

Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **27th May 2021**.

Present:

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

Cllrs. Barrett, Bell, Buchanan, Feacey, Forest, Pickering, Shorter.

Apologies:

Cllr. Clokie

Also Present:

Cllrs. Harman, Sparks, Walder, Wright.

In attendance:

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications, Strategy and Policy Development Manager, Member Services Manager.

24 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 29th April 2021 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

25 Leader's Announcements

The Leader said that he did just want to mention Councillor Charles Dehnel who would be standing down from his position as Ward Member for Downs North. Charles had a young family and very heavy work commitments and he was sure that colleagues would all wish him well. There would therefore be a by-election for Downs North Ward over the summer. He also advised that as a result, Councillor Callum Knowles would be taking over as the Member Champion for the Military Covenant and Ceremonial Liaison with immediate effect.

26 Rural Housing Working Group – Findings and Recommendations

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that the Deputy Portfolio Holder had chaired a group, consisting of Councillors, Officer and an external expert for a rural housing association, to discuss affordable rural housing in the Ashford Borough. The report: - provided an up-to-date position; discussed the challenges around increasing the number of rural affordable homes and ideas to accelerate delivery; highlighted progress on rural schemes; and discussed how the Council intended to raise awareness of the need for affordable rural housing with Parish Councils and local communities.

A Member said it was important for decisions to be community led and asked that the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) was kept informed so that Parish Councils could better understand and feed into the process. Another Member mentioned an Officer led workshop that had been held in her Ward which had done much to explain the approach and break down the myths of rural housing provision, and considered, if possible, this should be repeated in other areas. The Portfolio Holder gave a reassurance of that continued communication.

Resolved:

- That (i) the content of the report and the work of the Rural Group be noted and endorsed.**
- (ii) an increase in the number of rural local needs surveys, aiming for six per annum for three years and then returning to four per annum after that, be agreed.**
- (iii) a commitment to fund the rural housing surveys until at least 2025/26 be agreed.**
- (iv) communications to Parish Councils be prepared and authority be delegated to the Head of Housing to agree this, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing.**

27 HRA Acquisition – Chilmington s106

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which asked for endorsement of the acquisition by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) of a small residential stake in the Chilmington development for affordable housing.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted and the acquisition of the homes for affordable housing be endorsed, subject to the conclusion of legal discussions between the Council and the developer's solicitors.

28 Street Naming and Numbering – Andrew’s Garage Site, Smeeth

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

Resolved:

That the use of the name Andrews Close be approved.

29 Draft Carbon Neutral Action Plan

The Leader introduced the report which set out the process for consultation on the Council’s draft Carbon Neutral Action Plan and outlined a study to be undertaken to determine the Council’s carbon footprint and pathway to zero carbon. He said he, and the Council’s Officers, were passionate about this subject and said that action taken now would be their legacy for the future. He advised that for the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee in 2022 she had advocated green canopy in the UK and Ashford would take the lead and he mentioned a scheme to plant a tree for every single resident of the Borough - approximately 135,000 new trees over the next 18 months. More details of that strategy would emerge over the coming month.

The Deputy Leader said he supported the report and the future aims and looked forward to the outcomes of the consultation, but said it was also important to be aware of the number of things that were already happening at both a Borough and County level to reduce carbon and he outlined some of those initiatives.

In response to more specific questions, the Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications said that the Council’s strategy would include a whole basket of measures to reduce carbon and whilst the tree planting was only a small part, the scheme would be a powerful sign of the Council’s commitment and hopefully encourage everyone to get involved to do their bit. The consultation would be wide ranging in order to understand what the Borough’s residents wanted and what they were already doing, so they obtained a full picture.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the aim to achieve carbon neutrality within the Council’s own estate and operations by 2030 be supported.**
 - (ii) the challenges to achieve carbon neutrality across the Borough by 2030 be recognised, whilst acknowledging national and regional targets, and remaining committed to working in partnership to achieve carbon neutrality across the Borough as soon as possible, supporting the UK Government’s target to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035, compared to 1990 levels.**

- (iii) the draft Carbon Neutral Action Plan be approved for consultation.
- (iv) the appointment of Laser Energy to undertake an emissions baseline and pathways study to inform the final draft action plan be noted.

30 Ashford Strategic Delivery Board – Notes of 30th April 2021

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board held on the 30th April 2021 be received and noted.

31 Compliance and Enforcement Board – Notes of 27th April 2021

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Compliance and Enforcement Board held on the 27th April 2021 be received and noted.

32 IT and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee – Notes of 16th March 2021

The Chairman of the Advisory Committee said he just wanted to highlight the great amount of work that was being done on digital transformation across the Council. The Leader said he had been astonished to learn exactly how much work IT and others were doing in this area, to transform the way the Council did its work.

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meeting of the IT and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee held on the 16th March 2021 be received and noted.

33 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.