

## Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **13<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

### Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);

Cllr. Claughton (Vice-Chairman);

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

### Apology:

Cllr. Marriott.

### Also Present:

Cllrs. Bennett, Britcher, Buchanan, Burgess, Clokie, Davison, Michael, Ovenden, Sims, Wedgbury.

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Head of Planning and Development, Head of Cultural and Project Services, Head of Communities and Housing, Head of Finance, Health, Parking and Community Safety Manager, Assistant Health, Parking and Community Safety Manager, Principal Accountant, Policy and Performance Manager, Environmental Contracts and Operations Manager, Senior Communications Officer, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

## 227 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Clokie	Made a "Voluntary Announcement" in respect of Agenda Item 13 as he was a member of Tenterden Town Council, and	237
	made a "Voluntary Announcement" in respect of Agenda Item 12 as he was a Director of the Local Authority Mutual Investment Trust.	236
Davison	Announced an "Other Interest" in respect of Agenda Item 13 as he owned a small piece of land in the Hamstreet area.	237

## **228 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2014 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **229 Leader's Announcements**

The Leader advised that a formal planning application had been received and registered for the Designer Village Outlet extension. This would now be subject to the normal planning process.

## **230 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2014-2044**

The report provided Members with an update on the financial projections associated with the HRA Business Plan, highlighting material changes and issues relating to the Plan. Tabled at the meeting was a set of revised recommendations.

The Portfolio Holder for Social, Local Needs and Special Care Housing referred to the Tabled Paper and advised that Recommendation (vi) within the original report had been removed as it was considered to be superfluous given that all individual projects would be brought before the Cabinet in due course. The Portfolio Holder explained that apart from the views which had been set out within paragraph 57 of the report, she wished to comment further on Recommendation (iii). She explained that there would be a Member-led Working Group set up to update and review the priorities of the HRA. She indicated that she would chair the Group, assisted by the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget and Resource Management. She also advised that paragraph 6 of the report was also relevant in that it would be individual Members who would determine the appropriate finance for projects and they would have to delegate powers to the appropriate Officers. The Portfolio Holder further explained that she anticipated that such a Member-led Working Group would concentrate on the future delivery of new homes for the residents of Ashford by way of Council houses, sheltered accommodation and local needs on rural exception sites, whilst keeping a close eye on the numbers of householders on the waiting list, and the plight of those who found themselves homeless through no fault of their own.

The Portfolio Holder considered that homelessness caused by non-payment of rent was self-inflicted. Furthermore she said that the Council was already working with the Department of Works and Pensions with a view to helping tenants manage their financial affairs better so that they would be in a position to pay their rent when Universal Credit was established next year. The Member-led Working Group would also review how the Council worked with other agencies and the effectiveness of the Tenants' Panel. She also referred to paragraph 53 of the report which suggested further topics which could be considered. When the Working Group had been established it would examine such areas and investigate as appropriate and bring recommendations back to subsequent Cabinet meetings.

The Chairman said that he would wish to see the Terms of Reference and proposed membership of the Group to come back to the Cabinet for approval.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget and Resource Management said he believed the Working Group would have a good opportunity to comment and prioritise issues for the future and furthermore it would also be able to examine the Housing Revenue Account in greater detail.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community, Wellbeing and Education referred to paragraphs 27 and 28 of the report which dealt with welfare reform. He said it was right to draw attention to the risks and uncertainties for the future and it was appropriate to make provision now for any further uncertainties that might arise.

In response to a question from a Member regarding the conversion of void properties from social rents to affordable rents, the Head of Housing and Communities said that the rent level would be changed to an affordable level which was still below the Housing Benefit level. She confirmed that in the region of 100 properties a year would be converted to affordable housing.

**Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the updated HRA Business Plan and Financial Projections be agreed and it be noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would continue to review the Plan on an annual basis as part of the Budget Scrutiny process.**
  - (ii) the next annual update include an overview on progress since the introduction of self-financing on the number of new Council properties.**
  - (iii) a Member-led Working Group be set up to revise and update the priorities of the HRA.**
  - (iv) the transfer of garages to the General Fund as agreed at the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2014 Cabinet Meeting be noted.**
  - (v) the potential future accounting issue surrounding impairment and revaluation of the HRA be noted.**

## **231 Renewal of LASER Contract for the supply of Gas and Electricity**

The report identified the different options available to the Council when it came to the procurement of utilities and explained the advantages of entering into a new LASER Contract so that the Council could continue to procure its utilities through the LASER Consortium for the next three years. The Portfolio Holder said he supported the recommendation and advised that under the current contract the Council saved in the region of £39,900 per annum for the provision of utilities.

