

Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **9th November 2017**.

Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);
Cllr. Bell (Vice-Chairman);

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

Apologies:

Cllrs. Hicks, Link.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Buchanan, Burgess, Dehnel, Howard-Smith, Knowles, Miss Martin, Wedgbury.

Chief Executive, Director of Law and Governance, Director of Place and Space, Director of Finance and Economy, Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications, Head of Corporate Property and Projects, Head of Environment and Land Management, Head of Housing, Head of HR and Customer Services, Accountancy Manager, Customer Service Manager, Environmental Contracts and Enforcement Manager, Facility Development Manager, Health, Parking and Community Safety Manager, Senior Policy, Performance and Scrutiny Officer, Commercial Development and Regeneration Officer, Corporate Scrutiny and Overview Officer, Environmental Health Officer, Open Space Planning Development Officer, Communications and Marketing Manager, Senior Member Services Officer.

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Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 12th October 2017 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

213 Leader's Announcements

The Leader advised that the pilot scheme for an experimental overnight parking and clamping trial for HGVs on the A20 had commenced and seemed to be working well at this early stage. The Truck Stop appeared to be coping with the extra demand and the mobile app advising of the number of available spaces was being well used. He had checked before the meeting and at that stage there had been 89 free spaces. The Leader said he looked forward to both the Ashford and Shepway Truck Stops increasing their capacities in the near future.

214 Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 2 - 2017/18

The report updated Members and the public on the performance of the Council against its Corporate Plan for Quarter 2 - 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 re-iterated that the data belonged to the whole Council and he hoped all Members would look and take an interest in it. Information on the Council's performance would be available to the public via the Council's website imminently. He advised that the number of residents needing temporary Bed and Breakfast accommodation continued to increase which was unfortunate. Whilst this was a national issue, the Council was active in looking to respond and a report on the forthcoming Homelessness Reduction Act would be coming to the Cabinet in December.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Property drew attention to town centre vacancy rates which, at 7.9%, were at their lowest since rates were first recorded in 2008. These figures also did not yet reflect the new shops that had opened in recent weeks or were due to open before the end of this month. He said he would like to publically thank Jo Wynn-Carter, the Council's Town Centre Regeneration Manager, who had done a fantastic job in reducing those rates and would be missed when she left the Council next month.

Resolved:

That the Council's performance against the Corporate Plan in Quarter 2 of 2017/18 be noted.

215 Financial Monitoring – Quarter 2 – 2017/18

The report presented an assessment of the outturn based on the first half of the financial year, including the General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account and the Collection Fund. The General Fund was projecting an overspend against original budget with an overall movement from last quarter of £14,000. There were a number of variances affecting this position detailed within the report, however it should be noted that during the last quarter £100,000 of the service contingency was utilised and this had now been removed from the forecast. The Housing Revenue Account was projecting an underspend of £78,000, and there were again a number of variances affecting the position that were detailed in the report. He considered this was a good achievement in the current climate and applauded those involved. The report also asked Members to delegate authority to the Director of Place and Space, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to increase Planning Fees in line with statutory fee increases.

Resolved:

That (i) the outturn position for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and the Collection Fund be noted.

- (ii) the update to the HRA Business Plan to include the purchase of off plan dwellings be noted (Paragraphs 20 – 22 of the report refer).

Recommended:

- That
- (i) the Council delegate authority to the Director of Place and Space, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to increase Planning fees in line with statutory fee increases (Paragraphs 10 – 12 of the report refer).
 - (ii) the Council approve the transfer of the Section 151 functions to the Director of Finance and Economy, which were previously held by the Head of Finance and IT (Paragraph 13 of the report refers).

216 Medium Term Financial Plan 2018-2023

The report presented the Medium Term Financial Plan, a budget forecast including underlying assumptions, covering a five year period from 2018 to 2023. This was for the General Fund and a Business Plan for the Housing Revenue Account would be covered separately in a report to the December Cabinet. The Plan highlighted a budget gap from 2020/21 and the proposed measures to close that gap, including the Inflation Management Strategy.

Both the Leader and the Portfolio Holder drew attention to paragraphs 53 – 55 of the report on development of future income streams, which was all part of the Council's wider strategy to improve the quality of services, whilst at the same time limiting the burden on Council tax payers and the reliance on Government subsidies.

Resolved:

- That
- (i) the forecast be noted and underlying assumptions accepted.
 - (ii) the Inflation Management Strategy be endorsed.
 - (iii) it be noted that this is the third year of the four year settlement.
 - (iv) the one year change to the New Homes Bonus policy be noted.
 - (v) authority be delegated to the Director of Finance and Economy in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT to agree the Council's continued participation in the Kent Business Rates pool.

