

## **Cabinet**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **10<sup>th</sup> January 2019**.

### **Present:**

Cllr. Bell (Vice-Chairman in the Chair);

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Bradford, Clokie, Galpin, Pickering, Shorter, White.

### **Apologies:**

Cllrs. Bennett, Clarkson.

### **Also Present:**

Cllrs Buchanan, Burgess, Hicks, Smith, Mrs Webb.

Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Economy, Head of Legal and Democracy, Head of Environment and Land Management, Head of HR and Customer Services, Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager, Facility Development Manager, Senior Recovery Officer, Senior Communications Officer, Member Services Manager (Operational).

## **279 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **280 Leader's Announcements**

In the absence of the Leader, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Property said he wanted to update Members following national press coverage of poor retail performance over the Christmas period. He was pleased to reassure Members that Ashford had bucked the trend and seen a 69% increase in footfall in the town centre during the week before Christmas, as compared to the same week last year. Christmas week itself had seen a 53% increase. This equated to approximately 80,000 and 60,000 people respectively in Ashford Town Centre during those weeks. In terms of Ashford itself, occupancy rates were now at about 80% and County Square had reported that they were the only Kennedy Wilson owned shopping mall in the country that had seen an increase in footfall in the last year. In addition, the town had recently experienced two visits from international media outlets (the New York Times and ARTE TV) with a positive focus on the town's economy. He hoped that would provide some reassurance to Members as it was fair to say that Ashford Town Centre was doing pretty well. The Deputy Leader

thanked the Portfolio Holder for his update and wanted to congratulate all involved in the continued rejuvenation of the Town Centre.

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

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which proposed the formal write off of 342 accounts totalling £476,183.07. The proposals were in line with the Council's Revenues and Benefits Service Write Off Policy and the Director for Finance and Economy had been consulted along with the Heads of Service for the relevant areas. He advised that provision for bad debts had been made in the final accounts to account for expected write-offs during the year. All reasonable and viable options to recover the debt had been pursued and would continue if possible in to the future. It was though an important part of strong financial management to regularly review and write-off uncollectable debts.

### **Resolved:**

- That (i) the action that accounts totalling £65,279.18 had been written off under delegated powers be noted (Financial Regulations 11.1)**
- (ii) the write offs listed in the Exempt Appendices totalling £410,903.89 be approved.**

## **282 High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that the Management Plan had been reviewed for the period 2019–2024. AONB Management Plans were statutory documents under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and Local Authorities were required to publish an up to date plan that formulated the policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.

### **Resolved:**

**That the revised High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019–2024 be adopted.**

## **283 Aspire – Two Year Update**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which provided an update on the progress of the Cabinet's decision to bring the grounds maintenance service "in-house" in the form of Aspire Landscape Management. The report also reflected the progress of the Service since its inception in October 2016 and the future anticipated direction of the Service.

She said by any measure the move had been a resounding success and she wanted to thank Tracey Butler, James Laidlaw, David Hartley and the whole team for everything they had done to ensure that success. It was a team and a Service she was very proud to say that she was the Portfolio Holder for. Those comments were echoed by the Cabinet as a whole.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted and the direction of travel for the Service be supported.**

## **284 Undergraduate Work Placement and Bursary Scheme**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which recommended the introduction of an undergraduate work placement and bursary scheme. The scheme would aim to support a local person in developing their career by providing good quality work placements as well as financial assistance whilst studying. He explained that the Council already had a good reputation for supporting young people through graduate placements and apprenticeships and this was the next logical step to enhance their offer and also attempt to help to address recruitment and retention difficulties in key service areas.

**Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the introduction of the Undergraduate Work Placement and Bursary Scheme be approved.**
  - (ii) the financial commitment of doing so be noted and approved.**

## **285 Ashford and District Rifle Club: Request to Extend and Upgrade Facilities**

The Deputy Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that the Cabinet had previously given approval for the lease of additional land to the Ashford and District Rifle Club to enable the construction of an Olympic length outdoor small bore rifle range. Planning permission had subsequently been achieved and the Club had grant offers from Sport England, Kent County Council and Ashford Borough Council. The Club wished to proceed at the earliest opportunity, however as the land to be leased to the Rifle Club was held by this Council as open space, notices had been placed in the local newspaper which had resulted in one objection being received. The report asked the Cabinet to consider the objection and confirm if it still wished to proceed with the transaction.

In response to a question it was confirmed that the land was being leased to the Club, not sold.

**Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the objection received by the Council be noted, but it be confirmed that the approval given on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2012 should be actioned.**
  - (ii) the Head of Culture and the Director of Law and Governance be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture to take any further actions required to give effect to these recommendations.**

## **286 Joint Transportation Board Minutes – 11<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board on the 11<sup>th</sup> December 2018 be received and noted.**

## **287 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group Notes – 28<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2018 be received and noted.**

## **288 Ashford Town Centre Place Making Board Notes – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Ashford Town Centre Place Making Board on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018 be received and noted.**

## **289 Economic Regeneration and Investment Board Notes – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

**Resolved:**

**That the Notes of the Meeting of the Economic Regeneration and Investment Board on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018 be received and noted.**

## **290 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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