**Resolved:**

**That the Council enter into a new LASER Agreement so that it can continue to procure its utilities through the LASER Consortium until November 2018.**

## **232 The EU Waste Framework Directive**

The report enclosed a Briefing Paper and provided the Cabinet with an overview of the key requirements of the EU Waste Framework Directive as it affected Ashford Borough Council.

The Portfolio Holder clarified that all Councils within the country would need to comply with the Directive which had been transposed into English Law. She advised that she had visited a Material Recycling Facility in Crayford with the Environmental Contracts and Operations Manager, which had been very informative. There all items were separated and recycled with less than 2% of the items rejected. She said that there would be a further report to the Cabinet which would set out the work that the Council would need to do to achieve compliance with the Directive.

In response to a question from a Member, the Portfolio Holder said that a further leaflet would be distributed to residents setting out the Christmas collection arrangements and providing further recycling information.

In response to a question from a Member the Portfolio Holder explained that all Material Recycling Facilities needed to be licensed.

### **Resolved:**

- That (i) the key requirements of the legislation and the work undertaken to date be noted.**
- (ii) it be noted that further work determined as appropriate by Officers would be undertaken prior to a further report to Cabinet in December.**

## **233 Licensing Act 2003: The Revision to Ashford Borough Council's Statement of Licensing Policy**

The report presented a revision to the Ashford Borough Council's Statement of Licensing Policy which had been prepared in accordance with the Licensing Act 2003 following a public consultation. It was noted that only minor legislative amendments had been made to the version of the Policy previously presented to the Committee prior to the consultation exercise.

### **Recommended:**

**That the revised Statement of Licensing Policy be approved.**

## **234 Street Naming and Numbering for CHAR2 – Land to the South West of A20 Roundabout, Maidstone Road, Charing**

The report advised that the Street Naming and Numbering Policy required that any requests for naming a new road after a person, deceased or living, should be agreed by the Cabinet.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the two names proposed were to commemorate local military personnel, which was particularly relevant given the 100 year anniversary of the Great War.

The Chairman also advised that the link road 'Poppyfields' had been chosen by the local primary school. He also advised that the DCLG would be giving a commemorative paving stone to honour those persons who had been awarded the Victoria Cross. The only recipient of the VC in the Borough had lived in the Charing Ward.

**Resolved:**

**That the use of the names as set out in paragraph 4 of the report be approved.**

## **235 Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 2 2014/15**

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

The Portfolio Holder said that in his view the report presented a story of success for both Officers and Members involved in the various initiatives.

In response to a question from a Member the Portfolio Holder agreed to check the figures set out on page 79 of the Agenda regarding the level of visitors which had been dealt with by the Customer Service Agents at the Gateway.

The Portfolio Holder for Town Centre Focus and Commercial Property referred to the reduction in figures in respect of unemployment, it being noted that it was now 1.4% of Ashford's working age population.

The Deputy Leader said that he wished to thank Officers for their work on disabled adaptations which he believed had been undertaken in a sensitive manner.

The Chairman, whilst commenting on an issue raised by a Member regarding the interpretation of footfall figures for the town, said that he had information from the County Square Manager who had indicated that their performance was 0.9% up on the same figure for last year and therefore, although he accepted that footfall could be interpreted in different ways, believed that there was an upward trend which had been identified by the trade.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget and Resource Management referred to the recently published report on shopping centres across the country and said he did not think it was appropriate for Ashford to be compared with the likes of Harrods or Knightsbridge.

The Portfolio Holder for Town Centre Focus and Commercial Property advised that figures had now been collected for footfall within the town centre over the past 14 or 15 months and therefore comparison data would soon be available.

**Resolved:**

**That the Performance for Quarter 2 of 2014/15 be noted.**

## **236 Budget Monitoring Report – Quarter 2 2014**

The report presented the second Budget Monitoring Report for the current year based on the first half of the year, April to September. The report showed an overall outturn of £4,000 above budget for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account was also over budget with a pressure of £2,000.

