

Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **10th September 2015**.

Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);

Cllr. Bell (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Galpin, Heyes, Miss Martin, Shorter.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Clokie, Smith

Also Present:

Cllrs. Britcher, Burgess, Hicks, Michael, Ovenden, Sims, Wedgbury.

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Head of Planning and Development, Head of Finance, Principal Accountant, Head of Environmental and Customer Service, Cultural Projects Manager, Customer Services Manager, Policy and Performance Manager, Health, Parking and Community Safety Manager, Communications Officer, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

116 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 9th July 2015 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

117 Leader's Announcements

The Chairman said that he was pleased to inform colleagues that the Council was in the process of appointing Quinn Estates Ltd and George Wilson Holdings Ltd as its developer for the Commercial Quarter. He explained that they were a local contractor with a strong track record and a reputation for delivery and had worked on a number of projects in Kent. They had been in partnership for over 10 years and had delivered over 1 m sq ft of commercial space in Kent and created thousands of jobs. The Chairman explained that the Commercial Quarter was a mixed use development that would maximise its location opposite Ashford International Station. It would be the dynamic new main business hub stimulating major investment opportunities, creating several hundred jobs, 590,000 sq ft of office space and some 150 homes. It would bring spending power to the heart of the town centre and would help to sustain the best possible range of retail and leisure activity.

The Chairman further explained that the Council had purchased International House in the previous year and that investment was performing extremely well both as a revenue stream and as a property asset that was a landmark building. The new Public Realm works around International House would lead to a newly designed Dover Place which was due to be completed soon. This would create a sense of place, forming an attractive walk into the town centre, and passing the open square of the Commercial Quarter and would give a first class impression of Ashford. In addition, planning applications for two other major projects had been lodged and were due to be considered by the Planning Committee shortly, namely the proposed expansion of the Designer Outlet and plans for a town centre cinema, hotel and restaurants at Elwick Place. These large scale developments were part of the Council's Big 8 projects and emphasised the Council's ambition for the town, illustrating how it was intended to unlock major opportunities, deliver new jobs, housing, retail and cultural facilities. The Chairman said that the message from this Council to everyone, but especially the business community, was clear in that Ashford was going places and now was the time to get on board. From the evidence he had mentioned, he said it appeared that the business community was listening and responding in a most positive way. He hoped colleagues would agree that there were some very exciting times ahead for Ashford.

Finally, the Chairman reminded Members to come along to the event to enjoy the Open Day at the new Conningbrook Lakes Country Park on Saturday 12th September 2015 which started from 11.00 am.

118 Landscape Management: Improving Presentation of the Borough; Creating an In-house Service

The report presented an options appraisal for the delivery of an improved Grounds Maintenance Service considering key factors affecting the Council and the service and identifying the risks and mobilisation plan for the preferred service delivery model. The conclusions of the options appraisal had identified that the preferred service delivery model was an in-house landscaping grounds maintenance service.

The Portfolio Holder explained that the options considered had been based upon the objectives as set out in the Landscape Improvement Plan which had been considered by Members in 2014. The main driver was the need to achieve quality and in particular to improve the appearance of the entrances to the town centre, its roundabouts and grass verges. The Portfolio Holder believed that the current contract had not enabled the Council to keep pace with the standards it now aspired to. The Portfolio Holder therefore considered that the in-house option would enable the Council to control the focus of the service or prioritise particular areas and monitor the overall quality of the landscaped areas. The annual cost of the service would be in the region of £1.7 million plus start-up costs which were identified within the report. The investment in the service would make such areas more welcoming to visitors to the Borough and also to those businesses who were considering locating to the area. The Portfolio Holder also hoped that residents would see the benefit of well maintained areas of valuable public space. The Portfolio Holder said she was grateful for the work undertaken by the Cultural Projects Manager and the Head of Cultural and Project Services in their thorough and objective approach to this issue.

The Chairman suggested a slight amendment to the wording of recommendation (iv) as set out within the report.

