

Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **12th September 2013**.

Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);

Cllr. Claughton (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Mrs Blanford, Galpin, Heyes, Hicks, Howard, Shorter.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Chilton, Davidson, Robey.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Bennett, Burgess, Clokie, Marriott, Michael, Smith, Yeo.

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Planning and Development, Head of Property and Community Projects, Finance Manager, Principal Accountant, Assistant Health, Parking and Community Safety Managers, Licensing Manager, Tourism, Heritage and Nature Conservation Manager, Communications and Marketing Manager, Policy and Performance Officer, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

128 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Claughton	Announced a "Voluntary Announcement" as he had played cricket at Kennington Cricket Club	138
Clokie	Announced a "Voluntary Announcement" as he lived in Tenterden	144
Hicks	Announced a "Voluntary Announcement" as she lived near the Chilmington Green area and was the Ward Member for part of the area.	135
	Announced a "Voluntary Announcement" as she had been appointed the Council's representative on the Ashford Leisure Trust.	141

129 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 11th July 2013 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

130 Transportation, Highways and Engineering Advisory Committee – 5th July 2013

The Chairman of the Committee advised that at their first meeting they had discussed the Terms of Reference and considered future items to be discussed by the Committee. Furthermore the transport providers had given an update on matters as they affected their services.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Transportation, Highways and Engineering Advisory Committee held on the 5th July 2013 be approved and adopted.

131 Recommendations arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's debate on the Chief Executive's Update on the 'Best Services Resources Allow' aspect of the 5 Year Business Plan

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 20th August 2013 had received a presentation on the 'Best Services Resources Allow' aspect of the 5 Year Business Plan. Arising from this the Committee had put forward two recommendations for the Cabinet to consider.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) Officers be asked to look at options around providing support to homeless people in the Borough; perhaps including provision of a hostel in co-operation with other operators (e.g. Housing Association, KCC).**
 - (ii) a revised consultation to look at long-term budget aspirations for the next Council be completed within 12 months.**

132 Covert Surveillance Policy

The report advised of changes to the Council's powers of surveillance and sought approval of consequential changes to the Council's Covert Surveillance Policy. The Chairman explained that it was a straightforward report and was in line with new regulations. He also advised that covert surveillance could now only be used after consent had been granted by a Justice of the Peace and when the Council was

investigating criminal offences which attracted a maximum custodial sentence of at least six months or more.

Recommended:

That the amended Covert Surveillance Policy be approved.

133 Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013

The report advised of the recently enacted Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 and set out delegations to Officers in terms of managing the scheme and also proposed an amount for the application fee.

The Portfolio Holder explained that the legislation stemmed from a Private Members' Bill seeking to halt the rise in metal theft.

In response to a question one of the Assistant Health, Parking and Community Safety Managers confirmed that Ashford Borough Council was at the forefront in terms of the application of the legislation and said that the Licensing Manager was fully conversant with the requirements of the Act.

Resolved:

That the application fees set out within paragraph 6(1) of Schedule 1 to the Scrap Metal Dealers' Act 2013 and as detailed in paragraph 22 of the report be approved.

Recommended:

That the delegations and changes to the Constitution as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved.

134 Review of the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

The report summarised the main proposed amendments within the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 2013, the current version having been adopted in 2009. The report also set out the reasons for the proposed amendments.

The Head of Planning and Development advised that he had received further comments on the report from the Legal Services Section and said that there was a need to add to the list of consultees. He suggested that he be given delegated authority to make any subsequent changes as he considered appropriate.

Recommended:

That (i) the contents of the revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) be approved and adopted.

- (ii) **authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Development to make any necessary additional minor amendments.**

135 Chilmington Green Quality Agreement

The report advised that the Council had made a clear to commitment to the development being of the highest quality possible and explained that one means of making sure this was the case was the Draft Quality Agreement which was attached as an appendix to the report. The approach sought to get the team of developers promoting Chilmington Green to sign up to key quality principles that would help to shape detailed design and delivery at Chilmington.

The Chairman emphasised that there was a need for the quality aspects of the development to be carried right the way through the whole development.

The Head of Planning and Development advised that there had appeared to be confusion about whether this document replaced former documents approved or to be approved and he explained that this was not the case. This document was in addition to all previously approved documents and it sought to reinforce the quality aspects of the development. A Member commented that it was important that the quality of life for the community living in the houses was to the highest standard and he asked whether the Quality Agreement dealt with issues such as designing out the potential for anti-social behaviour. Another Member commented about the nature of fittings and fenestration on the properties fronting the street and considered they would need to be of a high standard to reflect the quality of the development.

