

## Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **27<sup>th</sup> January 2022**.

### **Present:**

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

Cllrs. Buchanan, Clokie, Feacey, Forest, Iliffe, Pickering, Shorter

### **Apologies:**

Cllr. Bell, Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive.

### **Also Present:**

Cllrs. Burgess, Harman, Sparks, C Suddards, Wright.

### **In attendance:**

Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Head of Finance and IT, Economic Development Manager, Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Parking, Highways and Transportation Team Leader, Communications Officer, Member Services Manager.

## **246 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **247 Leader's Announcements**

The Leader said that he had two matters he wanted to share with colleagues this evening.

Firstly, he wanted to advise that on the new play area and outdoor gym at Hunter Avenue, South Willesborough was now underway. The Council had used the results from a consultation with residents when the previous park was taken down in February 2020 to put together a new design specification. The new play area, costing some £180,000, would include a fenced area for younger children to play, with a Disability compliant roundabout and a high backed swing chair. Children would also be able to enjoy a 25m long zip wire, a larger junior multi-play unit,

double width mound slide, swinging area and mini football goals for informal kick about. New seating and picnic tables would be installed to provide a communal space, accessible for all, to enjoy the outdoors. Additionally there would be a brand new outdoor gym area to improve free access to health and wellbeing activities for the local community. Once the new play area was installed, Aspire Landscape Management would block out areas for meadow grass to grow, to encourage and improve biodiversity in the area. Hunter Avenue, combined with the Council's recent, Cabinet approved, announcement of £1.1 million investment in another three key play areas, meant that thousands more residents would have access to high-quality, outside recreation. These installations would contribute to fitness and wellbeing and provide space for communities to mingle and friends and family to spend quality time together.

In addition he advised that earlier that day, Holocaust Memorial Day, he was pleased to have been at The Green, at Woodchurch to assist the Mayor and Ashford's MP the Rt. Hon. Damian Green, to plant one of the 80 native oak trees being planted in Great Britain, to honour the people and places that symbolise the contribution made to British life by refugees who escaped from Nazi Europe. In 1939, Great Engeham Farm in Woodchurch established a camp for housing Jewish refugee Kindertransport children. Combined productive agriculture training was coupled with education there, and some 300 to 350 children aged from 13 to 16 passed through the camp before being moved to Devon in November 1939. The dedication service had been both dignified and very poignant.

## **248 Automatic Number Plate Recognition Installation**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which sought the introduction of an Automatic Number Plate Recognition and barrier system at Park Mall Car Park, operating on a pilot basis as a wholly cashless car park. Subject to the pilot being successful, it was proposed to also implement within Edinburgh Road Car Park.

In response to questions about disabled users and blue badge holders, it was explained that ANPR was an easier method as drivers did not have to search the car park for terminals and it provided a hands-free entry and exit. People could register on-line or pay using the RingGo App. Blue badge holders did have to register their details once a year, but this was seen as a necessary measure to prevent fraud, and Parking Customer Care would be more than happy to assist anyone having problems.

### **Resolved:**

- That (i) the installation of an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and barrier system within the Park Mall Car Park be approved and it be operated on a pilot basis as a cashless car park.**
- (ii) expenditure of up to £53,000 be approved from the previously agreed capital budget to deliver the ANPR solution within the Park Mall Car Park.**

- (iii) authority be delegated to the Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing, in consultation with their Portfolio Holder, to effect and complete all necessary steps for the implementation of ANPR at Park Mall Car Park.
- (iv) further update reports be received as necessary prior to potentially introducing a similar system and payment arrangements within Edinburgh Road Car Park.

## **249 Parking Charges for Edinburgh Road Car Park and Park Mall Car Park**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report with sought agreement on new parking charges for Edinburgh Road and Park Mall Car Parks. A reduction in the basic parking charges had been proposed to promote use of the car parks and thus support the vitality of the Town Centre. A revision to the minimum parking period was also recommended. The charges included absorbing the 'Pay-by-Phone' convenience fee into the basic parking charge, rather than there being an additional cost for using that service.