Recommended:

- That
- (i) the Landscape Management Service aims and objectives summarised in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.**
 - (ii) the Service Delivery Model Options Appraisal for grounds maintenance detailed in Appendix 2 to the report be noted and it be agreed that the Council's grounds maintenance work be best provided through an in-house service at the present time.**
 - (iii) a base budget growth allocation of £250,000 be included, as part of the budget build and MTFP 2016/17 process to deliver the in-house service and related land management functions.**
 - (iv) a one-off revenue budget allocation of £200,000 as a contingency sum to support the implementation of the work across 2015 and 2016 be approved.**
 - (v) a capital budget be approved of £1.5 million for acquisition of grounds maintenance machinery, equipment and depot.**
 - (vi) the Chief Executive and appropriate Heads of Service in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Public Interaction and Borough Presentation and Finance, Budget and Resource Management be authorised to take the necessary steps to give effect to the above recommendations.**

119 Allotment Review

The report outlined the review of the Allotment Service carried out between May and July 2015 and put forward recommendations for the future operation of the service.

The Portfolio Holder clarified that the correct series of recommendations for the Cabinet were set out on pages 37 and 38 of the Agenda.

Recommended:

- That
- (i) the management of allotments remain with the Council until a cost-neutral (excluding recharges) budget is achieved at which point the Allotment Society will reconsider the option to take over the management with assistance from the Council and the National Allotment Society.**
 - (ii) the policy be changed to charge allotment fees in advance with effect from October 2015, with payments made by 1st October each year, in line with national best practice.**

- (iii) **to assist plot holders with a transition from in arrears to in advance payments, a free fee paying period from April to October 2015 be allowed, to avoid two full years' payments in one year which for some may be unaffordable; all allotment holders had been written to giving 90 days' notice, subject to Cabinet approval, of this change and there will be no impact on the in-year budget as a result.**
- (iv) **a 50% concession be applied for existing and new plot holders, for the first 5 perch with full payment for any further perch's allocated; applicants for a concession will be means tested. An annual declaration of benefits (other than state pension) will be required.**
- (v) **a 20% increase for all plot holders (£1 per perch) be applied, split over two years, 50 pence in October 2015 and 50 pence in 2016, effective 1st October 2015, invoiced in advance.**
- (vi) **the fees and charges in relation to allotments be amended with effect from October 2015.**
- (vii) **a £25 deposit be charged for the first key, £10 for each additional key, to be refunded upon return to the Council.**
- (viii) **the incentive for plot holders to save water be agreed with a target reduction of 25% (£1,000 across all sites) with an Officer review in one year; if achieved and continually maintained water charges will not be applied; Water policies will be worked up for each site ensuring the no plot holders are disadvantaged.**

120 The Ashford Borough Council/Kent County Council "District Deal"

The report explained the background to the proposed Delivery Deal and a copy of the full version was appended to the report. The deal was designed to improve the joint working of the County and the Borough Council in delivering key projects and services.

The Chairman explained that Ashford had been chosen as the first district to pilot a Delivery Deal with the County Council and he believed it stemmed from the successful partnership working as evidenced by the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board. He further explained that the success of the arrangement would be reviewed on an annual basis to assess how it worked in practice.

Resolved:

- That (i) the ABC/KCC Delivery Deal be endorsed and the responsibility for finalising the draft document be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council.**

- (ii) **the proposed arrangements to monitor affected delivery by means of a District Deal Delivery Board be agreed.**

121 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and the Prevent Programme

The report set out the implications of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and the Prevent Duty. The report proposed how this would be achieved at the Council including the mechanisms for reporting concerns.

The Portfolio Holder advised that all Local Authorities had to respond to this legislation and he believed the report presented a good summary of the principle provisions of the Act.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) **the Community Safety Partnership continue to lead on the Prevent Duty on behalf of the Council.**
 - (ii) **representatives from the Council would participate in the formation of a county-wide Prevent Action Plan and a Working Group from the Community Safety Partnership will be tasked to produce a Borough Prevent Action Plan.**
 - (iii) **Ashford Borough Council would support Kent County Council with the Channel Panel and specifically support any cases that are identified as having a link to the Borough of Ashford.**
 - (iv) **the Council give consideration to the use of its own buildings and resources to ensure that they do not promote extremist views.**
 - (v) **the mechanisms for reporting concerns be agreed.**

122 Revised Contract Standing Orders and Procurement Guidance

The report advised that the contract procedure rules had been last reviewed in April 2012, Since then a number of references to information were now neither no longer applicable/available and certain procedures were obsolete. The original Contract Procedure Rules had been separated in to two documents – Contract Standing Orders (CSO) and Procurement Guidance (which was appended to the report).

The Portfolio Holder said he wished to congratulate the Procurement Officer and the Principal Solicitor for the work on the report and advised that it stemmed from an audit undertaken in 2013. He believed that the proposed changes represented a clear methodology for applying contract law to the procurement process.

