

Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **11th April 2019**.

Present:

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

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

Apologies:

Cllrs. Barrett, Ovenden

Also Present:

Cllrs. Buchanan, Burgess, Hicks, Knowles, Link.

Chief Executive, Director of Law and Governance, Director of Finance and Economy, Head of HR and Customer Services, Head of Corporate Property and Projects, Head of Finance, Human Resources Manager, Policy Manager, Principal Solicitor for Property and Projects, Senior Accountant, Communications Officer, Member Services Officer, Member Services Manager (Operational).

Development Surveyor – Gen2.

415 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Buchanan	Made a Voluntary Announcement as his Son worked for Aspire Land Management.	421

416 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 14th March 2019 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

417 Leader's Announcements

The Leader advised that as this was the last Cabinet Meeting before the Local Elections on the 2nd May he did not have any specific announcements but wanted to wish everyone well in the weeks to come.

418 Overview and Scrutiny Recommendations to Cabinet – Planning and Air Quality

During its scrutiny of the Council's draft budget, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee expressed a desire to understand more about the Council's Section 106 process and current position, as well as plans for addressing staff shortages within the Planning and Development Service and the ongoing development of an Air Quality Strategy for the Council. In its review, the Committee had made six recommendations which were now presented to the Cabinet.

The Leader thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their report and advised that the Cabinet were minded to accept three of the six recommendations (iii, iv, and vi). It was considered that the other three recommendations (i, ii, and v) should not be accepted as they were premature at this stage.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) planning applications must not be permitted to go to the Planning Committee for determination before the time for public consultation has elapsed.**
 - (ii) per the Constitution, planning applications must not be approved under delegated powers where the Ward Member has called the application in to the Planning Committee.**
 - (iii) the Council should engage with UK Power Networks to ensure that there is sufficient grid supply to meet demand for electric vehicle charging in new developments.**
 - (iv) the remaining three recommendations be not adopted.**

419 Adoption of Village Envelope Boundary Maps

The report sought Cabinet approval to adopt village envelope boundaries as informal guidance for development management purposes. These maps had been prepared in consultation with Parish Councils and Ward Members to indicate where the Council currently considered the existing built-up confines of settlements were. These would help clarify the written definitions in the Local Plan for the purpose of decision making on planning applications.

Both the Leader and Portfolio Holder said this had been an extremely worthwhile and positive exercise which had seen good engagement from local representatives.

Recommended:

- That**
- (i) the village envelope boundaries shown in the appendix to the report be adopted as informal guidance for development management purposes.**

- (ii) **authority be delegated to the Head of Planning Policy, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development, to amend, where relevant, a village envelope boundary to account for the construction of new development.**

420 Local Development Scheme (LDS) Update 2019

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that the LDS was required under legislation and compliance with it was a matter of 'soundness' for Development Plan Documents (DPDs). It was therefore essential that it was kept up to date. The draft LDS 2019 set out the project plan and timetable for preparation of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation DPD until the end of 2020. Both the draft LDS 2019 and the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation DPD timetable conformed with the regulations.

Recommended:

That the Local Development Scheme 2019 be adopted, as required under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011).

421 Personnel Policy Review – Grievance Resolution Policy

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that as part of a wider programme of personnel policy reviews, the Cabinet was asked to consider and advise upon a proposed new Grievance Resolution Policy document, which materially altered existing policy. This policy replaced policy document G1 Grievance Procedure in the current Conditions of Service. He wanted to thank the HR Manager for her hard work in undertaking this review.

Resolved:

That the Grievance Resolution Policy document be approved and form part of the Conditions of Service.

422 Modern.Gov Roll Out and Members IT Scheme Update

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which detailed the progress made to date with the Modern.Gov 'Early Adopters Roll Out' to Elected Members and the subsequent revised IT Scheme for Elected Members from 2019. Further, it reported on the involvement of the IT and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee who had monitored progress over the last year. He explained that this represented a significant step change for the Council, but the experience of the Early Adopters had been good and the full roll out of Modern.Gov would bring significant benefits for the new Council. It would provide a common platform for Members to be able to access documents and communicate with the public and each other. He fully endorsed the proposals and hoped Members would fully embrace the new scheme which would allow further developments over time as well as significant savings in printing and postage costs. He said he also particularly wanted to thank the Member Services Officer who had led on this project for

the enormous amount of work she had put in, as well as the Member Services and IT Teams. The role of the IT and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee, chaired by Councillor Knowles, was also recognised.

Resolved:

- That (i) the progress to date be noted.**
- (ii) the amendments to the Members IT Scheme, including the use of ashford.gov email accounts for all Council business, as set out at Appendix B to the report, be supported and agreed.**

423 Appointment of Project Manager

The Portfolio Holder and Shareholder Representative introduced the report which advised that in accordance with the previously approved Business Plan for A Better Choice for Property Ltd, a significant expansion in the Company's residential portfolio had been supported. To enable this to continue, a Project Manager was now required and would be the second employee of the Property Company. The Trading and Enterprise Board had supported this appointment and Cabinet was asked to recommend approval of the post and remuneration package to Full Council. The post would be funded directly through project delivery finance.

Recommended:

That the appointment of, and remuneration package for a Project Manager, directly employed by A Better Choice for Property Limited, be approved.

424 Joint Transportation Board Minutes – 12th March 2019

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held on the 12th March 2019 be received and noted.

425 Ashford Town Centre Place Making Board Notes – 21st February and 6th March 2019

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meetings of the Ashford Town Centre Place Making Board held on the 21st February and the 6th March 2019 be received and noted.

426 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group Notes – 27th February and 15th March 2019

Resolved:

That the Notes of the Meetings of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 27th February and the 15th March 2019 be received and noted.

427 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.

428 Strategic Acquisition – Matalan Site, Brookfield Road, Ashford

The report set out a proposal to purchase the freehold of the Matalan site in Brookfield Road, Ashford after the existing owners had brought the investment to the market in February. The site was a key strategic one and formed one of the gateways from rural to urban Ashford on the A28. The freehold was subject to a long lease from Matalan for a remaining term of six-and-a-half years and the Council had made an conditional offer for the property on the terms set out in exempt Appendix 2 to the report, subject to further due diligence and approval from both Cabinet and Council. The investments would provide an income stream to the Council on the basis set out in the report.

Cabinet Members were extremely supportive of the proposals and thanked the Officers involved for their hard work in bringing this proposal forward. The Deputy Leader said he also wanted to thank the Leader and the Chief Executive for leading the culture at the Council which put it in a position to identify and take advantages of opportunities such as this one.

Recommended:

- That**
- (i) the use of the Chief Executive’s urgency powers in relation to the submission of a bid to purchase the property be noted.**
 - (ii) the property as outlined within the report be purchased, subject to detailed due diligence being carried out to the satisfaction of the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Economy and the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT and the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Property.**
 - (iii) to finance the cost of the purchase as outlined in exempt Appendix 2 to the report, this be funded from prudential borrowing.**

- (iv) **authority be delegated to the Head of Legal and Democracy, in consultation with the Head of Corporate Property and Projects to agree, execute and complete all necessary documents required to give effect to the above recommendations.**