

Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **13th July 2017**.

Present:

Cllr. Bell (Vice-Chairman in the Chair);

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Bennett, Bradford, Clokie, Galpin, Pickering.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Clarkson, Shorter, White, Buchanan, Burgess, Howard-Smith, Link, Miss Martin, Ovenden.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Barrett, Chilton, Heyes, Hicks, Knowles, Smith.

Chief Executive, Corporate Director (Law and Governance), Head of Culture, Head of Finance and IT, Head of Health, Parking and Community Safety, Head of Housing, Licensing Manager, Project Delivery Engineer, Communications Officer, Senior Member Services Officer.

96 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Hicks	Made a Voluntary Announcement that she was a Member of Kingsnorth Parish Council.	104
Smith	Made a Voluntary Announcement that he was Treasurer of the SWAN Community Group.	103

97 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 15th June 2017 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

98 HRA Affordable Housing Programme - Update

The report provided an update on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) affordable housing delivery programme previously approved at Cabinet on the 14th April 2016. In addition, the report also set out proposals for a new affordable housing programme

over the next five years (2018 to 2022), maximising grant funding, capital receipts from Council house sales and HRA resources in order to contribute to meeting the demand for housing in the Borough.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the progress with the Affordable Housing Programme 2015-2019 set out at Appendix 1 to the report be noted.**
 - (ii) the proposed new programme (2018-2022) shown at Exempt Appendix 2 to the report be approved, maximising grant funding from the HCA and receipts from the sale of Council properties.**
 - (iii) authority be delegated to the Head of Housing, the Head of Finance and IT and the relevant Portfolio Holders to vary the programme as necessary to maximise use of 1 for 1 monies for the purchase of street properties subject to resources being available within the HRA business plan.**
 - (iv) the Director of Law and Governance be authorised to execute and complete all necessary documentation, in consultation with the Head of Housing, to give effect to the above recommendations including the execution of any agreement necessary for the receipt of grant from the HCA.**

99 Dover Place Public Realm Phase II and International House Car Park Re-Surfacing

The report advised that the proposed works on one of the Council's Big 8 projects would enhance the Commercial Quarter and facilitate its further development. It provided information on the proposed works and sought authority to proceed with the two projects and to accelerate the delivery programme to bring them forward approximately four months earlier than planned. The rationale for early delivery was due to the completion date of the Quinn CQ office building being brought forward to spring/early summer 2018. It would also allow the Council to take advantage of an opportunity which would significantly reduce the disruption that the work would cause to the business tenants in International House by utilising the new Quinn CQ building's car park on a temporary basis whilst works were undertaken in the International House car park.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the proposals to accelerate the delivery programme for the resurfacing of International House car park be approved to allow the allocated funding to be spent in the 2017/18 financial year instead of 2018/19.**
 - (ii) authority be given to the Head of Corporate Property and Projects to negotiate the temporary car parking arrangements with Quinn Estates.**

- (iii) authority be given for the Dover Place Public Realm project to proceed, including the preparation of further designs and planning permission prior to procuring the works, either via competitive tender or an alternative method.**
- (iv) authority be given to the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Head of Corporate Property and Projects and his Portfolio Holder, to effect and complete all necessary documentation.**

100 Taxi Licensing Policy

The report presented Cabinet with an updated version of the Council's Taxi Licensing Policy following the expiry of the current policy in April 2017. The new policy reflected changes in legislation and good practice.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3, Mrs Whybrow, a local taxi driver representative, spoke on this item. She advised that the taxi drivers welcomed the opportunity to review the policy but the concern was that drivers had not had the opportunity to comment before it was sent out for consultation with the public and in her opinion, they should have had that opportunity. She considered the proposals in the policy were skewed too much towards the urban areas of the Borough and did not pay enough attention to the vast rural areas and in her view, it was another occasion where the perhaps well-intentioned plans of this Council with regard to its taxi drivers had not quite hit the mark. Officers had mentioned the possibility of a drop-in session with drivers during the consultation, but no further meetings were planned and she wondered whether a drop-in session would be enough of an opportunity for drivers to properly respond.

The Portfolio Holder said it was worth re-iterating that the purpose of this report was to agree that the draft policy be sent out for consultation. After listening to the speaker, he was concerned that there was a risk there could be 'consultation about a consultation'. Several stakeholder groups needed to give feedback, as well as the taxi drivers, and they would all have that opportunity during the consultation period.