A Member referred to the estimated number of dwellings for which the Council would receive New Homes Bonus for in 2015/16 and said that he was surprised that this was lower than the estimate and asked whether this was a result of any actions by the Council.

The Portfolio Holder said that the reduction related to a reduced level of completions, for example the Panorama development which had been delayed by the finding of asbestos. However, he believed that the following year the Borough would see a spike in completions.

**Resolved:**

**That (i) the Budget Monitoring position as at 30 September 2014 be noted.**

**(ii) the New Homes Bonus Schedule (NHB) including approved projects for 2014/15 and carried forward projects from 2013/14 in Appendix A of the report be noted.**

**(iii) the replacement of 45 parking machines over the next 3 years at a total cost of £270,000 as detailed in paragraphs 29-34 of the report be approved.**

**(iv) the Growth Area Funding capital funding position as set out in paragraph 35 of the report be approved.**

**(v) the proposed projects to be funded from Growth Area Funding as set out in paragraphs 36 & 37 be approved.**

**(vi) the added £1m treasury management investment made in the CCLA Property Fund above the Council's Treasury Management limit be noted so as to take advantage of an opportunity to improve investment returns while maintaining good security (paragraphs 41-42 of the report refers).**

**(vii) the Mid-Year Treasury report as set out in Appendix C of the report be noted.**

## **237 Planning Task Group – Notes of the Meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

A Member explained that the exhibitions held within his Ward in terms of the Rural Sites submissions had been attended by a relatively few number of people from the area and furthermore he said that he had spoken to the Chairman of the Parish Council who had advised that he had not had a face to face discussion with Officers over the sites submitted in respect of the Parish. He also explained that he was surprised when he had seen the retention of a site, which the residents of Orlestone had not wanted to proceed, still included with a report.

The Head of Planning and Development said that Officers would be happy to meet the Member on a one to one basis but explained that consideration of the sites was a two stage process with sites being listed on the 'long list' prior to the application of set criteria to filter out those sites which were not considered appropriate to take forward. The 'long list' had been sent to Parish Councils for reasons of transparency.

The Chairman also said that at the most recent meeting Members of the Planning Task Group had been unanimous in their wish to see the proposed Park and Ride site next to the Drovers Roundabout removed from the Plan. In terms of the sites in Hamstreet and Orlestone the Chairman said that the Head of Planning and Development would take up the Members' request for a meeting in due course.

### **Resolved:**

**That the notes of the meeting of the Planning Task Group held on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014 be received and noted.**

## **238 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.**

## **239 Items for Future Meetings**

A Member referred to earlier discussion regarding the reduction in house completions and asked for further information on this issue. The Chairman said that he was sure the Head of Planning and Development would be able to provide that information outside of the meeting.

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Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Keith Fearon:  
Telephone: 01233 330564 Email: [keith.fearon@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:keith.fearon@ashford.gov.uk)  
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## **Cabinet**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **4<sup>th</sup> December 2014**

### **Present:**

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);

Cllr. Cloughton (Vice-Chairman);

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

### **Apologies:**

Cllrs. Burgess, Hicks, Sims.

### **Also Present:**

Cllrs. Bell, Bennett, Britcher, Chilton, Davison, Miss Martin, Mortimer, Ovenden, Smith, Wedgbury.

Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Head of Culture and Environment, Head of Communities and Housing, Head of Environmental and Customer Services, Head of Finance, Cultural Projects Manager, Tourism, Heritage and Nature Conservation Manager, Customer Services Manager, Communications and Marketing Manager, Policy and Performance Officer, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

## **255 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2014 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **256 Leader's Announcements**

The Leader gave an update on the various developments relating to the town centre and the Borough. In particular he drew attention to the news that a planning application was expected to be submitted to develop the land opposite Debenhams for use as a cinema, eateries and parking. He also explained that the promoters of the proposed model railway museum would be making a presentation shortly to Members and a planning application was expected to follow. In terms of Dover Place, the Public Realm Works would start shortly after Christmas and in the New Year the Planning Committee would be considering the application for the expansion of the Designer Outlet. In terms of the Dark Skies/Observatory he explained that consultants had been appointed to look into the viability of such a project prior to further consideration being given to the proposal.

The Leader also explained that the recent Farmers Market and the Outlet and shops such as Dobbies and John Lewis appeared to be very busy and he said it was good to see all this activity happening within the town.