The Portfolio Holder for Town Centre Focus and Business Dynamics said that he believed that the review had been timely and was pleased that it clarified the issue associated with the use of single suppliers and allowed for the exclusion of contractors for poor performance.

Recommended:

That the new Contract Standing Orders be approved and the accompanying procurement guidance be noted.

123 Face to Face Customer Services at Ashford Gateway Plus

The report advised that the Customer Service Strategy had been approved by the Cabinet in December 2014 and was designed to reflect the changing pattern in how residents interacted with the Council from the traditional face to face and telephone contact communication to via email and the internet. The report outlined progress in relation to the implementation of the strategy and proposed a relocation of the face to face services.

The Portfolio Holder explained that over time the number of face to face enquiries had reduced with many customers now happy to have their queries dealt with via email or on-line. The Portfolio Holder emphasised that the current proposals still enabled those residents of the Borough to arrange face to face sessions with staff if they so desired. She also explained that one of the advantages of moving to the Civic Centre was that free parking was available for 20 minutes. In response to a comment as to whether 20 minutes was sufficient, the Head of Environmental and Customer Service said that the situation would be monitored and staff would be available to arrange for extensions of time should appointments run over the allotted period of 20 minutes.

In terms of the use of the vacant space within the Gateway, the Head of Environmental and Customer Service explained that the Gateway was a KCC building and they would be considering how to utilise that space in due course.

In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder explained that the issue of the location of the Tourist Information Centre was being considered and that she was mindful that their current location was hardly ideal. This would be considered in due course.

Recommended:

- That**
- (i) the withdrawal of Customer Services from Ashford Gateway Plus by no later than the end of March 2016 be approved.**
 - (ii) the Civic Centre refurbishment costs of £58,000 be approved.**

124 Helping to Deliver Key Investments in the Town Centre

The report reviewed the current situation regarding development in the town centre and the need to encourage and capitalise on the growing but cautious private sector interest to help the Council's aims as set out in the Town Centre Area Action Plan. A series of considerations were set out within the report that could form part of the overall assessment of planning applications for key strategic developments.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development said that he wished to commend the Officer's work on the report and said he was happy to recommend that the Council accepts it as a positive and innovative step towards delivering key investments in the town centre.

Resolved:

That the approach as suggested in paragraphs 20, 26 and 31 of the report to help deliver key strategic investments in the town centre be endorsed and that the report be drawn to the attention of the Planning Committee Members.

125 Budget Monitoring Report – First Four Months 2015/16

The report presented the first Budget Monitoring Report for the current year based on the first four months actuals for the General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account and the Collection Fund.

The report also asked for approval for three additional New Homes Bonus allocations, the ring fencing of the Wilkinson stores leasing, to cover the Park Mall first year operating costs and initial regeneration feasibility and the transfer contract inflation index cost savings to the Repairs and Renewals reserve of £80,000 for litter bin replacement.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the Budget Monitoring Report as at 31st July 2015 be noted.**
 - (ii) the ring fencing of the Wilkinson income to first year costs relating to Park Mall as detailed in paragraphs 12 to 13 of the report be approved.**
 - (iii) the annual transfer to the Repairs and Renewals Reserve for the replacement of litter and dog waste bins as outlined in paragraph 30 – 31 of the report be approved.**
 - (iv) the New Homes Bonus projects as set out in paragraph 33 of the report be approved.**

126 Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 4 2014/15 and Quarter 1 2015/16

The report advised Members and the public on the performance of the Council during the respective quarters. This included information on what the Council 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.

In terms of the report, the Portfolio Holder drew particular attention to the point within the Quarter 4 2014/15 report and explained that whilst the numbers of people needed to be housed in bed and breakfast accommodation had risen when compared to the end of 2014, with the Council's new provision at Christchurch Road this had enabled the cost to be lower than at the same time last year.

Resolved:

That the performance for Quarter 4 of 2014/15 and Quarter 1 2015/16 be noted.

127 Terms of Reference of Cabinet Approved Boards, Steering Groups and Task Groups

The report set out the Terms of Reference of the various Cabinet member groups set up by the Cabinet on 11th June 2015 which were required to be approved under the terms of the Constitution. Tabled at the meeting was an additional recommendation (ii).