In response the Head of Planning and Development agreed to meet with the respective Members outside of the meeting to discuss ways in which their concerns could be incorporated within the document.

Resolved:

That the draft Chilmington Green Quality Agreement be endorsed.

136 Trading Companies – Update following O&S Recommendations

The report advised that following approval of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendations in terms of the call-in of the original report, an independent financial review of the Property Company Business Plan had been commissioned to examine the Plan and comment on the Company's ability to trade as a going concern.

The Portfolio Holder advised that it had been hoped that the consultant's report would be available for this meeting. However, a final version had not been received and therefore a further report would be submitted to the October meeting of the Cabinet. The Portfolio Holder also drew attention to the wish to vary the Building Consultancy Company Business Plan to reflect new guidance which had been issued which enabled the Local Authority Trading Company to be registered as an

Approved Inspector for building control works. A Member referred to comments within the Exempt Appendix to the report and the Chairman advised that these would be considered outside of the meeting.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) it be noted that the Financial Review had been commissioned.**
 - (ii) the variation to the Building Consultancy Company Business Plan be approved.**
 - (iii) it be agreed that work can continue to set up the Building Consultancy Company.**

137 First World War Commemorations, 2014-2018 and Second World War Commemoration, 2015

The report sought agreement as to how the Borough Council should commemorate the centenary of the First World War, 2014-2018 and the 70th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 2015.

The Portfolio Holder explained that the Borough Council would be working with Parish Councils in terms of any commemoration events they wished to hold and she also considered it was entirely appropriate to hold the Civic Awards in both of those years, i.e. 2015 and 2018.

The Deputy Leader said that both events carried a great deal of significance and he emphasised the word “commemorate” to reflect the sacrifices so many people had made in those two wars.

The Portfolio Holder for the Town Centre and Urban Economy advised that he was supporting an event organised by the Local Museum and town centre traders which would be held to mark the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War at an event due to be held on the 4th August 2014.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) it be agreed that it is more appropriate and fitting to commemorate the end of both World Wars rather than the beginning and as such it be agreed that the 70th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War be commemorated in 2015 and the centenary at the end of the First World War be commemorated in 2018.**
 - (ii) it be agreed that the overall approach to the commemoration be based around the proposals outlined within the report and separate reports referencing the detailed proposals and funding be considered closer to the time.**
 - (iii) it be agreed that the community projects commemorating the First and Second World Wars be included as an additional funding**

priority in the Single Grants Gateway for the period that such projects are likely to be delivered, i.e. 2014-2018.

- (iv) a sum (in the region of £5,000 to £7,500 per year funded from the New Homes Bonus) be agreed to increase the current Single Grants Gateway one-off revenue budget with the increase being ring-fenced for those First and Second World War commemorative projects taking place between 2014 and 2018.**
- (v) it be noted that Councillors may also consider allocating their Member Grant towards community projects commemorating the First and Second World Wars.**

138 Single Grants Gateway (SGG) – Loan to Kennington Cricket Club

The report advised that an application had been received from Kennington Cricket Club for a loan of £25,000 through the Single Grants Gateway towards the replacement of their club house.

The Portfolio Holder advised of the recommendations in the report and referred to paragraph 7 which advised that the combined cricket and football club had 450 members with a further 200 people using the facilities by hiring them. He also explained that the club had received a grant from Sport England and the Single Grants Gateway had already provided £10,000 towards the project. He considered that the level of interest rate fixed for the loan was appropriate.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the recommendation of the Grants Gateway Panel to loan £25,000 to Kennington Cricket Club, subject to the conditions and repayment terms set out in the report be approved.**
 - (ii) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Legal & Democratic Services to complete the required documentation in relation to the loan.**

139 Local Government Finance Settlement 2014-2015, 2015-2016 and proposals for the pooling of New Homes Bonus for Local Growth Funds

The report explained the announcements made by Government at the end of July concerning Local Authority Revenue Support Grant and New Homes Bonus for the next two years and advised that the announcement was not expected and would have serious impacts on the Council's funding. The report discussed the changes made to formula grant and the second part dealt with the detailed proposals to pool a proportion of the New Homes Bonus receipts.

