

## Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **21<sup>st</sup> March 2024**.

### Present:

Cllr. Ovenden (Chair);  
Cllr. Campkin (Vice-Chair);

Cllrs. Barrett, Harman, Hayward, Walder, Wright.

### Apologies:

Cllr. Betty, Nilsson, Deputy Chief Executive.

### Also Present:

Cllrs. Bartlett, Bell, Chilton, Feacey, Gathern, Gauder, Michael, C Suddards, L Suddards.

### In attendance:

Chief Executive; Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer; Corporate Director of Housing, Customer, Technology and Finance; Corporate Director of Health and Wellbeing; Assistant Director of HR, Customer Services, Communications and Digital; Human Resources Manager; Housing Operations Manager; Tenant Engagement Officer; Web and Communications Assistant; Democratic Services Manager.

## 373 Minutes

### Resolved:

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **374 Annual Pay Policy Statement (including Review for 2024/25)**

The Human Resources Manager introduced the report which advised that the Localism Act 2011 required the Council to publish an Annual Pay Policy Statement. The report reviewed the current Pay Policy Statement, ensuring it was up to date and reflected the Council's approach to pay. The Council also took this annual review as an opportunity to review the Ashford Apprentice Wage Allowance and the report therefore updated the position in relation to Apprentice pay for 2024/25.

A Member mentioned another Council where Living Wage rates were not only paid to Council employees, but were also imposed on subsidiary companies and those who they partnered with or who were paid to provide services for the Council. The aim of this was to raise people's spending power which in turn encouraged them to spend locally and it was questioned whether this was something this Council could look in to as they built future budgets.

**Recommended:**

- That (i) that the updated Pay Policy Statement be approved.**
- (ii) the continuation of the Ashford Apprentice Wage Allowance at a rate of 20 pence per hour over the National Minimum Wage rate applicable to the age of the apprentice, be approved.**

### **375 Armed Forces Policy**

The Council's appointed Member Champion for the Armed Forces and Military Covenant introduced the report. It reviewed and sought approval for the adoption of a new Armed Forces Policy. The Member wanted to thank the Officers who had put in an awful lot of work to bring this policy together and hoped it was the first step towards eventually becoming a 'Gold' Employer.

A Member asked about the Armed Forces Covenant which the Council had signed and how that linked with this policy. The Member Champion advised that this was part of the policy and a vital component as they looked to become a silver and then gold employer. The covenant document was on display in the Mayor's Parlour and available on the Council's website for the public to view.

**Resolved:**

**That the new Armed Forces Policy be approved and adopted.**

### **376 Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results and Initial Action Plan**

The Portfolio Holder and Tenant Engagement Officer introduced the report which informed of the results of the 2023/24 annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey based on the Regulator's 12 Tenant Satisfaction Measures and provided commentary and the Council's Action Plan.

A Member asked about the decision to bring housing repairs in house and whether any results could be drawn from that yet. The Portfolio Holder advised that as this had only happened in December 2023, it was too early for the results to be apparent in the 2023/24 survey results. It was an ongoing process and there was a lot of work to do, however once bedded in there would no doubt be benefits to this Council, particularly in the area of oversight and having a full system of checks and balances from the start to the end of the process.

**Resolved:**

**That the publishing of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey results and Initial Action Plan for Ashford Borough Council be noted.**

### **377 Joint Transportation Board – Minutes of 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held on the 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024 be received and noted.**

### **378 Trading and Enterprise Board – Minutes of 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board held on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024 be approved and adopted.**

### **379 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – Notes of 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024 be received and noted.**

### **380 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.**

### **381 Governance for Housing Compliance Reporting and Improvement**

The Corporate Director for Housing, Customer, Technology and Finance introduced the report which advised that following a 'regulator ready' inspection commissioned by the Council to review its readiness to respond to the new consumer standards set by the Social Housing Regulator, coming in from April 2024. The inspection had identified that the Council's Housing Property Management Framework was not as effective as it should be. In response they had taken the decision to make a self-

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referral to the regulator. To address the weaknesses an Action Plan had also been developed to ensure improvements were made to data storage which would ensure compliance is met and decent homes can be evidenced. Members had been updated at an early stage on the steps that were being taken and the report asked Cabinet to support a number of measures to address these issues.

**Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the actions taken to date by the Council's Strategic Leadership Team be noted.**
  - (ii) the establishment of the Asset Compliance and Improvement Board, Chaired by the Leader of the Council, be noted.**
  - (iii) the Audit Committee be invited to receive quarterly reports on the progress in resolving these issues.**

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