217 Mid Kent Joint Waste Partnership – Ashford's Progress

The report examined the Council's progress in the Mid Kent Joint Waste Partnership and asked the Cabinet to agree to continue with the same collection methodology until re-procurement began in 2019/20 as well as making some slight adjustments to non-statutory services to cover costs and encourage digital service participation.

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and emphasised the ongoing positive picture. She addressed concerns about a possible increase in fly-tipping and the measures the Council was taking to mitigate those concerns including jointly funding with other Kent Authorities, (for a two year trial), an Intelligence officer who would be dedicated to the detection of, and data sharing on, waste crime, to enable possible prosecutions. Additionally, they would be exploring the possibility of mobile camera fly-tipping enforcement. She endorsed the recommendations in the report and thanked the Borough's residents for their continued support.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the positive progress on the contract to date be noted.**
 - (ii) in the life of this contract, Ashford Borough Council would continue with the same collection methodology (subject to no legislative/regulatory changes that indicate to the contrary).**
 - (iii) in 2018/19 the Council engage with residents to achieve, as far as is practicable, a future quality household waste collection service, that residents demand and continue to understand and support.**
 - (iv) adjustments to non-statutory services be supported to cover costs from the next financial year and encourage digital service participation.**

218 Playing Pitch and Sports Facilities Strategy

The report advised that both of these strategies had been produced by external consultants Max Associates, to assess current and future demand for indoor and outdoor sports facilities. They both supported the emerging Local Plan and would address the Borough's qualitative and quantitative needs. The report sought endorsement of the draft strategies and authority to adopt them following public consultation. Copies of both strategies could be found in the Members Room and on the Ashford Borough Council website.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the responses made against the draft Playing Pitch and Indoor Sports Facilities Strategies following consultation be noted.**
 - (ii) the Playing Pitch and Indoor Sports Facilities Strategies be approved and authorised for adoption.**
 - (iii) authority be delegated to the Director of Place and Space, in consultation with the necessary Portfolio Holders, to put in place all actions necessary to implement both Strategies.**

219 Open Space Strategy - Adoption

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that the Open Space Strategy had been produced to detail how the Council, in partnership with a range of organisations, planned to protect, enhance and provide open spaces to 2030 and

helped inform relevant sections of the emerging Local Plan. Following formal consultation on the draft Open Space Strategy, a number of comments had been received and these were contained at Appendix 1 to the report. These had resulted in a few updates to certain parts of the strategy. The report sought endorsement of the final strategy, a copy of which could be found in the Members Room and on the Ashford Borough Council website.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the representations made against the draft Open Space Strategy following consultation be noted.**
 - (ii) the final Open Space Strategy be approved and endorsed for adoption.**
 - (iii) authority be delegated to the Director of Place and Space, in consultation with the necessary Portfolio Holders, to agree final formatting and minor editing.**

220 Digital Transformation Strategy

The Portfolio Holder introduced the Strategy which set out how the Council would go about developing greater on-line service delivery to provide customers with the widest choice of ways to access services and to improve efficiency of service provision. The report recommended that Cabinet approve and adopt the Strategy and associated action plans, and delegate the Member level monitoring of delivery of the Strategy to the IT and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the Digital Transformation Strategy be approved and adopted.**
 - (ii) the Member level monitoring of the delivery of the Strategy and action plans be delegated to the IT and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee.**

221 Garage Commercialisation Strategy

The report sought Cabinet approval to implement the Garage Commercialisation Strategy which would improve revenues from existing garages and provide improved parking and landscaping in and adjacent to the Council's estates. The Strategy would also identify sites suitable for development or alternative uses.

Members expressed their general support for the proposals and the principle of allowing more flexibility around garage sites. One Member asked about the reference to 'development potential' and whether that would allow for the development of Council or local needs housing? She also hoped that in view of the lack of parking in the urban areas, all opportunities to create extra parking areas for residents would be explored. The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Property responded that each site would be looked at on a case by case basis, but generally they had already been assessed as too small for housing potential when they were originally part of the Housing Revenue Account. The Leader agreed that any opportunities to improve parking

provision should be examined. The Deputy Leader advised that in Biddenden, redundant garages had been transformed in to local needs bungalows, so there was already a precedent for this type of development.

