

Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **7th December 2017**.

Present:

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

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

Apologies:

Cllrs. Burgess, Chilton, Galpin, Hicks, Knowles

Also Present:

Cllrs. Barrett, Buchanan, Dehnel, Mrs Dyer, Howard-Smith, Link, Miss Martin, Ovenden, Smith, 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 Health, Parking and Community Safety, Head of Housing, Head of Planning and Development, Interim Head of Finance, Health, Parking and Community Safety Manager (JF), Chilmington Community Management Organisation Project Manager, Economic Development Manager, Policy Manager, Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Senior Accountant (JS), Senior Accountant (LF), Senior Accountant (MH), Communications Officer, Senior Member Services Officer.

At the commencement of the meeting the Chairman advised of a change of order to that contained within the Agenda.

259 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Clarkson	Declared an Other Significant Interest as a Director of A Better Choice for Property Limited and would leave the meeting for the debate and vote on this item.	277
Chief Executive	Declared an Other Significant Interest as a Director of A Better Choice for Property Limited and would leave the meeting for the debate and vote on this item.	277

Interim Head of
Finance

Declared an Other Significant Interest as a
Director of A Better Choice for Property Limited
and would leave the meeting for the debate
and vote on this item.

277

260 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 9th November 2017 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

261 Leader's Announcements

The Leader advised that he had recently made some further changes to the Deputy Portfolio Holders and would like to bring these to Members' attention this evening. Councillor Andrew Buchanan had moved to Deputy Portfolio Holder for Culture, a position which had been vacant and Councillor Mrs Jenny Webb had replaced Cllr Buchanan as Deputy Portfolio Holder for Health, Parking and Community Safety.

262 Submission Version of the Ashford Borough Local Plan 2030

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which asked Cabinet to approve the final submission version of the Local Plan to 2030 and recommend that Full Council approves the submission of the Plan for public examination. He wanted to thank all of those involved in getting the Plan to this stage and all of the residents who had been involved in the extensive consultation that had taken place. With this Plan in place, and M20 Junction 10a now getting the go ahead, Ashford would be able to fulfil its five year land supply and be in a better position to protect itself against unscrupulous and speculative development. He endorsed the recommendations.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mr Tomkins, Chairman of Brook Parish Council spoke on this item. He said he wanted to thank Ashford Borough Council Members for their help and support over the years, but he said that he could not understand why they were now proposing to build on a site in their village which was in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and one that had been previously rejected as unsuitable for development. The reasons remained: - the village was a ribbon or linear development and there was no backfilling in Brook as this particular site would be; drainage and sewerage was an issue in Brook and more households would make the problem worse; Brook had no public transport and KCC appeared to be withdrawing support for the Dial A Bus service; and the roads were already busy and dangerous and there was a huge parking problem at picking up and dropping off time at the local school – if there was to be development in the village perhaps a car park for the school should be considered. Furthermore, the village had no infrastructure, public services or shops. People in the village understood the need for growth in the Borough, but at no time had anyone from the Planning Department engaged with people in the village and asked them what they wanted. The Council appeared to have excluded Bonnington from development because it would be affected by nearby development in Aldington, and he asked them to do the same for Brook as it would already be affected by proposed development in Wye and close to the William Harvey

Hospital. For those reasons, he asked for Brook to be removed from the Plan and for the impacts on smaller villages and rural communities to be further considered.

The Leader responded that the Council did understand the concerns of the villages. The Plan going forward was the result of over four years of work and they had been at pains to ensure that as much development as possible took place on brownfield sites. They had been out to public consultation on two occasions and there would be another opportunity for the public to raise their concerns at the Examination in Public with the Planning Inspector. They were talking about relatively modest numbers of new housing in the area (10 dwellings in Brook and 30 in Aldington) and if approved, this would protect against far larger numbers potentially coming forward from predatory developers. Further to questions about the Examination in Public process, it was explained that the Inspector would consider all representations previously made and could invite individuals to address the Examination at his discretion.

One of the Ward Members for Saxon Shore said that she accepted it was difficult to make changes to the Plan at this late stage, but Members needed to accept that there were concerns and whilst they may only be talking about relatively small numbers of additional dwellings, this was on top of over-delivering with significant numbers in the previous plan and represented numbers that could surely be absorbed within existing brownfield sites. People in her Ward did feel let down and that promises had not been kept. They understood the Council's need to deliver housing, but the concern was a lack of discussion with them and that comments made in the public consultation had not been taken account of. She also referred to Policy HOU1 and asked if social rented accommodation should be restricted to the urban areas, rather than rural villages with limited services and if conditions could potentially be put on planning applications to control HGV traffic on rural roads.