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, and Environment referred to the Terms of Reference for the Conningbrook Lakes Country Park Steering Group and advised that within that document there were several references to "County" Park rather than "Country" Park and therefore these needed to be rectified.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the Terms of Reference of the various groups set out within the report and as attached as an Appendix to the report be approved.**
 - (ii) the Property, Acquisition, Investment and Disposal Strategy be amended to reflect the Terms of Reference of the Town Centre Regeneration Board.**

128 Welfare Reform – Impacts Report 2015

The report provided an update in terms of the impacts of the changes in Welfare Reform since 2012. The impacts had been managed by the Council Tax and Welfare Reform Task Group.

The Portfolio Holder said that he would like to thank the Senior Revenues and Benefits Officer and Senior Communications Officer for the work they had undertaken on behalf of the Council Tax and Welfare Reform Task Group. He believed that the report gave a better understanding of how Ashford Borough Council, and its partners had managed the changes stemming from the reforms. He encouraged all Members to read the document and hoped that it would be widely communicated to the general public.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the proactive work undertaken by Officers across the Council to manage the local response be noted.**
 - (ii) the proactive way the Council had led the multi-agency response through the creation in November 2014 of the Welfare Partnership Hub and the endorsement of the Government Minister, Lord Freud be noted.**
 - (iii) the information contained within the report and the conclusions it draws and the next steps be noted.**

129 The Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – 15th July 2015

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 15th July 2015 be approved and adopted.

130 Ashford Strategic Delivery Board – 24th July 2015

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting of the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board held on the 24th July 2015 be received and noted.

131 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.

(KRF/AEH)

MINS:CAXX1537

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Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **8th October 2015**.

Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);

Cllr. Bell (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Clokie, Galpin, Heyes, Miss Martin, Shorter.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Bradford, Chilton, Hicks, Michael, Mrs Martin, Ovenden.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Britcher, Burgess, Link, Smith, Wedgbury.

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Planning and Development, Head of Culture and the Environment, Principal Solicitor for Property and Projects, Head of Finance, Head of Personnel and Development, Head of Communities and Housing, Housing Operations Manager, Housing Options Officer, Policy and Performance Manager, Senior Communications Officer, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

158 Urgency Provision

The Chairman advised that in accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 he had accepted the late inclusion of an item entitled "Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme" as a matter of urgency and by reason of special circumstances, namely that all Local Authorities had been asked to consider urgently their response to Government via the Regional Strategic Migration Partnership (RSMP) in terms of accommodating and supporting Syrian refugees.

159 Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme

The report had been accepted onto the Agenda by the Chairman as a matter of urgency.

The report gave a basic overview of the resettlement programme announced by the Prime Minister and outlined in general terms the way in which Ashford Borough Council planned to engage with the Home Office to play its part in the local, countywide and national response.

The Chairman advised that all Members had been sent a copy of the report that afternoon and he explained that a copy had also been released to the media. Prior to putting the report forward the Chairman explained that he had spoken to both

Group Leaders who were supportive of the recommendations set out within the report. The Chairman said that the Administration would still abide by its manifesto commitment to ensure that the Council Tax for Ashford was the lowest in the county and would remain so for the full four years of the Administration. He then read from a letter from the relevant Government Minister who had confirmed that the proposed scheme would be fully funded for 12 months and a commitment had been given to cover costs in future years.

The Vice-Chairman said he was supportive of the proposals, which he considered were extremely important in terms of the overall humanitarian aid programme. He sought assurances that the initiative would not affect those members of the public on the Housing Waiting List nor affect how the Borough dealt with the issue of homelessness.

The Chairman confirmed that the proposed scheme would not affect those members of the public on the Housing Waiting List as he advised that the properties required would be procured via the Private Rented Sector or by any purchases made by the Council's Property Company provided they were suitably located. The Council would still be standing by its commitment to honour the Armed Forces Covenant which had been signed the previous year. He emphasised that the refugees would only be those from camps located around Syria and would follow the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' process for identifying and resettling. Those refugees granted such status would be given 5 year humanitarian leave to remain in the country and have the right to seek employment.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Wellbeing and Safety queried whether the proposed level of refugees would cause a resource issue within the Authority and within other sectors and suggested that perhaps the initiative should be reviewed in a year's time to assess how it had operated in practice. He also considered that it would be prudent to ensure that the families were located throughout the Borough and not just in the urban area.

The Chairman explained that the matter would be reviewed after a year and emphasised that there was a need to ensure that the refugees were integrated and be in a position to be able to meet with each other. The option of location in villages would be considered along with all other locations in the Borough. In a response to a question he also explained that the screening process would take between 21 and 28 days and therefore it was likely that the first refugees could arrive in Ashford before Christmas.

