

Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **12th November 2015**

Present:

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

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

Apologies:

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Britcher, Clarkson, Hicks, Mrs Martin, Chief Executive.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Bradford, Buchanan, Burgess, Link, Michael, Ovenden, Sims, Smith, Mrs Webb, Wedgbury.

Head of Communities and Housing; Housing Resources Manager; Head of Personnel and Development; Head of Finance; Principal Solicitor – Strategic Development; Health, Parking and Community Safety Manager; Facilities Development Manager; Principal Accountant; Cultural Projects Manager; Communications and Marketing Manager; Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

198 Declarations of Interest

| Councillor | Interest | Minute No. |
|-------------------|--|-------------------|
| Smith | Made a "Voluntary Announcement" in respect of Agenda Item No. 6 as he was a retired Unison member. | 200 |

199 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 8th October 2015 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

200 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2015 - 2045

The report provided Members with the annual update of the HRA Business Plan financial projections and the affordability of agreed plans and priorities. Due to the four year rent reduction announced in the July 2015 Budget, Ashford was currently

anticipating an income loss of £10 m over the next four years and a loss of £160 m over the 30 year Business Plan cycle. A cost recovery programme had been actioned to recover the financial position of the HRA to ensure it remained affordable.

The Portfolio Holder referred to paragraph 20 of the report and said that in his view it was very unlikely that if a new Government was elected it would return the rent increases to their previous levels. He also explained that the recommendations within the report would allow the process of consultation with staff to commence which stemmed from the reduction in the work of the Building Maintenance team.

A Member referred to the issue regarding potential redundancies and said it appeared that the Council was not following its adopted policies and correct procedures and he therefore asked the Cabinet to consider deferring those elements of the report regarding the proposed redundancies to allow time to consider the potential for voluntary redundancies across the board.

The Chairman indicated that he did not support the request made by the Member and confirmed that following adoption of this report, the Council's normal processes would be followed. The Head of Personnel and Development confirmed that no decisions had been taken or were proposed regarding redundancies in the report and that a further report would be submitted to the Joint Consultative Committee in due course and appropriate due procedures.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the updated HRA Business Plan and Financial Projections be agreed.**
 - (ii) the savings programme to recover the financial position be approved.**
 - (iii) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be invited to review the HRA Business Plan Financial Projections as part of the budget scrutiny process.**

201 Spearpoint Community Sports Pavilion: Request for Additional Capital Funding

The report advised that the lowest acceptable tender received exceeded the anticipated estimate by £49,000 and by allowing a prudent 10% contingency the revised estimated cost was £918,000 which represented a revised total project cost of £130,000 above the anticipated level. The report sought Cabinet's approval for a capital budget allocation of £130,000 to address these costs.

The Portfolio Holder said that the tenders had come in higher than expected which was largely attributable to the upturn in the economy and the fact that building skills were now more in demand. Subject to the Cabinet and Council approving the recommendations, it was hoped to start on site in February/March 2016.

In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the tenders had been submitted on a fixed contract basis.

A Member said he wished to place on record the work undertaken by the Ward Member for Little Burton Farm in bringing the project to fruition.

Recommended:

- That**
- (i) entering into a contract for the demolition and construction of a new building be approved within the revised project budget of £918,000 subject to approval by the Council.**
 - (ii) an additional capital contribution of £130,000 be agreed for the renewal of the Spearpoint Pavilion to be funded from strategic 106 contributions and/or New Homes Bonus as detailed within the report.**
 - (iii) the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be given authority in consultation with the Head of Culture and the Environment to:**
 - (a) execute and complete all necessary documentation, and**
 - (b) in consultation with the Chief Executive take any further action required to give effect to the above recommendations.**

202 Gambling Act 2005 – Policy Revision

The report presented a revision to Ashford Borough Council's Gambling Policy for public consultation which had been prepared in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005.

The Portfolio Holder advised that there were no significant implications associated with the latest revision of the policy.

A Member referred to paragraph 6 of the report and said that he believed that it should be clarified that the majority of the establishments listed were in the urban areas of Ashford.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the revised Gambling Policy Statement be approved for the purposes of issuing for consultation.**
 - (ii) the Cabinet notes that the majority of gambling related businesses were located in the Ashford urban area (with one betting shop in Tenterden).**

203 Budget Monitoring Report – Second Quarter 2015/16

The report presented the Second Quarter Budget Monitoring Report for the current year for the General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account, and the Collection Fund. The report indicated that this quarter the General Fund was projected to be £30,000 over its original budget, a £16,000 movement from the last quarter where a slight overspend of £14,000 had been projected.