The Leader said he would refute the suggestion that promises had not been kept. With the housing situation as it was, the Council had not been in a position to make promises of any kind. The Portfolio Holder said that villages did have to grow from time to time to avoid stagnation. With regard to affordable housing, he said that there were already a large number within the urban area and there was a feeling that some should be provided in the villages. This had been the result of much discussion over the years.

The Deputy Leader said that as a rural Councillor he very much supported and welcomed the Local Plan. As previously mentioned, the Plan was actually the best protection that could be afforded to the villages and any alternative would potentially be far worse.

Resolved:

- That (i) the schedule of responses to the public consultation on the proposed 'Main Changes' to the Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to 2030 (published in July 2017), as attached as Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.**
- (ii) the proposed further minor amendments to the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan to 2030, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, be agreed.**

Recommended:

- That (i) the Council authorise the Head of Planning and Development to submit the Local Plan to 2030, attached as Appendix 1 to the report (and as amended by the further minor amendments at Appendix 3 to the report), to the Secretary of State for independent public examination.**
- (ii) the Council grant delegated authority to the Head of Planning and Development to: -**
- (a) make any further modifications he considers necessary or desirable before or during the Examination.**
 - (b) ask the Inspector to recommend modifications to the draft Local Plan under Section 20 (7C) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, if such modifications are considered necessary to make the Plan sound and/or compliant with legal requirements; and,**
 - (c) take any action he deems necessary to progress the draft Local Plan through the examination process.**

263 Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Housing Framework Annual Report

The report presented recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee following its consideration of the Housing Framework Annual Report. The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised that the recommendations were duly noted, but he considered they were already firmly part of the Service's thinking and plans.

The Leader advised that the Council had previously examined credit unions and decided not to promote them at this time, although this position would be kept under review.

In response to a question about modular housing, the Portfolio Holder advised that whilst it was too early to go public on the details, they were currently examining and financially modelling a scheme as a means to accelerate the delivery of lower cost housing for key workers.

Resolved:

- That (i) the report be noted and formally published on the Council's website.**
- (ii) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's request for Officer research into the following areas be noted and (resource permitting) taken forward: -**
- (a) The viability of schemes to encourage capital investment into social housing provision by landlords.**

- (b) The viability of modular housing homes as a means to accelerate the delivery of less costly social housing.**
- (c) The viability of self-build as an additional housing delivery option.**
- (d) The role and promotion of credit unions operating in the Borough.**

264 Draft Budget 2018/19

The report presented the draft budget for 2018/19 for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. The Portfolio Holder advised that the report was the culmination of a significant amount of work, which he thanked Officers for, and would now go forward for scrutiny via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and budget consultation. The proposals had been predicated on decisions made some four years ago to take a more commercial approach and provide income streams for the Council, in response to reducing Government grant. In the New Year the Cabinet would be looking to extend the Commercial Investment Strategy and further proposals would come forward at that time.

The Leader said that over the last ten years this Council had delivered a balanced budget year on year and continued to deliver the lowest Council Tax in Kent and one of the lowest in the Country. This was at the same time as being one of the financially soundest Local Authorities in the Country and delivering on this Administration's pledges which included not only maintaining services, but enhancing them.

Recommended:

- That**
- (i) the budget context be noted.**
 - (ii) the draft budget for 2018/19 be approved.**
 - (iii) the draft Housing Revenue Account budget for 2018/19 be approved.**
 - (iv) the report be used as the basis for budget consultation with the public, the business community, Parish Councils and staff.**
 - (v) the draft budget as set out in the report be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Budget Task Group for formal scrutiny.**
 - (vi) an increase to the long-term empty homes premium for Council Tax from 50% to 100% be approved.**

265 Council Tax Base 2018/19

The report advised that the Council was required to approve the tax base used to calculate the level of Council Tax for 2018/19. The tax base had been calculated at

45,680 Band D properties, an increase of 1008 (or 2.26%) on the current year. The Portfolio Holder also directed Members attention to references to the Council Tax Support Scheme.