In response to a question the Chairman responded that there would certainly be consultation over sites with relevant Ward Members and that was reflected within the recommendations.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the development of the Garage Commercialisation Strategy be noted.**
 - (ii) the Head of Corporate Property and Projects be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Corporate Property and Finance and IT, and following consultation with relevant Ward Members, to approve alternative usage of garage sites to maximise the value of such sites to the Council.**
 - (iii) the Head of Corporate Property and Projects be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Corporate Property and Finance and IT and the Director of Finance and Economy, to approve any revised pricing strategy developed as part of the implementation of the Garage Commercialisation Strategy.**

222 Primary Authority Partnerships

The report sought delegated authority for the Head of Health, Parking and Community Safety to enter into Primary Authority partnerships with suitable businesses. It explained that Primary Authority partnerships described an arrangement between businesses and regulators which improved the sharing of advice and guidance on regulatory matters relating to food hygiene, health and safety and licensing.

The Portfolio Holder endorsed the contents of the report and wanted to publically thank the Environmental Health Officer for the hard work she had undertaken to make some sense of this report and bring it to the Cabinet.

Resolved:

That authority be delegated to the Head of Health, Parking and Community Safety to enter into Primary Authority partnerships under the provisions of Section 25 of the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008, as amended by The Enterprise Act 2016 and the Co-ordination of Regulatory Enforcement Regulations 2017.

223 The Armed Forces Covenant

The Member Champion for the Military Covenant and Ceremonial Liaison introduced the report which advised that the Armed Forces Covenant was a promise from the Nation, ensuring that those who served or had served in the Armed Forces, and their families, were treated fairly. This commitment was made in recognition of the sacrifices they made on behalf of the Country. The Covenant was not designed to

give Armed Forces, Veterans and their families preferential treatment compared to other citizens, but it should ensure that they got a fair deal and were not disadvantaged because of their service. He gave some practical examples of where this principle had been put in place to achieve a favourable outcome. The report outlined an action plan for delivering the Council's commitments under the Armed Forces Covenant and strengthening support for the Armed Forces community. The Member Champion advised that he was looking forward to working with the newly appointed Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications on the action plan and chairing a new Civilian Military Partnership Board, which would work to bring in representatives of all of the relevant agencies to support the Council's Officers and the Armed Forces community.

The Member Champion further explained that a lot of work had been undertaken recently to revamp the Remembrance Sunday event which would be taking place that coming weekend and on an event at the Ashford Tank to mark the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Cambrai on the 17th November. He hoped that both of these projects would further demonstrate the Council's commitment to Ashford's Armed Forces community.

The Leader said he fully supported the report and said that it further demonstrated this Council's desire to be an exemplar Authority and a leader on a number of issues. They had been recognised as a national pioneer for their work on resettling Syrian refugees, they were one of the most improved Authorities in the UK on waste and recycling and earlier that day Ashford Borough Council had been shortlisted in the prestigious Local Government Chronicle Awards, in both the entrepreneurial Council of the Year and overall Council of the Year categories. This was all an indication of the direction in which the Council was heading.

Resolved:

- That (i) the action plan outlined at paragraphs 16 – 18 and Appendix 2 to the report be approved.**
- (ii) the appointment of the Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications to the role of Lead Officer for the Armed Forces Covenant be noted.**
- (iii) the Cabinet's support for the Armed Forces Covenant be re-affirmed.**

224 'Planning For The Right Homes in The Right Places' – Response to DCLG Consultation

The report set out the Council's proposed response to the current consultation document from the Department of Communities and Local Government entitled 'Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places'. The Portfolio Holder directed Members attention to the tabled paper which contained a revised version of the proposed response. He said this was an extremely important document and he hoped the DCLG would take on board the Council's comments.

The Leader advised that the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group had spent a considerable amount of time going through each of the questions and helping Officers

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to formulate the final response. A Member asked if the responses would have any bearing on the emerging Local Plan and if the Council had undertaken any lobbying of Government to have the numbers changed for the current period? The Leader said that Officers would be able to advise on the issue of lobbying, but he knew the Government faced a large housing shortfall and Ashford would have to play its role. The Deputy Leader said that rather than lobbying, at this stage the focus should be on completing the Local Plan process and getting that in place as soon as possible, in order to protect the Borough and its residents.

Resolved:

That the proposed responses to the consultation questions set out in the tabled Appendix to the report be endorsed.

225 Economic Regeneration and Investment Board – 27th September 2017

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration and Investment Board held on the 27th September 2017 be received and noted.

226 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – 13th September and 5th October 2017

Resolved:

That the notes of the meetings of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 13th September and 5th October 2017 be received and noted.

227 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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