Resolved:

That (i) the Budget Monitoring position as at 30th September 2015 be noted.

(ii) the New Homes Bonus Schedule in Appendix A be noted.

204 Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 2 2015/16

The report advised Members and the public of the performance of the Council during the Second Quarter. This included information on 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 Portfolio Holder drew attention to the fact that the average number of families requiring temporary Bed and Breakfast accommodation during the quarter had risen slightly to just under 15 a month. He acknowledged the significant contribution made by the Christchurch Road accommodation but believed that the overall situation needed to be closely monitored.

Resolved:

That the performance for Quarter 2, 2015/16 be noted.

205 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – 28th September 2015

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 28th September 2015 be received and noted.

206 Town Centre Regeneration Board – 20th October 2015

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting of the Town Centre Regeneration Board held on the 20th October 2015 be received and noted.

207 Ashford Strategic Delivery Board – 23rd October 2015

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting of the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board held on the 23rd October 2015 be received and noted.

208 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:CAXX1546

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Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **3rd December 2015**

Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);

Cllr. Bell (Vice-Chairman);

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

Apologies:

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Michael,

Also Present:

Cllrs. Britcher, Buchanan, Burgess, Chilton, Hicks, Link, Sims, Wedgbury.

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Legal & Democratic Services, Corporate Director – Operations, Principal Solicitor for Property and Projects, Head of Cultural and Project Services, Tourism, Heritage and Nature Conservation Manager, Principal Accountant, Head of Finance, Policy and Performance Manager, Housing Operations Manager, Communications Officer, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

233 Declarations of Interest

| Councillor | Interest | Minute No. |
|-------------------|--|-------------------|
| Clarkson | Announced an “Other Significant Interest” in respect of Agenda Item No.11 as he was the Chairman and Director of the Ashford Borough Council Better Choice for Property Company. | 242 |
| Shorter | Made a “Voluntary Announcement” as Director of Ashford Borough Council Building Company | 242 |

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Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 12th November 2015 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

235 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 “Expansion of Short-Stay Accommodation Provision” as a matter of urgency and by reason of special circumstances, namely that the property concerned was currently on the market and the Council needed to act quickly to secure its purchase.

236 Leader’s Announcements

The Leader advised that as this was the last meeting of the Cabinet before Christmas he wished to wish all Members and Officers a safe and enjoyable festive season.

237 Preliminary Draft Budget 2016/17

The report set the scene for the Cabinet to consider its preliminary draft budget for 2016/17 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 levels of grant support for next year.

The Portfolio Holder referred to two Tabled Papers, one of which was a briefing note on the Comprehensive Spending Review and the second requested the Cabinet to approve the earmarking of the £77,000 saved from the Management Re-Structure to fund the costs related to the Devolution Agenda as covered in detail in the Comprehensive Spending Review Paper. The Portfolio Holder advised that following agreement by the Cabinet the Budget would be published for consultation with the Business Community, Parish Councils and staff prior to the final Budget being considered in February 2016.

Recommended:

- That**
- (i) the Budget Context be noted.**
 - (ii) the preliminary draft budget for 2016/17 be approved, (noting that it was submitted before the Government’s announcement of the provisional grant settlement).**
 - (iii) the preliminary draft Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2016/17 be approved.**
 - (iv) the report be used as the basis for Budget consultation with the public, the business community, the Parish Councils and staff.**
 - (v) the preliminary draft budget as set out in the report should be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s Budget Task Group for formal scrutiny.**

- (vi) £77,000 saved from the management re-structure be earmarked to fund the costs related to the Devolution Agenda.

238 The Next Five Years: The Corporate Plan 2015-2020 (final version)

The report sought approval of the final version of the Corporate Plan 2015-2020: The Next Five Years and to its publication.

The Chairman said that the Corporate Plan reflected the four key areas of the Administration's election manifesto and was based on the principles of Aspiration, Action and Achievement.

A Member referred to the section of the report on employment and said that she was pleased to advise that two Ashford Borough Council Apprentices had received awards as star pupils over the whole of Kent.

The Chairman also advised that information from the Office of National Statistics showed that the wage levels in Ashford were improving.

Recommended:

That the final version of the Corporate Plan 2015-2020 (and the accompanying appendix) be agreed and that it be published and made available in both printed and digital media.

239 Council Tax Base 2016/17

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 2016/17. It was calculated with regard to the number of domestic properties (including a forecast for new properties) which were then converted into Band D equivalents. The Tax Base had been calculated at 43,750 Band D properties and was an increase of 1,385 (or 3.1%) of the current year's figures.