Recommended:

- That (i) the 2018/19 'net' tax base of 45,680 Band D equivalent properties be agreed.**
- (ii) the distribution across parished areas of the proposed grant to Parish Councils to help compensate for the negative impact caused by the Council Tax Support Scheme on Parish Council's tax bases (Appendix D to the report totalling £40,900 refers) be agreed.**
- (iii) the possibility of further Cabinet and Council decisions being required before the end of January, should any material change in the tax base be required as a consequence of any further relevant funding announcements from Government, be noted.**

DELIBERATELY LEFT BLANK

TAX BASE 2018/19
LOCAL TAX BASE (WHOLE/PART AREAS)

LOCAL TAX BASE	WHOLE AREA	BAND D EQUIVALENT	NEW OCCUPATIONS	0.75% PROVISION	Less discounts Council Tax Support	LOCAL TAX BASE
2017/18						2018/19
		48,719	658.00	(337)	(4,368)	44,672
	PARISH					
594	Aldington & Bonnington	652	17	(6)	(56)	607
339	Appledore	384	3	(3)	(46)	338
702	Bethersden	774	7	(7)	(68)	706
1,096	Biddenden	1,186	22	(11)	(88)	1,109
146	Bilsington	155	1	(1)	(11)	144
1,067	Boughton Aluph and Eastwell	1,117	2	(11)	(66)	1,042
597	Brabourne	618	2	(6)	(24)	590
155	Brook	157	8	(2)	(2)	161
453	Challock	460	43	(5)	(12)	486
1,306	Charing	1,421	24	(13)	(149)	1,283
746	Chilham	818	18	(8)	(75)	753
93	Crundale (PM)	94	0	(1)	(1)	92
501	Egerton	523	14	(5)	(27)	505
173	Godmersham	176	0	(2)	(5)	169
2,415	Great Chart with Singleton	2,629	47	(24)	(227)	2,425
114	Hastingleigh	120	0	(1)	(7)	112
716	High Halden	790	15	(7)	(64)	734
264	Hothfield	327	21	(3)	(75)	270
107	Kenardington	117	4	(1)	(12)	108
4,435	Kingsnorth	4,625	4	(44)	(244)	4,341
129	Little Chart	132	2	(1)	(3)	130
740	Mersham and Sevington	859	19	(8)	(41)	829
108	Molash	119	0	(1)	(10)	108
102	Newenden	108	0	(1)	(6)	101
597	Orlestone	649	0	(6)	(58)	585
476	Pluckley	513	21	(5)	(43)	486
681	Rolvenden	731	30	(7)	(68)	686
335	Ruckinge	350	5	(3)	(17)	335
543	Shadoxhurst	559	23	(5)	(38)	539
641	Smarden	669	34	(7)	(43)	653
360	Smeeth	398	4	(4)	(36)	362
777	Stanhope	1,043	0	(8)	(284)	751
202	Stone	224	0	(2)	(20)	202
3,534	Tenterden (TC)	3,767	177	(36)	(315)	3,593
175	Warehorne	179	1	(2)	(6)	172
325	Westwell	344	1	(3)	(16)	326
529	Wittersham	584	3	(5)	(56)	526
835	Woodchurch	904	17	(9)	(66)	846
1,025	Wye with Hinxhill	1,125	26	(10)	(113)	1,028
16,539	Unparished Area	18,789	1,268	(175)	(2,435)	17,447
44,672		49,189	1,883	(459)	(4,933)	45,680

266 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2017-2047

The report provided an annual update on the financial projections associated with the HRA Business Plan. The Portfolio Holder thanked Officers for their hard work in putting the plan together and advised that it appeared the bid to the DCLG for an increase in the HRA debt cap had been unsuccessful at this time. He advised that the Council would bid again in 2019, when it was considered there was a higher chance of success.

Resolved:

- That (i) the updated HRA Business Plan and financial projections be agreed.**
- (ii) it be noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was required to review the HRA Business Plan financial projections as part of the budget scrutiny process.**

267 Chilmington Green Community Development Strategy

The Portfolio Holder for Culture introduced the report which advised that adoption of the strategy would enable an early approach to educating, engaging and empowering new residents and the growing population of Chilmington Green and set a framework for community development activity for a wide range of delivery partners. Houses would begin to be built next year and it was about creating a living community, above and beyond a traditional housing estate and producing something truly innovative for the South East of England. It would also place management control firmly in the hands of residents. Substantial community consultation had taken place, with the Strategy amended to reflect this. This was the culmination of three years of hard work and thanks were given to the Project Manager and all those individuals involved.