The Licensing Manager ran through the proposed updates to the policy and the basis on which they had been put forward.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the contents of the draft policy be endorsed.**
 - (ii) the draft Taxi Licensing Policy be published for the purposes of consultation with the public and trade; following a suitable consultation process a final version be submitted to Cabinet for adoption.**

101 Independent Living Scheme at Repton Park

The report set out proposals to work in partnership with Cheyne Capital (an investment management company), using their Social Impact Fund, to deliver an Independent living scheme for older people at Repton Park, Ashford.

Resolved:

- That (i) the Council enters into a 40-year lease and sub-lease with Cheyne Capital (or its group companies) to support the delivery of an independent living scheme for older people at Repton Park, subject to any planning approvals that may be required to enable the proposed scheme to progress.**
- (ii) authority be given to the Head of Housing, Head of Finance and IT and the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to execute and complete all necessary documentation to give effect to the above recommendation.**

102 Station Approach

The report advised that as one of the Council's Big 8 projects, the proposed works would enhance the Commercial Quarter and facilitate its further development. It focused on two improvement projects that the Council had identified to reduce vehicle congestion on Station Approach and provide a safer and more direct route for pedestrians between the Commercial Quarter, railway station, town centre and Stour Centre car parks.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3, Mrs Whybrow, a local taxi driver representative, spoke on this item. She said previous visions for the town centre had seemed to want to remove taxis from the centre of Ashford altogether and her perception was that taxi drivers had been excluded from all discussions in recent months on the proposal to move the current taxi rank. There had previously been a proposal to move all taxis to the international side of the station and she said the Portfolio Holder had been unavailable for a number of months whilst taxi drivers asked for meetings about the proposals. She said there had been no inclusion of the taxi trade as a whole in discussions and only conversations with individual drivers. The proposal to move taxis from their current location to the Stour Centre car park would make things more difficult for the public and in particular disabled passengers. In addition, proposals to re-route traffic through the disabled parking area would, in her opinion, make this part of the station extremely dangerous. She concluded by saying there were a number of opportunities to do something different and better to what was being proposed, but she considered taxi drivers had been ignored and excluded.

The Vice-Chairman in the Chair directed Members attention to a letter from Councillor Miss Martin raising questions on the report and he advised that the Portfolio Holder would respond directly to the Councillor.

The Portfolio Holder said that the most important aim of this report was to provide a new zebra crossing for the safe passage of pedestrians using the station and beyond. The location had been chosen because it was where people already naturally looked to cross the road and this would increase when the students for the new college began to arrive in September and the new offices opened in the Commercial Quarter. In his view, the crossing was an absolute necessity. The other important part of the proposal was a plan to relocate the taxi holding rank to a proper, purpose built area in part of the Stour Centre car park. The current unofficial arrangement saw cars waiting on the side of the road in front of International House where the new crossing and zig zag markings would need to be provided. He advised that as recently as October 2016 Southeastern had wanted to move the taxis to the International side of the station. He had personally made a lot of effort to keep the rank on the domestic side, even though at times it would have been easier and less expensive not to do so. He said he had a lot of respect for taxi drivers and the role they played in moving people safely around the Borough and for that reason he considered they deserved a proper purpose-built rank on the domestic side of the station, and to not do so would be a disservice.

The Ward Member for Stanhope asked about the effect of the proposals on the Stour Centre car park as this was already busy and liable to flooding. The Project Delivery Engineer advised that the Stour Centre had been involved in discussions and the flooding considerations had been taken in to account. The proposed taxi waiting area was in the area of the car park least affected by flooding and was also strategically placed to minimise impact on the Stour Centre. It was also worth noting that the layout of the proposed area had already been re-engineered following consultation with taxi drivers.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the proposal for installing a new zebra crossing on Station Approach be approved.**
 - (ii) the proposal to relocate the taxi waiting area to the Stour Centre car park be approved.**
 - (iii) the use of single source suppliers for the works be approved.**
 - (iv) the Director of Law and Governance be authorised to complete all necessary documentation for implementation of works on such terms as in the Council's interest.**

103 Newtown Works Section 106 Spend

The report explained that the Council had collected significant Section 106 funds through the operation of the deferred contributions mechanism at Newtown Works. The Head of Development, Strategic Sites and Design had delegated powers to decide which projects were prioritised for spend, however in view of the sums involved it had been requested that Members review the submitted bids and the suggested breakdown of funding and indicate that they were satisfied with the suggested split of funding. The report also explained the original Section 106 and

compared the percentage of allocation of funding in that agreement with a suggested split of the deferred sum of £1.83m.