The Portfolio Holder referred to the impact the changes would have on the Council's financial planning and advised that the Leader would be submitting a political response on the consultation.

A Member expressed concern in terms of the proposal from the Government to top slice £400m of New Homes Bonus to allocate to the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP's) and commented that there were no plans in place in terms of how those funds would be spent.

The Chairman emphasised that the political response to the consultation would be very robust.

Resolved:

- That (i) the report be noted.**
- (ii) the proposal that the Leader of the Council draft a political response to the consultation responses be endorsed.**
- (iii) the responses to the technical questions as outlined in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report be agreed.**

140 Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 1 2013/14

The report sought to report to Members and the public on the performance of the Council during the quarter. This included information of what the Cabinet had achieved through its decision making, key performance data on front line services and consideration of the wider Borough picture which impacted upon the Council's work.

The Chairman advised that there was a member of the public who wished to speak on this matter and explained that the speaker had been in contact with a number of officers over the last few days. The Chairman emphasised that the Borough Council would respond to the points raised by the speaker and said that if he wished to provide any written additional information the Council would respond to that as well.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3, Mr Crompton, a local resident advised that he was concerned about disability adaptations and said that the Council had a statutory duty to process applications from all tenants in the Borough including tenants of Local Authority housing. He explained that he had first raised this issue six years' ago, and commented that the Borough Council website still did not specify who could apply for disability facilities' grants. He also explained that equality was covered on the website, but he said he was not certain that all officers within the Authority followed the advice set out within that legislation. He also explained that from a conversation he had had with an officer, he had been advised that the officer was only able to spend 5% of their time on this issue and furthermore to clear the backlog of adaptations in the region of £1m would be needed. In conclusion he emphasised that the Council had a statutory duty to process applications within six months and he said he wished to work with the Council to achieve this.

The Chairman said that he believed that the Council led the field in housing activity in the county. The Council supported housing for the disabled and general needs housing and commented that if the Council had an unlimited budget further work could be undertaken. He reiterated his earlier point in that if the member of the public wished to write to the Borough Council setting out all of his points of concern they would be considered.

Resolved:

That the Performance for Quarter 1 be noted.

141 First Quarter Budget Monitoring Report 2013/14

The report presented the first Budget Monitoring Report for the current year based on the first quarter's performance to the end of June 2013. The report showed a revised forecast of an overall pressure of £195,000 and the Housing Revenue Account reported a deficit of £350,000 which was a movement from the forecast surplus of £12,000.

Tabled at the meeting was a revised Appendix A to the report.

The Portfolio Holder gave details of the recommendations and read his Portfolio Holder comments which were set out within the report.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the First Quarter's Budget Monitoring Report for 2013/14 be noted.**
 - (ii) the budget virements explained in paragraphs 26-27 and detailed in Appendix B to the report be approved.**
 - (iii) it be noted that the Chief Executive had exercised his delegated approval under Civil Emergencies and/or Urgent Matters in paragraphs 28-29 of the report.**

142 Planning Task Group

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Planning Task Group held on the 10th July 2013 be received and noted.

143 Wye3 Task Group

The Chairman of the Task Group advised that the Wye Free School had now opened with an intake of 90 pupils with further plans to increase the intake to 600. He praised the significant amount of hard work undertaken behind the scenes to reach this stage and in particular he thanked the Head of Planning and Development and the Policy Manager and Margaret Williams who had been a driving force behind the school. He said he was sure Members would wish the school to be a great success.

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Wye3 Task Group held on the 30th July 2013 be received and noted.

144 Tenterden1 Task Group

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Tenterden1 Task Group held on the 22nd July 2013 be received and noted.

145 Chilmington Green Task Group

The Chairman believed that this Task Group was working very well and said that work had been undertaken in terms of speaking to people within the areas concerned. The Portfolio Holder for Culture and the Environment also explained that the Steering Group was involved with residents and the Parish Council.

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Chilmington Green Task Group held on the 12th August 2013 be received and noted.

146 Schedule of Key Decisions to be taken

The report set out the latest Schedule of Key Decisions to be taken by the Cabinet.

Resolved:

That the latest Schedule of Key Decisions as set out within the report be received and noted.

(KRF/VS)

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Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **10th October 2013**

Present:

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

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Mrs Blanford, Galpin, Heyes, Hicks, Howard, Robey, Shorter.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Chilton, Clarkson, Marriott, Michael.

