

Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **24th June 2021**.

Present:

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

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

Also Present:

Cllrs. Sparks, Wright.

In attendance:

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Head of Housing, Member Services Manager.

53 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Bartlett	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a Trustee of the Central Ashford Community Forum.	59
Clarkson	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society.	61
Clokie	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he was a member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society.	61

54 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 27th May 2021 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

55 Leader's Announcements

The Leader said that whilst he did not have any particular announcements, he did just want to mention that it was pleasing to that whilst the coronavirus figures were showing an increase in cases, the local hospitals were not reporting an increase in admissions and the death rate was still very low. This did not detract from those who had so tragically lost their lives, but it did bode well for the easing of the lockdown and reflected well on the vaccination programme.

56 The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015 – Financial Penalty Policy

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which sought approval to implement a Fee Policy Framework to allow the Council to achieve improvements in the private rented sector and reduce fuel poverty.

Resolved:

That the Fee Policy Framework, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

57 Electrical Safety Standards Regulations 2020 – Implementing Financial Penalties

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that the above Regulations required electrical installations in private rented properties to be safe. Landlords who failed to comply could be fined up to £30,000. In order to be able to implement such fines the Council was required to have a Fees Policy. The report sought approval from the Cabinet to adopt the Council's existing Financial Fee Policy.

Resolved:

That the Council's existing Financial Penalty Policy, as contained at Appendix 2 to the report, be adopted.

58 The Mobile Homes (Requirement for Manager of Site to be Fit and Proper Person) (England) Regulations 2020 – Implementing Fee Policy and Charge

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which sought approval to implement a fit and proper person test for site owners or appointed managers to improve park home site management standards and to implement a fee policy.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) a fit and proper person test for relevant protected sites be implemented.**
 - (ii) the fee to recover the costs in the application process of undertaking a fit and proper person test be formally approved.**
 - (iii) the amendment to the existing Fee Policy to incorporate the proposed fee be formally approved.**
 - (iv) the Head of Housing be given approval to adjust the fees set out in the existing Fee Policy.**

59 Net Carbon Zero Short Stay Housing Accommodation Proposal

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which notified Members of the formal planning application that was due to be submitted and sought endorsement of the potential alternative use of this site, as well as updating on progress with the project to date. He advised that there was a continuing need to respond to those threatened by homelessness and provide them with advice and assistance, including the provision of temporary accommodation. This Council already had two exemplar short-stay accommodation facilities at Christchurch House and Christchurch Lodge, which provided a far more practical and compassionate solution, than the more expensive and unsuitable 'paid for nightly' accommodation, but there were still around 100 people in such accommodation. The proposal to build this imaginative new facility on a much underutilised car park at Henwood would help solve the issue, whilst also providing attractive, net zero carbon homes.

The Deputy Leader said he fully supported the project and advised that the Council's Development Partnership Manager would be presenting to the Central Ashford Forum on the 13th September on this scheme. He hoped that by then they would be back to meeting in person and, in that case, all would be welcome.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development reiterated that it was important to note that this report was not pre-judging the outcome of any planning application. That planning application would be taken on merit by the Planning Committee at the appropriate time.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the content of the report and the fact that an application was being made to Planning be noted.**
 - (ii) the exploration of the potential use of the car park at Henwood be endorsed, mindful that the scheme proposed is subject to formal planning consent being obtained.**

- (iii) **expenditure on the project shall not be incurred until planning permission has been achieved, with the exception of £70,000 of preparation works that would be undertaken at risk.**
- (iv) **funding be allocated in accordance with the proposed budget of £4.7m to ensure the delivery of the scheme, with such funding to be met from the use of reserves and borrowing, the extent of which is to be determined by the Deputy Chief Executive.**
- (v) **It be agreed that ZedPods are accessed from the LHC framework, an external procurement framework.**
- (vi) **authority be delegated to the Head of Corporate Property and Projects, the Head of Housing and the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, to complete all necessary agreements that would need to be completed in order to expedite the above recommendations.**

60 Digital Transformation of Visitor Information Services at the Ashford Gateway

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which explained how the Visitor Information Service was effectively using the digital transformation agenda, allowing resources to be moved away from needing an Officer located at the Visitor Information Centre in Ashford Gateway to support other visitor economy marketing and development opportunities. The report also advised that Council Officers would work with KCC to agree future alternative use of the space and a possible early release of the Partnership Agreement which expired in 2026.

Resolved:

- That
- (i) **the digital transformation of the Visitor Information Service and the impact on requiring a staffed Visitor Information Centre at the Ashford Gateway be endorsed.**
 - (ii) **authority be delegated to the Head of Corporate Property and Projects to agree future alternative use of the space and, where possible, early release of the Partnership Agreement which expires in 2026.**

61 Ashford's Living Legacy for the Queen's Jubilee

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Land Management introduced the report which advised that, in conjunction with the Queen's Green Canopy initiative for 2022, and the Government's England Trees Action Plan (2021-2024), Ashford Borough Council was planning to plant one tree for each resident living in the Borough in 2022 (approximately 135,000), over the next three winters. This would be a bold an ambitious plan as part of the Council's wider carbon reduction initiatives.

The Leader stressed that the Council would be calling on everyone in Borough – individuals, schools, businesses, Parish Councils etc. to help with this plan and the actual planting. He had dubbed this the “Tree-Army” and it was hoped that such engagement would not only grow trees, but also grow communities.

Resolved:

That (i) the plan be endorsed.

(ii) authority be delegated to the Head of Environment and Land Management, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Land Management and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development, to decide upon the most suitable sites and species to take this project forward.

(iii) £318,000 be allocated from the Project Fund, to ensure the delivery of this project.

62 Joint Transportation Board – Minutes of 1st June 2021

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held on the 1st June 2021 be received and noted.

63 Trading and Enterprise Board – Minutes of 27th May 2021

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board held on the 27th May 2021 be approved and adopted.

64 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – Notes of 5th May 2021

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 5th May 2021 be received and noted.

65 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.

66 Joint Transportation Board – Nomination of Membership

Resolved:

That the following Members be appointed to the Joint Transportation Board: Councillors Burgess, Cornish, Feacey, Bernard Heyes (Ch), Tina Heyes, Krause and Spain.

67 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, 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 Paragraphs 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act, where in the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

68 HRA Acquisition

The Portfolio Holder introduced the exempt report which advised of the proposed acquisition and the reasons for it being brought before the Cabinet for approval.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the purchase and refurbishment of the property in the report be approved and funded from the existing budget for street purchases.**
 - (ii) the capital expenditure for the renovations be added to the Capital Programme.**
 - (iii) the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer be authorised, in consultation with the Head of Housing, to execute all documentation in relation to the proposed acquisition.**