A Member suggested that there was a need for Officers to examine locations of the proposed private sector properties to ensure that they were appropriate for the needs of the refugees and he also believed that there was a need to manage public perception and media in terms of the resettlement programme.

In response to a question, the Head of Communities and Housing referred to paragraphs 2 and 5 of the report which clarified that the programme was to resettle up to 50 refugees a year for a five year period. The Cabinet agreed that it would be appropriate to reflect this point within Recommendation (i) of the report.

In response to a further question, the Head of Communities and Housing advised that she had met with the Admissions Officer from Kent County Council to discuss school provision and she explained that further discussions would be held with Local Admissions Officers nearer the time when specific Syrian families were due to be resettled.

Recommended:

- That (i) **support be given to the Government's Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme to re-settle up to 50 Syrian refugees per year in the Borough over the next five years.**
- (ii) **authority be delegated to the Head of Communities and Housing, in consultation with the Leader and the Chief Executive, to agree the details of the delivery of the scheme with further reports/information being circulated to Members at appropriate points.**
- (iii) **progress on the scheme be reviewed in one year's time.**

160 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 10th September 2015 be approved and confirmed as a correct record subject to Minute No. 127(ii) "Terms of Reference of Cabinet Approved Boards, Steering Groups and Task Groups" being amended by the addition of the word "Recommendation" which had been omitted in error.

161 The Next Five Years: A Suite of Reports:- A Corporate Plan 2015-2020 (summary version); the MTFP 2016-2021; and Succession Planning Phase 2

The report sought approval to a number of recommendations set out in the suite of reports collectively called "The Next Five Years".

The Chairman explained that the Corporate Plan reflected the Administration's direction of Aspiration, Action and Achievement and set its priorities for the next five years. It was based on the Administrations' Manifesto and was aligned with Central Government Policies. The plan also aimed to highlight some important principles to underpin the four priority areas which were Enterprising Ashford; Living Ashford; Active and Creative Ashford; and Attractive Ashford.

The Chairman explained that Members and Senior Officers had worked together to produce the new plan which reflected a diverse but growing Borough and which focused on exciting opportunities to encourage and invest in economic growth and provide business and leisure facilities and quality homes to live in across the Borough. He explained that the document was a summary version of the Corporate

Plan and a fuller, more detailed version would be presented to the Cabinet in December.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget and Resource Management explained that the Medium Term Financial Plan covered the years 2016 to 2021 and supported the new Corporate Plan by ensuring resources were available and targeted to priorities. He advised that in accordance with Cabinet's previous agreement there was a mechanism in place to manage inflation and this, together with the already agreed Borrowing and Acquisition Strategy and a new strategy to close the budget gap, gave the Council some solid foundations upon which to build its aspirations and to make sure they could be achieved. In terms of the Chancellor's recent announcement regarding Revenue Support Grant being stopped entirely, he explained that local authorities would have to be much more independent and self-sufficient. In terms of Business Rates he explained that this would need to be subject to a detailed discussion in the future when more details about the scheme announced by the Chancellor were known. He explained that the Head of Finance had produced a straightforward aide memoire to show how the Government Baseline 2015/16 (Estimate) for Business Rates for Ashford was being set. He explained that copies would be available after the end of the meeting. The Portfolio Holder also referred to the Council's recent proactive action in terms of adopting its commercial approach, particularly in relation to recent acquisitions which were considered a good way for Local Authorities to operate and secure additional revenue streams. Further details of the future funding arrangements would be known following the detailed Comprehensive Spending Review in November. In conclusion he advised that Phase 2 of the Succession Planning aimed to endorse the continuation of the approach started some time ago which provided for in-house officer development to allow the organisation to cope with turnover but still retain essential skills, knowledge and experience. He advised that there was only one exception to this point which related to the post being recommended for redundancy where circumstances had changed since the role had been developed.

The Portfolio Holder for Information and Communications, who was also the Chairman of the Joint Consultative Committee advised that at that afternoon's meeting the reports had been positively received by staff and she wished to commend the work undertaken by the Head of Personnel and Development and her staff in terms of the contents of the report. She also said it was very pleasing that the Council had received a national award for internal communications with staff.