Also Present:

Cllrs: Bennett, Britcher, Buchanan, Burgess, Clokie, Davidson, Davison, Mortimer, Smith.

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Head of Cultural and Project Services, Head of Customer, Homes and Property, Head of Planning and Development, Finance Manager, Development and Regeneration Manager, Economic Development Manager, Policy and Performance Manager, Electoral Services Manager, Senior Communications Officer, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

162 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Hicks	Announced a "Disclosable Pecuniary Interest" in respect of Agenda Item 10 and left the meeting during consideration of that item.	168
Howard	Announced a "Voluntary Announcement" as members of his family owned land near the proposed Junction 10A of the M20.	172

163 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 12th September 2013 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

164 Joint Transportation Board – 10th September 2013

The Chairman of the Board advised that the meeting had discussed the shared space, Drovers Roundabout and Bus Lane camera enforcement.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held on the 10th September 2013 be approved and adopted.

165 Focus 2013 – 2015: A Corporate Plan and Supporting Financial Plans

The report sought Members' approval for the updated Corporate Plan and the proposed priorities for the Council until 2015. It also detailed the financial aspects which were required to support the Corporate Plan and which needed to be planned and managed if the Council was to succeed in its goals.

The Vice-Chairman explained that the Plan set the Cabinet's direction over the next two years. He said that it was important to be mindful that a balance was needed to be struck between efficiencies but ensuring the highest standards of services were provided to the residents. He believed that the financial aspects of the report stemmed from prudent fiscal policies and had to be designed to deal with any additional reductions in funding that might transpire. The Portfolio Holder drew particular attention to recommendations (ii) and (iii) in that the Cabinet was seeking to deploy £1 million of reserves over the next three years which was essential if the Council was to be able to deliver the key priorities covered within the document. He emphasised that if financial support for the posts were not provided, it would not be possible to deliver those priorities. He also explained that within recommendation (iii) funding was sought to allow IT to invest in IT infrastructure and he said that full details of the initiatives were set out within paragraph 47 of the report.

A Member, whilst fully supporting the report, explained that he would like further information regarding the overall costing exercise undertaken in terms of the figures set out within the report. The Portfolio Holder, in response, said he was comfortable with that information being provided to Members in due course.

Recommended:

- That**
- (i) the updated Corporate Plan: Focus 2013 – 2015 attached at Appendix A to the report be approved.**
 - (ii) £1 million of reserves be deployed over the next three years as outlined in Appendix B to the report.**
 - (iii) the principle of investing £360,000 in IT infrastructure be approved and a full programme be agreed by Management Team in consultation with the Portfolio Holder as outlined in Appendix C to the report.**

- (iv) **the strategic principles for managing the Budget (as outlined in paragraph 37 of the report) be adopted and that a draft budget for 2014/15 along with a fully reviewed Medium Term Financial Forecast be considered by Cabinet in December.**
- (v) **more detailed information in terms of the costing of the items set out within the report be provided to Members in due course.**

166 Review of Single Grants Gateway Funding Priorities and Eligibility Criteria

The report advised Members of the review of the eligibility criteria and funding priorities of the Single Grants Gateway and subsequent recommendations made and sought approval to those recommendations arising from the review. The Portfolio Holder explained that the recommendations set out within the report would ensure that funding support to the voluntary sector was transparent, easily accessible and in line with the Council's corporate priorities. He also emphasised that it was important not to under-estimate the value the voluntary sector contributed to in the Borough.

The Vice-Chairman explained that at the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held prior to the Cabinet meeting, they had agreed the changes to the Terms of Reference stemming from the review of funding priorities and advised that the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee had agreed that the Chairman of the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) be asked to be a voluntary member of the Single Grants Gateway Panel in the place of the Ashford Chamber of Commerce and Industry who had not been able to send any representatives to attend any of the meetings.

