

Decisions effective from the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021 unless they are called in or are recommended to the Council for approval

## **Cabinet**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **28<sup>th</sup> October 2021**.

### **Present:**

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

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

### **Apologies:**

Cllrs Chilton, Head of Corporate Property and Projects.

### **Also Present:**

Cllrs. Harman, Sparks, Wright.

### **In attendance:**

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Head of Environment and Land Management, Head of Finance and IT, Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager, Web and Communications Assistant, Member Services Manager.

## **165 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **166 Leader's Announcements**

The Leader said he had a couple of important announcements to make evening. Firstly, he was pleased to advise that the Council had been successful in its application to the Government for Round 1 of the Levelling Up Fund. This related to an application for Ashford International Studios at Newtown Works and the Minister, Neil O'Brien MP, had written to the Leader advising that they would receive the full grant of £14,773,745. The Minister had praised the strength of the application, which had performed well against the Government's assessment criteria and he had appreciated the hard work that had gone in to the application. He was also as keen as the Council to get delivery and spend underway quickly. The letter had concluded by advising that officials from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and

Communities would be in contact shortly regarding the next steps for the application, including the completion of delivery, financial, monitoring and risk register templates ahead of an inception meeting to help get delivery underway. The Leader said this was great news for Ashford and he wanted to congratulate everyone involved with the bid.

Secondly he said he wanted to make mention of the discussion at Full Council the previous week about the safety of women and girls. He knew it was a national issue but he thought it was disgraceful that women and girls felt intimidated and unsafe on our streets and that there was a sentiment that they should just learn to live with it as “that is the way things are”. He thought there was an obligation on everyone, particularly males, to alter their behaviour and ensure that this did not continue. He had outlined a long list of measures that they were engaged with in this area at the Council meeting, and he said they would continue to push ahead in every way possible, including working with other agencies where necessary, including with KCC on street lighting. Ashford was striving to be a caring Borough for everyone, including the disabled and the vulnerable, and work against this sort of intimidation and violence would go hand in hand with that. Caring Ashford was not a mere slogan, he wanted to continue to see action.

## **167 Medium Term Financial Plan**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which presented the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), a budget forecast including underlying assumptions, covering a five year period from 2022 to 2027 for the General Fund. The Draft Budget would be built using the assumptions in the MTFP and would be reported to Cabinet the following month. He also pointed out a minor typographical error in recommendation (iii) of the report.

The Leader drew attention to the table of earmarked reserves on page 20 of the report.

### **Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the forecast be noted and the underlying assumptions accepted.**
  - (ii) it be noted that 2022/23 funding is based on current funding with spending reviews, fair funding and Business Rate changes now to be implemented from 2023/24.**
  - (iii) the Reserves Strategy at Paragraphs 35 to 44 of the report be endorsed.**
  - (iv) authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT, to agree the Council’s continued participation in the Kent Business Rates pool.**

## **168 The Creation of Meadows and Enhanced Land Management Plans to Support Increased Biodiversity, Reduce Impacts of Climate Change and Connect People**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that the Council was acting boldly and decisively to increase biodiversity within green spaces owned by the Council. This was in response to the Government agenda to improve the natural environment, the Council's own Corporate Plan objective to be a Green Pioneer and its commitment to tackling climate change.

The Deputy Leader commended the report which he said was a good step forward and he was particularly pleased to see the references to plans for Queen Mother's Park.

A Member asked if lessons learned from this work could be shared more widely with other areas and Parish Councils as she knew they would have pieces of land in their own areas where they would like to create similar environments. The Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager for Aspire said he would be happy to do so.

### **Resolved:**

**That the development of enhanced land management plans be supported in order to further support increased biodiversity and connect people with the environment to support health and wellbeing.**

## **169 Corporate Property Performance - Annual Report**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that the revenue generated by the Council's Corporate Property portfolio contributed significantly to the Council's income. The income generated for the financial year ending March 2021 was shown in the Corporate Property Income Schedule at Appendix 1 to the report. The report also provided a summary of how the Council's main commercial assets were performing and the work the Council was undertaking to improve or maintain such performance. He wanted to praise the Officers involved for the sterling job they had done in continuing to manage the portfolio during the pandemic and in maintaining performance at a relatively high level. He drew particular attention to: - International House; Carlton Road Business Park; Elwick Place and the Council's garage stock.

### **Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the revenue performance of the Council's Corporate Property Portfolio during the financial year 2020/21, as provided for in the Corporate Property Income Schedule attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.**
  - (ii) the current position with the major commercial assets be noted, particularly in light of the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.**

## **170 Queen's Platinum Jubilee and Albacore Event Programme 2022**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that Ashford Borough Council was proposing to mark a number of significant national and local anniversaries in 2022, including the Queen's Platinum Jubilee which would be celebrated nationally from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> June, as well as Warship Week, HMS Albacore and the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ashford Sea Cadets. The report set out plans to celebrate those anniversaries. He stressed that whilst it was right that the Council took the lead, they wanted to focus on local community participation. The Portfolio Holder advised that there were some errors with the figures in the body of the report, but those in the recommendations were the correct ones.

### **Resolved:**

- That (i) **the proposed programme of events be agreed and a budget of £55,000 be agreed from reserves to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of HMS Albacore and the Ashford Sea Cadets in 2022.**
- (ii) **authority be delegated to the Head of Culture, Tourism and Leisure and the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer to put in place all arrangements, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Tourism and Leisure and the forthcoming Mayor for 2022.**

## **171 Trading and Enterprise Board – Minutes of 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board held on the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021 be approved and adopted.**

## **172 Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board – Notes of 29<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board held on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2021 be received and noted.**

## **173 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.**

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