Recommended:

- That**
- (i) the 2016/17 "Net" Tax Base of 43,750 Band D 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 them for the negative impact caused by the Council Tax Support Scheme on Parish Councils' 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 should any material change in**

the tax base be required as a consequence of any further relevant funding announcements from Government be noted.

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TAX BASE 2016/2017
LOCAL TAX BASE (WHOLE/PART AREAS)

| LOCAL TAX BASE 2015/2016 | WHOLE AREA | BAND D EQUIVALENT | NEW OCCUPATIONS | 1.0% PROVISION | Less discounts Council Tax Support | LOCAL TAX BASE 2016/2017 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| | | 47,310.00 | 502.00 | (426.60) | (5,020.40) | 42,365.00 |
| | <u>PARISH</u> | | | | | |
| 550.90 | Aldington & Bonnington | 609.40 | 23.60 | (5.80) | (47.40) | 579.80 |
| 326.00 | Appledore | 378.70 | 0.00 | (3.30) | (53.60) | 321.80 |
| 676.80 | Bethersden | 755.20 | 15.00 | (7.00) | (61.70) | 701.50 |
| 1,078.40 | Biddenden | 1,173.70 | 7.60 | (10.90) | (83.50) | 1,086.90 |
| 143.10 | Bilsington | 161.20 | 0.00 | (1.50) | (11.80) | 147.90 |
| 1,038.10 | Boughton Aluph and Eastwell | 1,124.50 | 0.00 | (10.50) | (70.10) | 1,043.90 |
| 586.10 | Brabourne | 625.40 | 0.00 | (5.90) | (29.40) | 590.10 |
| 150.30 | Brook | 156.90 | 0.00 | (1.50) | (3.20) | 152.20 |
| 414.30 | Challock | 425.30 | 0.00 | (4.10) | (15.80) | 405.40 |
| 1,204.00 | Charing | 1,346.90 | 42.40 | (12.80) | (118.20) | 1,258.30 |
| 716.70 | Chilham | 785.10 | 28.30 | (7.50) | (65.40) | 740.50 |
| 92.70 | Crundale (PM) | 94.50 | 0.00 | (0.90) | (1.10) | 92.50 |
| 499.80 | Egerton | 534.00 | 0.00 | (5.10) | (26.20) | 502.70 |
| 173.80 | Godmersham | 182.90 | 0.00 | (1.80) | (4.70) | 176.40 |
| 2,307.00 | Great Chart with Singleton | 2,628.90 | 16.00 | (24.50) | (200.20) | 2,420.20 |
| 113.20 | Hastingleigh | 120.10 | 0.00 | (1.20) | (4.20) | 114.70 |
| 715.20 | High Halden | 775.00 | 0.00 | (7.30) | (52.20) | 715.50 |
| 276.00 | Hothfield | 348.90 | 0.00 | (2.90) | (58.90) | 287.10 |
| 102.00 | Kenardington | 117.20 | 0.00 | (1.00) | (10.10) | 106.10 |
| 4,076.50 | Kingsnorth | 4,456.80 | 181.30 | (43.70) | (259.90) | 4,334.50 |
| 124.10 | Little Chart | 129.00 | 0.00 | (1.30) | (4.00) | 123.70 |
| 627.9 | Mersham and Sevington | 675.00 | 0.00 | (6.40) | (31.50) | 637.10 |
| 107.2 | Molash | 116.30 | 0.00 | (1.10) | (11.40) | 103.80 |
| 104.2 | Newenden | 108.60 | 0.00 | (0.90) | (4.50) | 103.20 |
| 554.9 | Orlestone | 590.40 | 28.30 | (5.70) | (53.10) | 559.90 |
| 473.6 | Pluckley | 509.40 | 0.00 | (4.60) | (36.00) | 468.80 |
| 654.6 | Rolvenden | 728.70 | 14.10 | (6.90) | (56.80) | 679.10 |
| 326.3 | Ruckinge | 343.80 | 0.00 | (3.20) | (22.90) | 317.70 |
| 489.6 | Shadoxhurst | 528.80 | 12.20 | (5.10) | (38.40) | 497.50 |
| 603 | Smarden | 666.70 | 0.00 | (6.10) | (40.10) | 620.50 |
| 349.1 | Smeeth | 392.10 | 0.00 | (3.70) | (31.40) | 357.00 |
| 711.7 | Stanhope | 1,024.30 | 0.00 | (7.90) | (233.90) | 782.50 |
| 209.6 | Stone | 224.10 | 0.00 | (2.00) | (21.50) | 200.60 |
| 3433.1 | Tenterden (TC) | 3,766.30 | 0.00 | (34.60) | (293.20) | 3,438.50 |
| 171.4 | Warehorne | 186.50 | 0.00 | (1.70) | (8.10) | 176.70 |
| 321.6 | Westwell | 340.10 | 0.00 | (3.20) | (17.40) | 319.50 |
| 524.1 | Wittersham | 586.40 | 0.00 | (5.40) | (55.70) | 525.30 |
| 818 | Woodchurch | 897.30 | 0.00 | (8.40) | (59.20) | 829.70 |
| 984.5 | Wye with Hinxhill | 1,127.90 | 12.20 | (10.40) | (84.40) | 1,045.30 |
| 15,535.60 | Unparished Area | 18,149.30 | 299.00 | (162.60) | (2,100.10) | 16,185.60 |
| 42,365.00 | | 47,891.60 | 680.00 | (440.40) | (4,381.20) | 43,750.00 |