Recommended:

- That**
- (i) **the review of the Single Grants Gateway (SGG) Funding Criteria and Priorities be noted.**
 - (ii) **the following recommendations set out in (a) to (i) below be approved:-**
 - (a) **Current funding priorities be replaced with those detailed in Section 11 of the report.**
 - (b) **Applicants be able to submit one capital application up to £1,000 and over £1,000 and up to £10,000 in a four year financial period. This was in addition to one revenue application in the same period. This did not restrict applications for Ward Member Grants.**
 - (c) **For projects delivering in a parished area, applicants be required to request a funding contribution from the Parish Council but the decision was not dependent on it being forthcoming.**

- (d) **Insurances or travel costs for one-off events be eligible for funding.**
 - (e) **An additional criterion should be introduced to read grants were “not for uniforms, parties, recreational trips or refreshments but trips to compete or perform or for another similar purpose will be considered”.**
 - (f) **Grant Panel meetings be increased to four times a year to meet in January, April, July and October. Deadlines for applications should be amended accordingly to be in November, February, May and August each year.**
 - (g) **Delegated authority to approve grants up to £1,000 be given to the Policy and Performance Manager.**
 - (h) **Terms and conditions be changed to allow for staggered grant payments to ease applicants’ cash flow.**
 - (i) **The interest rate on loans to be set according to an agreed rate as detailed in paragraph 17 of the report.**
- (iii) **the Funding and Partnership Officer, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, be delegated to make changes as appropriate to documentation supporting the SGG depending on the outcome of the report. Amended guidance incorporating the recommended changes was set out in Appendix B to the report. Amendments to current guidance were highlighted and deletions were struck through.**

167 The Introduction of Individual Electoral Registration in 2014

The report provided information on the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) which was due to come into force in July 2014 and highlighted the changes in the registration process and the implications of those changes for residents and the Borough Council.

The Portfolio Holder for Tourism and the Rural Economy considered that the report outlined major changes to the way in which people registered to vote and said inevitably this would prompt queries and hoped that good systems would be put in place to be able to deal with the queries that would arise. The Electoral Services Manager explained that this was the biggest change in electoral registration for over 100 years but she confirmed that the Electoral Commission would be undertaking a number of initiatives to raise public awareness. The transitional costs would be met by the Government and her team would be doing their best to cover all eventualities. It was emphasised that to ensure that voters did not “fall off” the Register, reminder letters would still be sent followed by a home call if that initial process was unsuccessful. In response to a further question, she confirmed that it would be

additional work for her team as to remove somebody from the Register would require a review process to be undertaken which included writing to the person concerned to check the information.

Resolved:

That the implications of the proposed introduction and implementation of IER and changes to the annual canvass arrangements for 2013 be noted.

168 Managing Poor Conditions in the Private Sector

The report explored the options for managing poor conditions in the private rented sector by working with Landlords in a more proactive way to encourage the supply of good quality homes.

The Portfolio Holder for Resource Management and Control drew attention to the recommendation which did not propose moving ahead with a selective licensing scheme at the present time but to continue to promote the Ashford Borough Council Accreditation Scheme and other initiatives to encourage improvements within the sector. He explained that where Landlords did not respond to their responsibilities, the Private Sector Housing Team could, where appropriate, take action under the Housing Act 2004 in relation to hazards identified within homes. Furthermore there was already evidence that many Landlords were withdrawing from the sector due to concerns about welfare reform and there was a concern that further regulation of the sector would make this situation worse and affect the supply of access to the private sector in Ashford.

In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder for Resource Management and Control advised that the issue of resources for the Private Sector Housing Team had been discussed and said that if there was a need to increase their capacity, this would be dealt with by Management Team.

Resolved:

That a selective licensing scheme be not progressed at the present time and work continue to promote the Ashford Borough Council Accreditation Scheme and other initiatives to encourage improvement within the sector.

169 Delivery of Affordable Housing

The report sought agreement for the release of additional resources from the Housing Revenue Account to support the delivery of 15 units of affordable housing by March 2014 and also to bridge the funding gap resulting from increased procurement costs.

The Portfolio Holder said the report offered the opportunity to provide additional units of affordable housing and to also purchase former Ashford Borough Council properties sold under the Right to Buy Scheme. She confirmed that the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) had given their permission for the Council to purchase

former properties and said that Officers were currently in the process of submitting bids for suitable properties. However, she explained that prices were rising in terms of the housing market. In terms of the construction of the existing phase of affordable housing, the Portfolio Holder advised that this had suffered from an increase in construction activity and a subsequent increase in costs. In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder said that all properties which the Council were considering acquiring were checked prior to a bid at auction being made and matters such as decoration and condition of kitchen facilities were taken into account in terms of the overall bid made for the property.

The Development and Regeneration Manager explained that the HCA provided £23,000 for each of the properties for which the Council was seeking to purchase and said that in general very little work was required to bring them up to the 2007 quality standard.