## **257 Council Tax Support Local Scheme for 2015-16**

The report advised that the Council had a statutory duty to consider annually whether to revise its Council Tax Support Local Scheme or to replace it with another scheme and consult with interested parties if it wished to revise or replace it. The report recommended that the Council consult on retaining the current scheme which had been approved by the Cabinet in 2013. The Portfolio Holder said that the original scheme had been developed two years ago and had worked well since then and he commended the report to the Cabinet.

### **Recommended:**

- That (i) **the proposed Local Scheme for 2015/16 as set out in the conclusions of this report, i.e. there be no change to the existing scheme, be approved.**
- (ii) **public consultation on the proposals should run until 12<sup>th</sup> January 2015.**
- (iii) **delegated authority be granted to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and the Leader, to make any adjustments to the final scheme by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2015 in relation to the level of grant notified by Central Government in December 2014 and following consideration of the consultation responses. (Note: in the event a further Cabinet decision is needed a report can be brought to the Cabinet Meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015.)**

## **258 Council Tax Base 2015-16**

The report advised that the Council was required to approve the Tax Base which would be used to calculate the level of Council Tax for 2015-16. It was calculated with regard to the number domestic properties (including a forecast of new properties), which were then converted to Band D equivalents. The Tax Base had been calculated at 42,365 Band D properties, and was an increase of 519 (or 1.24%) on the current year.

### **Recommended:**

- That (i) **the 2015-16 "Net" Tax Base of 42,365 Band D equivalent properties as set out in the table below be agreed.**
- (ii) **the distribution across parished areas of the proposed grants to Parish Councils to help compensate for the negative impact caused by the Council Tax Support Scheme on Parish Council Tax bases (Appendix D to the report refers), totalling £40,900 be agreed.**

- (iii) the possibility of further Cabinet and Council decisions being required, before the end of January, be noted should any material change in the Tax Base be required as a consequence of any further relevant funding announcements from Government.**

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**TAX BASE 2015/2016  
LOCAL TAX BASE (WHOLE/PART AREAS)**

LOCAL TAX BASE 2014/2015	WHOLE AREA	BAND D EQUIVALENT	NEW OCCUPATIONS	1.0% PROVISION	Less discounts Council Tax Support	LOCAL TAX BASE 2015/2016
		47,310.00	502.00	(426.60)	(5,020.40)	42,365.00
	<u>PARISH</u>					
572.00	Aldington & Bonnington	603.10	4.70	(5.60)	(51.30)	550.90
320.90	Appledore	372.30	9.30	(3.30)	(52.30)	326.00
660.30	Bethersden	731.50	19.80	(6.90)	(67.60)	676.80
1,057.50	Biddenden	1,172.20	9.30	(10.80)	(92.30)	1,078.40
147.00	Bilsington	157.00	0.00	(1.60)	(12.30)	143.10
1,030.70	Boughton Aluph and Eastwell	1,117.90	1.90	(10.40)	(71.30)	1,038.10
590.00	Brabourne	619.00	1.90	(5.90)	(28.90)	586.10
147.10	Brook	153.70	0.90	(1.40)	(2.90)	150.30
411.00	Challock	432.10	2.80	(4.20)	(16.40)	414.30
1,165.70	Charing	1,334.40	27.30	(12.20)	(145.50)	1,204.00
714.80	Chilham	778.90	17.90	(7.20)	(72.90)	716.70
92.40	Crundale (PM)	94.50	0.00	(0.90)	(0.90)	92.70
499.00	Egerton	531.60	1.80	(5.10)	(28.50)	499.80
170.90	Godmersham	182.90	0.00	(1.80)	(7.30)	173.80
2,318.60	Great Chart with Singleton	2,581.70	1.90	(23.30)	(253.30)	2,307.00
112.60	Hastingleigh	119.90	0.00	(1.10)	(5.60)	113.20
690.10	High Halden	769.20	15.00	(7.20)	(61.80)	715.20
275.00	Hothfield	346.90	0.00	(2.70)	(68.20)	276.00
104.90	Kenardington	110.20	3.70	(1.00)	(10.90)	102.00
4,074.90	Kingsnorth	4,373.70	0.00	(41.20)	(256.00)	4,076.50
120.80	Little Chart	129.20	0.90	(1.30)	(4.70)	124.10
650.4	Mersham and Sevington	660.80	1.90	(6.20)	(28.60)	627.90
103.3	Molash	117.10	0.00	(1.10)	(8.80)	107.20
101.7	Newenden	107.10	1.90	(0.90)	(3.90)	104.20
518.9	Orlestone	575.40	37.70	(5.60)	(52.60)	554.90
464.1	Pluckley	516.70	3.80	(4.70)	(42.20)	473.60
658.2	Rolvenden	726.80	1.80	(6.60)	(67.40)	654.60
320.1	Ruckinge	342.80	3.70	(3.20)	(17.00)	326.30
481	Shadoxhurst	524.50	13.10	(5.10)	(42.90)	489.60
605.4	Swarden	653.20	3.70	(6.10)	(47.80)	603.00
341	Smeeth	386.30	0.90	(3.50)	(34.60)	349.10
692.5	Stanhope	1,020.90	6.60	(7.10)	(308.70)	711.70
195.7	Stone	221.60	6.60	(2.00)	(16.60)	209.60
3449.8	Tenterden (TC)	3,735.00	37.20	(34.60)	(304.50)	3,433.10
173.2	Warehorne	182.50	0.00	(1.70)	(9.40)	171.40
306.3	Westwell	343.70	1.90	(3.20)	(20.80)	321.60
510.7	Wittersham	585.60	0.90	(5.40)	(57.00)	524.10
800.9	Woodchurch	898.40	0.00	(8.40)	(72.00)	818.00
982.2	Wye with Hinxhill	1,097.40	1.90	(9.90)	(104.90)	984.50
15,214.40	Un parished Area	17,902.30	259.30	(156.20)	(2,469.80)	15,535.60
41,846.00		47,310.00	502.00	(426.60)	(5,020.40)	42,365.00