240 Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/17

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 Portfolio Holder advised that the scheme had been in operation for the previous two financial years and this report reflected what would be the third year of its operation.

Recommended:

- That**
- (i) the proposed Local Scheme for 2016/17 as set out in the conclusions of the report, i.e. there are no major changes to the existing scheme but some minor changes are proposed, be approved.**
 - (ii) public consultation on the proposals should run until 11th January 2016.**
 - (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 31st January 2016 in relation to the level of grant notified by Central Government in December 2015 and following consideration of the consultation responses.**

241 Ashford Dark Sky and International Observatory

The report addressed the proposals by the Ashford Astronomical Society to consider the provision of an astronomical observatory and the closely and inter-related matter of Ashford's Dark Sky and approved Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The report also summarised the detailed findings from the "Fourth Street" Consultancy, copies of which had been placed in the Members Room.

The Chairman advised that the area to the south of Ashford had the darkest night skies in the whole of south-east England and that steps were being taken to ensure that this remained by using controls via the Planning system to ensure that lighting for future developments were of the type to reduce the level of light pollution. He believed that the mobile exhibition facility was an excellent idea and said that he understood that the local media was keen to follow up this initiative.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the approach by the Ashford Astronomical Society (AAS) be welcomed and supported.**
 - (ii) the proposal to commission the Ashford Astronomical Society to work closely with the Council to undertake public consultation to enable an "International Dark Sky Community Designation" to be**

submitted to the International Dark Sky Association on behalf of the Council and the AAS be approved.

- (iii) a capital budget of £25,000 to meet the costs of the proposal be approved.
- (iv) the Head of Culture and the Environment, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to take any further action required to give effect to the above recommendations.

242 Trading and Enterprise Board – 9th November 2015

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board be received, noted and approved with the exception of Minute No. 195.

Recommended:

That Minute No. 195 be approved.

243 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – 28th October 2015

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 28th October 2015 be received and noted.

244 Town Centre Regeneration Board – 18th November 2015

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Town Centre Regeneration Board held on the 18th November 2015 be received and noted.

245 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.

246 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

That pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item, namely Expansion of Short Stay Accommodation Provision, as it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure of exempt information hereinafter specified by reference to paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act, wherein the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

247 Expansion of Short Stay Accommodation Provision

The report had been accepted onto the Agenda by the Chairman as a matter of urgency. The report explained that following the success of Christchurch House which provided short stay accommodation for homeless families, approval was now sought for the purchase of another property suitable for a similar use.

The Portfolio Holder said he believed that the facility would provide quality accommodation for homeless people and said that the proposed acquisition was conveniently located for access by local transport to the town centre.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget and Resource Management said that during meetings of the Council Tax and Welfare Reform Task Group Members had indicated that should a further opportunity arise to increase the availability of the Council to support families or individuals made homeless, then the issue should be pursued.

Recommended:

- That**
- (i) a budget of £1.2m be approved for the purchase of the property as set out within the report to be funded by borrowing or Section 106 Funding whichever is appropriate, subject to due diligence, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Chief Executive, the relevant Portfolio Holder and the Leader.**
 - (ii) following the completion of the purchase it be used for short stay temporary accommodation and be known by the name as set out within the report.**
 - (iii) Officers set up appropriate management arrangements, including additional staffing as set out in the budget included within Appendix 2 to the report.**
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(KRF/VS)

MINS:CAXX1549

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