In response to a further question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the allocation of the £346,530 from the HCA had now been confirmed.

Recommended:

- That (i) the release of £1,675,000 from the HRA to fund 15 further units of affordable housing to incorporate the funding allocation of £346,530 from the HCA be approved.**
- (ii) the release of £500,000 from the HRA be approved to enable delivery of the Council's current Affordable Housing Programme as a result of increased cost as set out in the report.**
- (iii) authority be given to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Strategic Housing and Property Manager to execute and complete all necessary documentation to give effect to the above recommendations.**

170 New Procurement Strategy

The report sought approval of the New Procurement Strategy and explained the background to its formulation.

The Portfolio Holder explained that it was important in times of austerity that the Borough Council ensured best value for the monies it spent. He said that best value meant a wide range of factors; low cost, support of local economy and best fit solution, but not necessarily the lowest price. The Portfolio Holder advised that the document took all of these factors into account and had been checked to ensure it delivered the right solution for the circumstances at the present time.

Recommended:

That the New Procurement Strategy be approved and adopted by the Council.

171 Response to Current Government Consultation Documents on Planning Issues

The report advised that the Government was currently consulting on three documents, all of which required responses in October. The documents were; Housing Standards Review; Greater Flexibilities for Change of Use; and Planning Practice Guidance. The report highlighted the main issues arising from the three consultation documents and set out recommendations for a formal response. The Portfolio Holder read out his comments on the consultation as set out in paragraphs 41 and 42 of the report. He believed that the proposals were “at odds” with localism and considered that the Council should work with colleagues from other Authorities to lobby the Government on the issues of concern.

Another Member also commented that she had concerns on the elements of the consultation and in particular to the proposals to allow farm buildings to be converted to provide up to three houses in the countryside which she said was not sustainable. Furthermore she considered that the ability to change of use of shops to residential use was a real threat to village shops.

In response to a question from a Member, the Portfolio Holder explained that the consultation proposed that the Council would have a “duty to co-operate” to assist other Local Authorities if they were unable to meet their housing needs. The Head of Planning and Development further explained the point about “duty to co-operate” and said that the Authority would have to say why they were not in a position to provide additional housing to help an adjoining Local Authority meet their housing need.

In terms of the content of the response, a Member considered that it should concentrate on those particular aspects of the consultation documents which were considered particularly harmful.

Resolved:

- That (i) the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development, in consultation with the Head of Planning and Development be authorised to respond to the Government’s consultations on behalf of the Council as follows:**
- (a) To respond to the Housing Standards Review raising concerns about the proposed approach to applying national described residential space standards and the specific detail of such standards as set out in paragraph 16 of the report and**
 - (b) To respond to the Greater Flexibilities For Change of Use by raising concerns about the proposals to allow conversion of farm buildings and shops to residential development as set out in paragraphs 29 – 32 of the report.**

- (ii) **the potential implications of the National Planning Practice Guidance for plan making in the Borough be noted.**

172 Creation of the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board

The report and its appendix set out the proposals to set up a new Ashford Strategic Delivery Board to bring together key partners forming the membership of the Board to ensure the timely delivery of critical projects identified for the growth of economic development of the Borough. It also proposed the first six indicative priorities for the new Board to deliver. The Portfolio Holder for the Town Centre and Urban Economy emphasised that the proposed Board was a Board of Ashford Council and was democratically responsible. He also explained that the report contained the six key projects for initial work although he commented that an additional one might be added regarding the rail Europe network.

A Member advised that the Opposition Groups had discussed their wish to nominate an observer to the Board and said that they wished to nominate Councillor Davison in a non-voting observer capacity.

Recommended:

- That
- (i) **a new Ashford Strategic Delivery Board be established to deliver the strategic projects identified by the Cabinet and/or approved by Council as necessary.**
 - (ii) **the Leader, Councillor Gerry Clarkson, the Portfolio Holder for the Town Centre and Urban Economy, Councillor Graham Galpin and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development, Councillor David Robey be the Council's representatives on the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board; Councillor Davison be appointed as a non-voting observer.**
 - (iii) **authority be delegated to the Leader of the Council in consultation with the Chief Executive to invite the appropriate representatives from the organisations set out within the report to join the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board.**
 - (iv) **it be agreed that the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board would focus on the initial six identified projects and thereafter would be the subject of a future report to Cabinet for the approval of other projects as appropriate.**

173 Portas Pilot and Town Team Programme

The report identified the progress that had been made in delivering the Portas Pilot projects and the work of the Town Team to extend that programme to incorporate other key initiatives to improve the attractiveness and vitality of the Town Centre.