## 259 Preliminary Draft Budget 2015-16

The report set the scene for the Cabinet to consider its preliminary Draft Budget for 2015-16 and explained the important background and contextual information to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and next year's budget. The budget was preliminary as at the time of publication there was no final statement from the Government about the Council's level of support for next year, although the Government announced a provisional settlement for 2015-16 giving a clear indication of significant funding cuts for the next two years.

The Portfolio Holder referred to his comments set out within the report and said that he wished to say that he considered the draft Budget to be one of a successful Council. He explained that Council Tax had been frozen during the current year and would be frozen again for 2015-16. He said that he believed that the Council had taken steps to still deliver high quality services despite the reduced funding. He also referred to improvements which had been undertaken in the town centre. The report and budget would, however, need to reflect any changes arising from the Autumn Statement. The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Culture, Leisure, Parks and Open Spaces referred to the proposed increase in budget for the Create Festival and advised that she considered this entirely appropriate as it would be the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the event which she considered would be a very special occasion.

The Portfolio Holder for Community, Wellbeing and Education said that he believed that the success of the Create Festival, which had put Ashford on the map in terms of being the largest free festival in the south-east, rested with the enthusiasm and drive of the Arts and Cultural Industries Manager.

He also referred to Appendix E to the report which advised of the purchase by the Council of International House and said that he was pleased to report that all the voluntary and community sector groups had found suitable alternative accommodation.

In response to a request from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget and Resource Management undertook to ensure that the Committee and Task Group be provided with any additional information which arose during the scrutiny of the draft Budget proposals.

### **Recommended:**

- That
- (i) the Budget context and the proposed discussion with the Leader and Cabinet Members to review new homes bonus allocations (paragraph 47 of the report), prior to reporting to the February Cabinet Meeting, be noted.**
  - (ii) the preliminary draft Budget for 2015-16 be approved (noting that it is submitted before the Government's announcement of the provisional grant settlement),**
  - (iii) the preliminary draft Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2015-16 be approved.**

- (iv) **it be agreed that the report be used as the basis for budget consultation with the public, the business community, Parish Councils and staff.**
- (v) **the preliminary draft Budget as set out in the report should now be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Budget Task Group for formal scrutiny.**

## **260 Customer Service Strategy 2014-19**

The report outlined the Customer Service Strategy for the next five years taking into account changes in customer behaviour, their preferred methods of contact and how developments in technology would facilitate the future service provision.

The Portfolio Holder explained that the action plan had not been included within the agenda papers for the meeting but advised that she did have spare copies with her if Members wished to refer to them. She indicated that the strategy would be further reviewed in a couple of years' time.

