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## CABINET

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 15 July 2015 from 7.00 - 7.31 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Gerry Lewin (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), David Simmons, Mike Whiting, Ted Wilcox and John Wright.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Anne Adams, Abdool Kara, Zoe Kent, Chris Lovelock, Kellie MacKenzie, Jo Millard, Donna Price, Mark Radford, Nick Vickers and Phil Wilson.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors Roger Clark, Mick Galvin and Sue Gent.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Bowles, Mike Cosgrove and Ken Pugh.

### 101 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 May 2015 (Minute Nos. 38 – 40) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 102 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

### 103 INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE (ICO) FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT PUBLICATION SCHEME

#### **Cabinet Member for Finance**

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Legal Partnership and the above Cabinet Member which asked Members to adopt the Information Commissioner's updated model scheme as the Council's own.

The Cabinet Member for Finance stated that any Freedom of Information requirements, as set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report, would be included within the fees and charges for 2016/17.

A Member asked that future reports and appendices include full details as it would have been helpful if the dataset information had been included within the report.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the background information within the report relating to the new ICO model publication scheme be noted.***
- (2) That the new ICO model publication scheme, replacing the version SBC currently adheres to be adopted.***

**104 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT - FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT 2014/15****Cabinet Member for Finance**

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Finance and the above Cabinet Member which set out the outturn position for 2014/15.

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and was pleased to note that the Council had again been able to deliver services at a lower cost than budgeted for. He stated that both he, Cabinet colleagues and Senior Management Team were totally committed to generating additional income whilst reducing the spending of public money.

The Cabinet Member for Finance reported that the revenue underspend was £1.4 million. He explained that this was largely due to: the additional waste contract savings which were now taken as a base; and the higher than budgeted for planning fees. With regard to budgeting for planning fees, the Cabinet Member for Finance considered this should be budgeted at a realistic level.

The Cabinet Member outlined the importance of Business Rates as set out on page 13 of the report. He spoke about how complicated the arrangements for forecasting and accounting for business rates were, and therefore how volatile that income stream could be. He explained that the increase in business rates income was due to the number of new businesses being set-up in the Borough.

A Member welcomed the report and congratulated the Cabinet Member for Finance and Head of Finance and his team for their stewardship of SBC's finances. Members raised the following points: encouraging that whilst the national rate of employment had fallen, Swale was 'bucking the trend' with 400 new jobs being created; and welcome the positive comments from the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, about how SBC managed its finances.

In response to a query from a Member, the Cabinet Member for Environmental and Rural Affairs stated that funding would be available within the current financial year for wall repairs to be carried out at Newington Car Park as agreed at Cabinet on 11 March 2015.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the revenue underspend on services of £1,973,400, a £277,490 rollover of specific and other grants, and a rollover of £259,500 due to an accounting adjustment re play areas, leaving a net underspend of £1,436,410 be noted.***
- (2) That the revenue rollover of specific and other grants of £277,490 and £259,500 as set out in Table 3 and Table 4 Appendix I be approved.***
- (3) That the net revenue underspend on business rates of £190,230 be noted.***
- (4) That the further revenue service rollovers from 2014/15 and the setting up of new reserves, as set out in Table 4 Appendix I be approved.***
- (5) That the Head of Finance be delegated authority to allocate the uncommitted underspends to reserve funds.***

- (6) That the revenue service bids of £402,100 as set out in Table 5 Appendix I be noted.*
- (7) That the capital rollovers of £319,550 as detailed in Table 10 Appendix I be approved.*
- (8) That the amendments to the Council's 2015/16 capital programme as detailed in paragraph 3.18 be approved.*
- (9) That an amendment to the Council's Treasury Management Strategy 2015/16 as detailed in paragraph 3.31 be approved.*

## 105 PROPERTY MAINTENANCE TERM CONTRACT

### Cabinet Member for Finance

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Property Services and above Cabinet Member which summarised the procurement process and results of the Term Maintenance Contract to provide a reactive and planned maintenance service for a selection of Council owned buildings.

A Member welcomed the appointment of a local company who had been awarded the contract because of the quality of service they offered and that the Council was following its Local First policy.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the appointment of DCB Limited be approved as Term Maintenance Contractor from 1 October 2015 for an initial period of three years.*
- (2) That the Head of Property Services be delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance to extend the contract for a further two years subject to satisfactory performance of the Contractor.*

## 106 LOCAL ENGAGEMENT FORUM UPDATE

### Cabinet Member for Localism, Sport, Culture and Heritage

The above Cabinet Member introduced the report which drew together notes of the discussion, outcomes and recommendations for Cabinet to consider following the recent Swale Local Engagement Forums (LEFs).

In response to a concern from a Member, the Cabinet Member for Localism, Sport, Culture and Heritage agreed that it would make sense to consider the most recent round of LEFs. He had spoken with officers about this and been advised that this was not possible in this particular case due to how the item had been listed on the Forward Plan.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the discussion and outcomes of the three Local Engagement Fora held during March 2015 be noted.*

## 107 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 18 JUNE 2015

**RESOLVED:**

*(1) That the recommendations in Minute No. 81 be approved.*

**108 MINUTES OF THE SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD MEETING HELD ON 8 JUNE 2015****RESOLVED:**

*(1) That the recommendations in Minute No. 49 be approved.*

**109 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC****RESOLVED:**

*(1) That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act:*

*Paragraph 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).*

**110 ESTABLISHMENT OF A SHARED DEBT RECOVERY SERVICE****Cabinet Member for Finance**

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Housing and the above Cabinet Member which sought Members consideration of a shared debt recovery service for the collection of unpaid council tax, business rates and parking fines. The service would recover debts on behalf of the Borough instead of sending them to external enforcement agents.

The Cabinet Member for Finance advised that there was an error in Table 1 of the report, also included as Table 6 in Appendix I, which related to Profit and Loss. The amended Table had been emailed to Members and was also tabled.

In response to a query from a Member, the Assistant Revenues and Benefits Manager explained that officers had studied in depth the cost implications of collecting for type of case and the volume of each type of case. It was considered that for the first year at least it was simpler to divide the costs by three as they were likely to even out. She advised that this could be reviewed after the first year.

Discussions ensued about reviewing the service, and Members agreed that Recommendation (3) be amended to include the following wording to reflect that the Collaboration Agreement should include a three yearly review in addition to the proposed one year initial review 'shared debt recovery service for the collection of unpaid council tax, business rates and parking fines, **this will include a review of the service after one year as part of the implementation of the service and**

that a three yearly review be incorporated into the proposed Collaboration Agreement'.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That, subject to the agreement of Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils, the creation of an in-house debt recovery service for the collection of unpaid council tax, business rates and parking fines be approved.***
- (2) That the Revenues and Benefits Manager Financial and Technical be delegated authority to make the necessary implementation arrangements as set out in the report.***
- (3) That the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, be delegated authority to negotiate the terms of and enter into a collaboration agreement with Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils for the delivery of a shared debt recovery service for the collection of unpaid council tax, business rates and parking fines, be reviewed after one year as part of the implementation of the service and that a three yearly review be incorporated into the proposed Collaboration Agreement.***

Chairman

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel