	Ruckinge	343.80	0.00	(3.20)	(22.90)	317.70
489.6	Shadoxhurst	528.80	12.20	(5.10)	(38.40)	497.50
603	Smarden	666.70	0.00	(6.10)	(40.10)	620.50
349.1	Smeeth	392.10	0.00	(3.70)	(31.40)	357.00
711.7	Stanhope	1,024.30	0.00	(7.90)	(233.90)	782.50
209.6	Stone	224.10	0.00	(2.00)	(21.50)	200.60
3433.1	Tenterden (TC)	3,766.30	0.00	(34.60)	(293.20)	3,438.50
171.4	Warehorne	186.50	0.00	(1.70)	(8.10)	176.70
321.6	Westwell	340.10	0.00	(3.20)	(17.40)	319.50
524.1	Wittersham	586.40	0.00	(5.40)	(55.70)	525.30
818	Woodchurch	897.30	0.00	(8.40)	(59.20)	829.70
984.5	Wye with Hinxhill	1,127.90	12.20	(10.40)	(84.40)	1,045.30
15,535.60	Unparished Area	18,149.30	299.00	(162.60)	(2,100.10)	16,185.60
42,365.00		47,891.60	680.00	(440.40)	(4,381.20)	43,750.00

## **240 Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/17**

The report advised that the Council had a statutory duty to consider annually whether to revise its Council Tax Support Local Scheme or to replace it with another scheme and consult with interested parties if it wished to revise or replace it.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the scheme had been in operation for the previous two financial years and this report reflected what would be the third year of its operation.

### **Recommended:**

- That (i) the proposed Local Scheme for 2016/17 as set out in the conclusions of the report, i.e. there are no major changes to the existing scheme but some minor changes are proposed, be approved.**
- (ii) public consultation on the proposals should run until 11<sup>th</sup> January 2016.**
- (iii) delegated authority be granted to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and the Leader to make any adjustments to the final scheme by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016 in relation to the level of grant notified by Central Government in December 2015 and following consideration of the consultation responses.**

## **241 Ashford Dark Sky and International Observatory**

The report addressed the proposals by the Ashford Astronomical Society to consider the provision of an astronomical observatory and the closely and inter-related matter of Ashford's Dark Sky and approved Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The report also summarised the detailed findings from the "Fourth Street" Consultancy, copies of which had been placed in the Members Room.

The Chairman advised that the area to the south of Ashford had the darkest night skies in the whole of south-east England and that steps were being taken to ensure that this remained by using controls via the Planning system to ensure that lighting for future developments were of the type to reduce the level of light pollution. He believed that the mobile exhibition facility was an excellent idea and said that he understood that the local media was keen to follow up this initiative.

### **Resolved:**

- That (i) the approach by the Ashford Astronomical Society (AAS) be welcomed and supported.**
- (ii) the proposal to commission the Ashford Astronomical Society to work closely with the Council to undertake public consultation to enable an "International Dark Sky Community Designation" to be**

submitted to the International Dark Sky Association on behalf of the Council and the AAS be approved.

- (iii) a capital budget of £25,000 to meet the costs of the proposal be approved.
- (iv) the Head of Culture and the Environment, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to take any further action required to give effect to the above recommendations.

## **242 Trading and Enterprise Board – 9<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

**Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board be received, noted and approved with the exception of Minute No. 195.

**Recommended:**

That Minute No. 195 be approved.

## **243 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

**Resolved:**

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015 be received and noted.

## **244 Town Centre Regeneration Board – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

**Resolved:**

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Town Centre Regeneration Board held on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2015 be received and noted.

## **245 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.

## **246 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, namely Expansion of Short Stay Accommodation Provision, 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, wherein the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.**

## **247 Expansion of Short Stay Accommodation Provision**

The report had been accepted onto the Agenda by the Chairman as a matter of urgency. The report explained that following the success of Christchurch House which provided short stay accommodation for homeless families, approval was now sought for the purchase of another property suitable for a similar use.

The Portfolio Holder said he believed that the facility would provide quality accommodation for homeless people and said that the proposed acquisition was conveniently located for access by local transport to the town centre.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget and Resource Management said that during meetings of the Council Tax and Welfare Reform Task Group Members had indicated that should a further opportunity arise to increase the availability of the Council to support families or individuals made homeless, then the issue should be pursued.

**Recommended:**

- That**
- (i) a budget of £1.2m be approved for the purchase of the property as set out within the report to be funded by borrowing or Section 106 Funding whichever is appropriate, subject to due diligence, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Chief Executive, the relevant Portfolio Holder and the Leader.**
  - (ii) following the completion of the purchase it be used for short stay temporary accommodation and be known by the name as set out within the report.**
  - (iii) Officers set up appropriate management arrangements, including additional staffing as set out in the budget included within Appendix 2 to the report.**
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Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Keith Fearon:  
Telephone: 01233 330564 Email: [keith.fearon@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:keith.fearon@ashford.gov.uk)  
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