Recommended:

That

(a) in terms of the Corporate Plan 2015-2020 summary version:

(i) the four proposed priorities as set out in:-

- **Enterprising Ashford**
- **Living Ashford**
- **Active and Creative Ashford**
- **Attractive Ashford**

be adopted as the Council's Corporate Priorities

- (ii) the underpinning principles be adopted to highlight the standards to which the Council strives at all times.
- (b) in terms of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2016-21:-
- (i) the forecast be noted and the underlying assumptions be accepted.
 - (ii) the Inflation Management Strategy be re-endorsed.
 - (iii) the Borrowing and Acquisition Strategy be re-endorsed.
 - (iv) the Closing the Gap Strategy 2019/20 be endorsed.
 - (v) authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Leader and Portfolio Holder to agree the Council's continued participation in the Kent Business Rates Pool.
 - (vi) the proposed strategy for reviewing the Council Tax Support Scheme for April 2017 be agreed and the Deputy Chief Executive be granted delegated authority, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to agree the Terms of Reference for the review.
- (c) in terms of Succession Planning, Phase 2:-
- (i) the development of the approach to succession planning and the underpinning principle that ABC will seek to develop its officers to prepare for turnover and internal changes in order to retain skills, knowledge and experience during the critical period of the Five Year Corporate Plan, be endorsed.
 - (ii) the deletion of Post No. 1100 be approved on the grounds of redundancy.

162 Striving for Quality Place-Making – The Proposed Quality Monitoring Approach

The report set out the suggested approach to strengthen quality monitoring of new development to seek to drive up standards of new homes built and the outside environment around them. The Portfolio Holder explained that the quality of design was the core aim of this initiative and he commended the recommendation in the report.

In response to a comment, the Chairman advised that he was sure that the standards would be adopted across all areas of the Borough.

Resolved:

That the approach to quality monitoring of new housing developments as set out in the report be endorsed.

163 Pest Control Contract

The report outlined the review of the current Pest Control Contract with recommendations on future procurement and changes to the fees and charges structure.

The Portfolio Holder advised that both Maidstone and Swale had removed subsidies for certain aspects of pest control with no effect. However, she advised that a contingency was available to use if any particular problems occurred, for example with the prevalence of rats.

In response to a question from a Member, the Portfolio Holder said that she would be happy to discuss the possible collection of dead rats by the contractor following their treatment of areas.

Another Member emphasised that it was important to retain the contingency and he referred to problems caused by developments on brownfields sites which often led to an increase in the level of rats in residential areas.

The Chairman indicated that he wished to discuss some issues associated with the contingency fund with the Portfolio Holder outside of the meeting.

Recommended:

- That**
- (i) a one year extension to the current contract with Mitie be approved allowing an opportunity to monitor impact of any removal of concessions.**
 - (ii) a further joint procurement with Maidstone and Swale, for provision from January 2017 be agreed.**
 - (iii) the removal of all subsidies be agreed and charges for rats, mice, bedbugs and cockroaches be introduced with effect from 1st January 2016; the savings realised to be held in the service as contingency against any potential environmental health issues.**
 - (iv) the revised charges from the contractor, Mitie be accepted with effect from 1st January 2016 and the fees and charges be increased to reflect contract fees and charges on a continual basis.**

164 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) Update 2015

The report gave details of the requirement for the Council to have an up-to-date Local Development Scheme (LDS) and set out the content of the proposed LDS for 2015. The Portfolio Holder advised that the document had been agreed by the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group.

Recommended:

That the adoption of the Local Development Scheme as required under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2014 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) be approved.

165 Staff Insurance Scheme

The report recommended that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be appointed as the officer to administer the scheme and be an authorised signatory of the Trust. The change was required following the redundancy of the post of Head of Property and Community Projects.

Recommended:

That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be appointed as an officer to administer the Staff Insurance Scheme and be an authorised signatory.

166 Homelessness Strategy 2015

The report sought authority to commence consultation on the Homelessness Review and Strategy developed during 2015.

The Portfolio Holder referred to his comments set out in paragraphs 24 and 25 of the report and he said he looked forward to the responses to the document.

Resolved:

- That (i) the Homelessness Review and draft Homelessness Strategy set as out in Appendix 1 to the report be taken forward into a consultation exercise.**
- (ii) the findings of the consultation exercise be reported back to Cabinet prior to finalising the Review and Homelessness Strategy.**

167 Town Centre Regeneration Board – 26th August 2015

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Town Centre Regeneration Board held on 26th August 2015 be received and noted.

168 Joint Transportation Board – 8th September 2015

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held on the 8th September 2015 be received and noted.

169 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – 16th September 2015

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 16th September 2015 be received and noted.

170 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.

(KRF/VS)

MINS:CAXX1541

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