The Portfolio Holder for the Town Centre and Urban Economy explained that the granting of Portas Pilot status had benefited the profile of the Town and allowed dialogue to commence with local retailers. Progress was being made in terms of the development of the website and app which was hoped would be launched in April 2014. Work on improving the Market was still ongoing and talks had been held with organisers of Farmers' Markets. He explained that in terms of the proposed feasibility study for the covered area in the Lower High Street, initial work had raised significant engineering issues, in particular the fact that cellars extended from underneath the adjacent properties where it was initially considered the covered area would be located. He explained that following a request from the Community Forum and from comments made by the Police and businesses in the town it was suggested that the proposed feasibility study for the development of a covered area be removed from the programme.

The Portfolio Holder said he was also pleased to advise that the 'Pop Up Shop' project was about to be launched and he invited all Members along to the event on 14th October at 6.00 pm.

A Member said that he considered more work was required in terms of the Market as the variety and number of stalls was still very unreliable. He also had a perception that progress on the Portas Pilot was slow. He also referred to the poor standard of reinstatement work undertaken by Kent County Council for the paving blocks in the lower High Street. The Portfolio Holder, in response to the point about the poor condition of the reinstatement work, said that he had raised this with the KCC Cabinet Member but he needed to pursue it further. He accepted that there had been slow progress in terms of the improvements to the Market and explained that it had been for the principal reason that it was a wish that the traders be involved with the proposals to enhance the Market offer.

The Portfolio Holder for Transportation, Highways and Engineering advised that the consultants who had undertaken a review of the shared space project would be attending the December meeting of the Joint Transportation Board to answer Members' questions.

Another Member said that for many years he had expressed concerns about the shared space scheme and advised that he had suggested to the Leader of the Council that the Council consider adopting a Code of Practice for any street work undertaken in Ashford.

Resolved:

- That (i) the progress of delivering the Town Team Programme be noted.**
- (ii) the removal of the Feasibility Study to investigate the development of a covered area of the Lower High Street from the Programme be supported following representation from the Central Ashford Community Forum and businesses on the Town Team.**

- (iii) the 'Pop Up Shop' project be supported which had been incorporated into the Town Team Programme.
- (iv) the latest performance of the Town Team be noted.

174 Mid Kent Audit Partnership – Evolution to “One Team, One Employer”

The report provided the Cabinet with a timetable and a narrative for the creation of a “One Team, One Employer” model for the Internal Audit Shared Service. Tabled at the meeting was an extract from the Minutes of the Audit Committee held on the 26th September 2013. The Audit Committee had supported the proposals set out within the report. The Chairman of the Audit Committee explained that the Committee had considered it important for the Chairmen of the four Audit Committees in the Partnership to be consulted on the new Collaboration Agreement.

The Portfolio Holder summarised his portfolio comments set out within paragraph 55 of the report and also confirmed that the Joint Consultative Committee had been content that the way forward was appropriate.

Recommended:

That subject to all four Councils agreeing on the proposal, acceptable terms being agreed on the Partnership (Collaboration) Agreement and employee consultation, it be agreed that:

- (i) a “One Team – One Employer” employment model be adopted for the Mid Kent Internal Audit Partnership.
- (ii) the employing authority for the Mid Kent Audit would be Maidstone Borough Council.
- (iii) the timetable for the transfer of staff to the new employer as set out in the report be agreed.
- (iv) the transfer to take place under TUPE.
- (v) an amendment be made to the collaboration agreement to reflect the new employment arrangements.
- (vi) the Partnership Agreement be extended from 1st April 2014 for five years (therefore expiring 31st March 2019).
- (vii) delegated authority be given to a Senior Officer (The Deputy Chief Executive for Ashford) to agree any final changes.

175 Planning Task Group

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting of the Planning Task Group held on the 3rd September 2013 be received and noted.

176 Schedule of Key Decisions to be Taken

The report set out the latest Schedule of Key Decisions to be taken by the Council.

Resolved:

That the latest Schedule of Key Decisions as set out within the report be received and noted.

(KRF/AEH)

MINS:CAXX1341

Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Keith Fearon:
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