### **Resolved:**

**That the Customer Service Strategy 2014-19 be approved.**

## **261 Land Management Improvement Plan**

The report set out the Land Management Improvement Plan and a range of priority early works for approval. It also introduced potential delivery models which would be subject to detailed assessment in a subsequent report.

The Portfolio Holder said that she was pleased the report had come before the Cabinet and explained that it was important to gather all the different strands associated with the management of the various types of landscape within the Borough. Work would also be undertaken to prioritise the key activities and residents would be involved in the consultation. The report also set out the options for delivering the Landscaping Grounds Maintenance Contract. The Chairman said that the issue had also been the subject to a Members' Seminar in November which assisted in the development of the plan.

### **Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) **the Land Management Improvement Plan attached as an appendix to the report be approved noting the positive endorsement of a Members' Workshop on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2014 and Officers be authorised to engage further with key partners and agree any changes in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.**
  - (ii) **the Heads of Service be authorised to put in place required staff resources and contracts to deliver the prioritised landscape improvement works using the approved allocation of New Homes Bonus in 2014/15 and other funding sources where appropriate.**

- (iii) the Head of Culture and Environment be authorised to bring forward, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, a further investment plan that looked to deliver the remaining Land Management Improvement Plan areas of work, to be considered by Management Team as part of the future New Homes Bonus bidding rounds.**
- (iv) the on-going financial implications with funding be noted subject to further discussions with the Leader and Cabinet Members before the February Cabinet Meeting.**
- (v) a detailed further report be submitted to Cabinet to consider the preferred service delivery model, providing a business case and a 3 Year Business Plan.**
- (vi) the use of reserves (up to a cost of £50,000) be approved to enable Management Team to engage the required expertise to complete the Business Planning work as required.**
- (vii) subject to recommendations (iv) and (v) above, further consideration of funding will be included in the Budget Report to the February Cabinet Meeting.**

## **262 Stour Centre Regeneration Project Update**

The report gave an update on the progress being made on the Stour Centre Regeneration Project including the creation of the Jasmin Vardimon International Academy. The report also sought approval for the early construction of a dedicated Spin Bike studio at the Stour Centre.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the current location used for the spin bike sessions was within the current gym and that a number of complaints from gym users had been received regarding noise.

The Portfolio Holder for Community, Wellbeing and Education explained that he was a former member of the gym and he believed the location of the spin bike studio in the gym was not appropriate. He supported the proposed construction of a new spin bike studio and he said it was important that the Stour Centre remained an attractive venue in view of the competition with facilities in the private sector.

The Portfolio Holder for Town Centre Focus and Commercial Property referred to recommendation (iii) and said it was pleasing to note that Ashford Leisure Trust were agreeing to replace the existing gym equipment from its own operating trading account.

A Member asked for a copy of the most up to date layout plan of the refurbishment works planned for the Stour Centre and also enquired as to whether the Business Plan had been produced regarding the Jasmin Vardimon facility.

The Chairman said that he was sure that the Head of Culture and the Environment would supply the Member with a plan. The Head of Finance advised that

consultants had been commissioned to conduct the work on the Business Plan and they were due to report back to the Council prior to Christmas.

The Chairman advised that he had used an element of his Ward Member grant to help in the purchase of an additional piece of equipment for the Stour Centre which was for the exclusive use of the disabled. He thanked those colleagues who had also agreed to allocate an element of their Ward Member grant for the acquisition of this particular piece of equipment.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) the work of the Stour Centre Regeneration Member Steering Group and Project Team and the early progress that had been made on the project be noted.**
- (ii) it be noted that Ashford Leisure Trust were agreeing to replace the existing gym equipment from its operating trading account.**

**Recommended:**

**That the construction of a new spin bike studio be financed from reserves for the Stour Centre plant and equipment.**

## **263 Ashford Borough Tourism Review 2013-2014**

The report set out the outcomes of the 2013/2014 Tourism Review which included a programme of short-term “quick win” projects and sought approval to a range of longer term actions.

The Portfolio Holder explained that during the process there had been widespread consultation but she explained that the review did not cover all aspects of tourism. She drew attention to one particular area, namely business tourism which she said would be explored further. She said she wished to thank the Tourism, Heritage and Nature Conservation Manager for all her assistance in this process and her valuable input.