The Ward Member for South Willesborough said that the area of South Willesborough and Newtown had always been a community deprived of funding. Now, only 14% of the monies generated from this development was proposed to be spent in South Willesborough and Newtown. He asked for this to be considered in the future when money came in from new developments throughout the south of Ashford.

Resolved:

- That (i) the proposed allocation of deferred payments received from the Newtown Development be endorsed.**
- (ii) authority be given to the Director of Law and Governance, Head of Development, Strategic Sites and Design, and the appropriate Heads of Service to complete all tasks and to execute and complete all documentation necessary to deliver the projects and give effect to the above recommendation.**

104 Ashford Town Bowls Club

The report sought Cabinet approval for the release of Section 106 contributions from the Newtown Works Development to be used for the relocation of Ashford Town Bowls Club to Kingsnorth Entrance Park and for the existing bowls club site on the corner of Vicarage Lane and Church Road to be used to enlarge and enhance the Memorial Gardens.

Resolved:

- That (i) the release of Newtown Section 106 contributions of £509,000 for the relocation of the Ashford Town Bowls Club and the transfer of the existing Bowls Club site to the Council for the enlargement and enhancement of the Memorial Gardens be approved.**
- (ii) authority be given to the Director of Law and Governance and appropriate Service Heads to secure the land at Vicarage Lane/Church Road in return for granting a long-term lease to Ashford Town Bowls Club of Council owned land at the Entrance Park in Kingsnorth.**
- (iii) a masterplan for further improvements to the Memorial Gardens incorporating the new site, be received at a later meeting, in consultation with the Design and Development of Parks and Open Spaces Task Group.**

105 Town Centre Annual Report

The report documented the achievements and projects delivered in the town centre by the Regeneration Team with support from Officers across the Council and how the

delivery had had a positive impact on the town in terms of footfall, vacancy rates and consumer confidence.

The Portfolio Holder said he wanted to make special mention of his Deputy Portfolio Holder Councillor Barrett and thank him for the work he had done to improve the appearance of the town centre.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the report and the considerable progress made in reinvigorating Ashford town centre as a whole be noted.**
 - (ii) the significant positive change in fortunes of Park Mall shopping centre since Members had the vision to instruct the Council to acquire it be noted.**
 - (iii) the delivery of Phase 2 of the business mentoring programme be agreed to support independent businesses at a cost of £10,000.**

106 Hamstreet Open Space, Play Area and Multi Use Games Area – Approval to Spend Section 106 Funding

The report advised that Section 106 funding had been secured from the Redrow development at Lancaster Close in Hamstreet. After extensive consultation with Orlestone Parish Council and residents, it was proposed to use the provisions for informal/natural green space and young people's play, to improve the village green and redevelop the play area located on the green near Hamstreet Victory Hall, managed by the Hamstreet Victory Hall Committee. Consequently, the play area at Lancaster Close, owned by the Borough Council, would be gradually decommissioned. It was proposed to use the contribution for outdoor sports pitches to resurface the existing Multi Use Games Area as the current surface had reached the end of its natural life. The proposals had the unanimous support of the Parish Council, both Ward Members and the Victory Hall Committee.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) Section 106 funding of £143,645 (subject to any further indexation) be approved for spend on the projects detailed in the report.**
 - (ii) the contribution for outdoor sports pitches of £20,200 be transferred, subject to a funding agreement, to the Hamstreet and District Sports and Leisure Association, in order for them to arrange resurfacing of the Multi Use Games Area.**
 - (iii) authority be given to the Director of Law and Governance and the Head of Culture to complete all tasks and to execute and complete all documentation necessary to deliver the projects and give effect to the above recommendations.**

107 New Cabinet Advisory Committees and Task Groups – Terms of Reference

The report set out Terms of Reference of new Groups and advised of changes to existing Groups.

Resolved:

That the Terms of Reference of the new Advisory Committees and Task Groups and the changes to existing Groups as set out in the report be agreed.

108 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – 25th May 2017.

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 25th May 2017 be received and noted.

109 Economic Regeneration and Investment Board – 25th May 2017

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration and Investment Board held on the 25th May 2017 be received and noted.

110 Trading and Enterprise Board – 3rd July 2017

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board held on the 3rd July 2017 be approved and adopted.

111 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.

DS

Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Danny Sheppard:
Telephone: 01233 330349 Email: danny.sheppard@ashford.gov.uk
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: www.ashford.gov.uk/committees