Resolved:

That the consultation and its outcomes be noted and the approach be endorsed.

Recommended:

- That (i) the Early Community Development Strategy for Chilmington Green be adopted.**
- (ii) the Director of Place and Space, in consultation with relevant Directors, be authorised to put in place a legal contract with the Chilmington Green Community Management Organisation, to lead and co-ordinate delivery of community development action, using as appropriate the relevant Section 106 contribution.**

268 Discretionary Business Rates Relief Scheme

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which presented an amended Discretionary Business Rates Relief Scheme, in response to the consultation on the criteria of the scheme and detailed financial modelling. This was a fully funded scheme for the next three years and honouring the pledge to support local businesses made back in 2015.

The Leader said that the proposals were indicative of the notice taken of consultation feedback by this Council.

Resolved:

That the amended scheme as outlined in the report be adopted.

269 East Kent Growth Framework 2017 - 2027

The report summarised the East Kent Growth Framework 2017 – 2027, as prepared for the East Kent Growth Board by Litchfields, alongside an Officer Working Group from the six East Kent Local Authorities. This was an important piece of strategic work, updating the 2013 East Kent Growth Plan and setting out an overarching strategic approach for identifying investment priorities to achieve long term economic growth across East Kent for the next ten years. The Leader directed attention to two important projects in particular – M20 Junction 10A and the Ashford International Station Signalling, which were taking place in the Borough, but were vital for the development of East Kent as a whole.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the contents of the East Kent Growth Framework and associated documents be noted.**
 - (ii) the East Kent Growth Framework be endorsed as the strategic document setting out the key investment priorities for the growth of East Kent.**

270 Short Stay Accommodation

The report advised that the purchase of 112 Beaver Road had been approved in May 2017 and a capital budget was now sought to convert the property into the Council's second short stay accommodation facility. This was following the successful development of Christchurch House for a similar purpose.

The Leader said that success of Christchurch House as an innovative scheme, which had actually saved the tax payer money against Bed and Breakfast costs, had been widely recognised. It also meant that this proposal made sense as well as being something to be proud of. A Member agreed and said that the facility would also provide a significantly safer option for families than being placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

Recommended:

That a capital budget of £500,000 be allocated to enable conversion works at 112 Beaver Road, to create a short stay accommodation facility.

271 Smoke Free Civic and Stour Centre Grounds

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which sought Cabinet's support for the introduction of a trial scheme to promote the Civic and Stour Centre as smoke-free grounds. This formed part of the Ashford Health and Wellbeing Board's work programme which was helping to create a healthy environment for the Borough's residents, visitors and employees. It supported both the Council's and Stour Centre's wellbeing initiatives. He advised that in a recent consultation 70% of respondents were fully in favour of the proposals.

Resolved:

That the introduction of a trial scheme to promote the Civic and Stour Centre as smoke free grounds be supported.

272 Trading and Enterprise Board – 6th November 2017

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board held on the 6th November 2017 be received and noted.

273 Ashford Strategic Delivery Board – 27th October 2017

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting of the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board held on the 27th October 2017 be received and noted.

274 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – 3rd November 2017

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 3rd November 2017 be received and noted.

275 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.

276 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 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, where in the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

277 Victoria Quarter Development (Jemmett Road)

The Vice-Chairman directed Members attention to the tabled paper which updated the Cabinet following consideration of this report by the Trading and Enterprise Board on the 4th December 2017. He also thanked those individuals who had worked so hard to bring these proposals forward for the Property Company.

Recommended:

- That**
- (i) the outline Business Case for the proposed development as detailed in the report be approved.**
 - (ii) the Council delegate responsibility to the Head of Legal and Democracy and Director of Finance and Economy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT and the Deputy Leader, for signing off the final business case and making available to the Company the necessary funds for the proposed development.**
 - (iii) the Council delegate authority to the Head of Legal and Democracy and Director of Finance and Economy, to draft and enter into the loan agreements between Ashford Borough Council and A Better Choice for Property Limited.**

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Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Danny Sheppard:
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