A Member referred to page 20 of the Action Plan and in particular to the promotion of the rural “gastro” pub network and said that there were particular issues in terms of the costs for businesses of the provision of the brown tourism promotional signs. She asked whether the Council could work with Kent County Council on this issue and she also said that furthermore some village signposts were poor. She considered that in addition to promoting the “gastro” pubs in the rural areas with accommodation, there was also a need to promote ordinary pubs that sold straightforward bar meals.

The Portfolio Holder said that the issues of village signs and signage to villages were different matters but said she was happy to work with Kent County Council on the latter point. She said she understood the issue with the failing viability of certain rural pubs which she said had been caused by a number of reasons such as the smoking ban and also the fact that people were staying at home and having their drinks there. Tourism South East were encouraging suitable pubs to provide accommodation facilities.



The Chairman referred to paragraph 10.5 of the report (the Tourism Societies National Conference) and said it was pleasing that he could report that for the 2015 Tourism Symposium there was a proposal being put forward by Visit Kent with the support of Kent County Council and Medway to win the event for Ashford in 2015.

**Resolved:**

- That
- (i) the outcomes of the Ashford Borough Tourism Review 2013/2014 carried out by the Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Rural Focus and Customer Services be noted.**
  - (ii) a programme of short-term “quick win” projects was proposed to be funded from the £20,000 New Homes Bonus which was originally earmarked for undertaking the review be noted.**
  - (iii) a range of longer term actions as set out in the Action Plan and the main review document be agreed.**
  - (iv) the Head of Culture and Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, be authorised to bring forward the costed programme of longer term prioritised actions (recommendation (iii) above) to be considered by Management Team as part of a future New Homes Bonus bidding round with a view for it to be included in the budget report to Cabinet in February 2015.**
  - (v) a proposal for an improved Ashford Tourist Information Service taking account of funding opportunities presented by the expanded Designer Outlet Section 106 Agreement be developed.**

## **264 Transparency Code 2014**

The report provided an update on the Transparency Code 2014 which was effective from the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2014 and placed requirements on all Local Authorities to begin publishing a range of data on their services over the coming months.

**Resolved:**

- That
- (i) the implications of the Transparency Code 2014 be noted.**
  - (ii) authority be delegated to Management Team, in consultation with the departments responsible for each data return and the Portfolio Holder, to ensure the ongoing publication of the data included within the code by whichever means is suitable and compliant in each instance.**

## **265 Re-provision of the Charing Sports Pavilion**

The report sought approval for the Section 106 Contribution from a Ward's development of 61 homes in Charing (CHAR2) to be used for the re-provision of the pavilion at Arthur Baker Playing Fields.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Charing Playing Fields Committee were seeking funding to ensure that the new pavilion building under construction could be made watertight in time for Christmas. She also advised that the forward funding would also be subject to consideration of a business plan which would demonstrate that there were sufficient funds to complete the construction of the pavilion.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) the forward funding of the re-provision of a pavilion at Arthur Baker Playing Fields be approved subject to:-**
- (a) Prior completion of a Funding Agreement on terms agreeable to the Head of Culture and the Environment in consultation with the appropriate Portfolio Holders and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Head of Finance up to a maximum of £116,815.**
  - (b) Prior submission to, and approval by the Head of Culture and the Environment in consultation with the Head of Finance, of a Business Plan demonstrating that there are sufficient funds to complete the construction of the pavilion.**
  - (c) Advances be made in two instalments with the first instalment of £30,000 being released on completion of a Funding Agreement and a second instalment being released on a future date to be agreed by the Head of Service.**
- (ii) the expenditure of the Section 106 Sports Pitches Contribution from the CHAR2 site be approved once it has been received for the same purpose as the above.**

## **266 Educational and Vocational Skills Advisory Committee - 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Educational and Vocational Skills Advisory Committee held on the 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014 be received and noted.**

## **267 Transportation, Highways and Engineering Advisory Committee – 27<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Transportation, Highways and Engineering Advisory Committee held on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2014 be received and noted.**

## **268 Ashford Strategic Delivery Board – 24<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board held on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2014 be received and noted.**

## **269 Planning Task Group – 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Planning Task Group held on the 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014 be received and noted.**

## **270 Schedule of Key Decisions to be Taken**

The Chairman referred to the tabled paper which advised of a number of changes to the Key Decisions Schedule.

**Resolved:**

**That the latest Schedule of Key Decisions as set out within the report and as amended by the tabled paper be received and noted.**

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(KRF/VS/AEH)

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