

## **Cabinet**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **14<sup>th</sup> September 2017**.

### **Present:**

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

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Bradford, Clokie, Shorter, White.

### **Apologies:**

Cllrs. Bennett, Clarkson, Galpin, Pickering, Buchanan, Miss Martin, Mrs Martin, Ovenden.

### **Also Present:**

Cllrs. Barrett, Burgess, Dehnel, Feacey, Howard-Smith, Link.

Chief Executive, Director of Law and Governance, Director of Finance and Economy, Head of Housing, Senior Commercial Development Manager, Neighbourhood Services Manager, Senior Policy, Performance and Scrutiny Officer, Commercial Development and Regeneration Officer, Communications Officer, Senior Member Services Officer.

## **154 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2017 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **155 Corporate Property Performance – Annual Report 2016/17**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that the revenue generated by the Council's corporate property portfolio contributed significantly to the Council's income. The income generated for the financial year ending March 2017 was contained within the report. He advised that the Council had had a good year both in terms of income generated and in securing lettings at Park Mall. In response to a comment he had received from a Member by email, he reminded the Cabinet that the purchase of Park Mall had not been made to generate a revenue return, but rather for regeneration purposes and to reinvigorate the town centre and in this respect it was performing well.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) the revenue performance of the Council's corporate property portfolio during the previous twelve months as provided for in the Corporate Property Income Schedule attached at Appendix 1 to the report be noted.**
- (ii) the work undertaken to increase profitability and investment activity during the previous twelve months and going forward be noted.**
- (iii) the Chief Executive's urgency decision to authorise the execution of an agreement with High Speed 1 Ltd as described in the report be noted.**

## **156 Proposed Purchase of Light Industrial Units at Carlton Road**

The report advised that the Council currently owned and ran an industrial estate at Ellingham which was fully occupied and with a tenant waiting list. An opportunity had now presented itself which would allow the Council to purchase off plan a proposed new light industrial estate comprised of 28 varied size units at a derelict site at Carlton Road, Cobbs Wood. The Portfolio Holder said he fully supported the proposed purchase on both a financial basis and for the possibility it gave for the Council to promote economic investment, growth of small business and employment opportunities in the Borough. He advised that the final acquisition was subject to detailed due diligence and final negotiation of contracts, but he wanted to thank the Officers who had worked so hard to bring this proposal to fruition, in particular the Commercial Development and Regeneration Officer

**Recommended:**

- That (i) the Head of Corporate Property and Projects be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Finance and IT and Corporate Property, and the Directors of Finance and Economy and Law and Governance, to carry out detailed due diligence, negotiate terms and take any other steps he considers prudent in the Council's interests in order to enable the purchase to proceed as a sound investment, and to approve final due diligence reports and a final risk analysis schedule which are satisfactory in his view, and subject to those matters (ii) and (iv) below become effective. In the event that those matters are not satisfactory, the proposal shall be reported back for decision by the Cabinet.**
- (ii) the Council enter into an agreement to purchase the freehold interest in the industrial estate as outlined in the report and appendices.**
- (iii) the Council agree to finance the cost of the purchase from General Fund Reserves and/or Prudential Borrowing at the discretion of the**

**Director of Finance and Economy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT.**

- (iv) **the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Head of Corporate Property and Projects, be authorised to execute and complete all necessary documentation to give effect to the above.**

## **157 Tenancy Strategy, Tenancy Policy and Procedure**

The report sought approval to adopt the new Housing Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy and Procedure. The policy outlined the objectives of the Authority with reference to the review of fixed term tenancies and maximising the best use of the Authority's housing stock. The report also highlighted legislative changes brought in by the Housing and Planning Act 2016. The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and advised that it was not proposed to adopt the Government's optional 'Pay to Stay' Policy as the cost of administration would far outweigh any financial benefits.

**Recommended:**

**That the revised Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy and Procedure be adopted.**

## **158 Ashford Borough Council Performance – Quarter 1 2017/18**

The report updated Members and the public on the performance of the Council against its Corporate Plan for Quarter 1 - 2017/18. This included information on what the Cabinet had achieved through its decision-making, key performance data and consideration of the wider Borough picture which impacted upon the Council's work.

The Portfolio Holder drew attention to the summary highlights from the online Performance Dashboard. He re-iterated that the data belonged to the whole Council and he hoped all Members would look and take an interest in it. A timeline of achievements was also now available to the public via the Council's new website.

**Resolved:**

**That the Council's performance against the Corporate Plan in Quarter 1 of 2017/18 be noted.**

## **159 Financial Monitoring – Quarter 1 2017/18**

The report presented an assessment of the outturn position based on the first four months of the financial year, including the General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account and the Collection Fund. The General Fund was projected to be overspent by £74,000, predominantly due to void periods at International House and homelessness pressures. The Housing Revenue Account was projecting an overspend of £708,000, largely due to the 1% rent reduction. The HRA Business Plan had been reviewed in light of this pressure and was still affordable. The report also updated Members on the new Local Business Rates Relief Scheme and the next

steps to implement the scheme as well as asking the Cabinet to delegate authority to the Director of Finance and Economy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT, to complete the design of and consultation on a discretionary scheme and for that to be reported to the Cabinet in December.

The Portfolio Holder advised that he had received some comments from Members prior to the meeting regarding the pressure on the planning reserve which was already fully committed for the year in terms of spend on planning appeals. If there were further appeals the Council would need to consider how to fund them and it may be necessary to earmark further funding from reserves to meet these pressures, either from the General Fund reserve, from additional planning income, or funding allocated to corporate projects. The Vice-Chairman in the Chair said it was absolutely vital that the Council continued to defend planning appeals in order to continue to protect residents from unscrupulous developments.

**Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the outturn position for the General Fund Housing Revenue Account and the Collection Fund be noted.**
  - (ii) the appropriations between the General Fund and the Housing Revenue account contained at Paragraphs 15-17 of the report be approved or noted as appropriate.**
  - (iii) the purchase of land near Blind Grooms Lane (Paragraphs 18-19 of the report refer) be noted.**
  - (iv) the purchase of 112 Beaver Lane (Paragraph 20 of the report refers) be noted.**
  - (v) the continued operation of One You (Paragraphs 21-23 of the report refer) be noted.**
  - (vi) the breach of the Investment Policy (Paragraph 55 of the report refers) be noted.**
  - (vii) authority be delegated to the Director of Finance and Economy, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT to: -**
    - (a) complete the design of a proposed Discretionary Business Rates Relief Scheme based on the principles outlined in the report**
    - (b) conduct a consultation process on the proposed scheme to gather views on the design of the scheme to report back to Cabinet in December.**

## **160 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – 11<sup>th</sup> August 2017.**

**Resolved:**

**That the notes of the meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 11<sup>th</sup> August 2017 be received and noted.**

## **161 Economic Regeneration and Investment Board – 4<sup>th</sup> August 2017**

**Resolved:**

**That the notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration and Investment Board held on the 4<sup>th</sup> August 2017 be received and noted.**

## **162 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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Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Danny Sheppard:  
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