### **Resolved:**

- That
- (i) reduced parking charges be approved for both Edinburgh Road and Park Mall Car Parks, incorporating the 'Pay-by-Phone' convenience fee that will be absorbed by Ashford Borough Council.
  - (ii) a minimum parking period of one hour at Edinburgh Road and Park Mall Car Parks be approved.
  - (iii) the Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing, in consultation with their Portfolio Holder, be authorised to implement changes to the proposals contained within the report, including amendments to the Off Street Parking Places Order, undertaking the statutory public notices, consultation and dealing with any responses.

## **250 Extension of Electric Vehicle Charger Provision**

The report sought approval for the installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points and to approve the release of funds to install in locations that were ineligible for funding through the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) scheme. This would utilise the Council's Climate Change Reserve Fund.

In response to a question the Parking, Highways and Transportation Team Leader advised that this formed Phase 2 of the Council's overall strategy. Phase 1 would utilise OLEV funding and confirmation of this funding was expected the following week.

A Member said he fully supported the proposals but wanted to ensure that there was enough capacity on the network and that UK Power Networks were encouraged to keep the infrastructure up with those ambitions.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) **the release of £164,000 from the Climate Change Reserve Fund be approved to install 15 Electric Vehicle Charging Points.**
- (ii) **authority be delegated to the Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing, in consultation with their Portfolio Holder, to effect and complete all necessary steps to install in total 44 charging points as listed in the report.**
- (iii) **the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer be authorised to negotiate, finalise and complete all necessary legal agreements and other documents to give effect to the above.**

## **251 Health and Safety Policy for Ashford Borough Council**

The Portfolio Holder for HR and Customer Services introduced the report which sought agreement of the revised Health and Safety Policy, which was due for review. The Policy had been revised and updated to provide additional clarity relevant to Officer responsibilities and to further strengthen governance of health and safety within the Council. The revised policy also streamlined arrangements to enable the organisation to respond quickly to anticipate changes to legislation. He thanked Officers for their work in pulling the revised policy together.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) **the revised Health and Safety Policy be agreed.**
- (ii) **the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer be authorised to negotiate, finalise and complete all necessary legal agreements and other documents to give effect to the above.**

## **252 Revenues and Benefits Recommended Write-Offs Schedule**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which proposed the formal write-off of £321,056.74, The proposals were in line with the Council's Revenues and Benefits Service Write-Off Policy. The Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) had been consulted along with Heads of Service for relevant areas. The Portfolio Holder wanted to stress how thoroughly the team pursued debts owed to the Council and he was satisfied that the proposals in the report were correct and pragmatic.

**Resolved:**

- That (i) the action that accounts totalling £40,060.70 had been written off under delegated powers (Financial Regulations 11.1) be noted.
- (ii) the write-offs listed in the Exempt Appendices totalling £280,996.04 be approved.

### **253 Greater Ashford Borough Environment and Land Mapping Commission – Notes of 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

**Resolved:**

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Great Ashford Borough Environment and Land Management Commission held on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021 be received and noted.

### **254 Joint Transportation Board – 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

**Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021 be received and noted.

### **255 Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board – 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021**

**Resolved:**

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021 be received and noted.

### **256 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021**

**Resolved:**

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021 be received and noted.

### **257 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.

## **258 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 Paragraph 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.**

## **259 Newtown Works**

The Leader and Portfolio Holder introduced the exempt report. The Leader clarified that the recommendations were for Full Council to resolve.

### **Recommended:**

- That**
- (i) subject to negotiation and the completion of appropriate due diligence, the purchase of shares within the Development Company, for up to a figure as stated in the confidential report, be agreed.**
  - (ii) it be agreed in principle that a Loan Facility be made available to the Development Company for the construction of residential property in line with existing planning permission, for the figure stated in the confidential report. This is subject to the completion of the due diligence process.**
  - (iii) responsibility for finalising the deal and sign-off be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Executive Leader, subject to satisfactory oversight of a Due Diligence Working Group which will include the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny and the Portfolio Holders for Finance and IT and Regeneration and Corporate Property.**
  - (iv) the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer be authorised to negotiate, finalise and complete all necessary legal agreements and other documents to give effect to the above.**

## **260 Regeneration, Infrastructure and Improvement Co-Ordination Board – 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Regeneration, Infrastructure and Improvement Co-Ordination Board held on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021 be received and noted.**

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