
CABINET

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne on Wednesday, 2 September 2015 from 7.00 - 7.54 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Bowles (Chairman), Duncan Dewar-Whalley, David Simmons, Mike Whiting, Ted Wilcox and John Wright.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Katherine Bescoby, Abdool Kara, Zoe Kent, Jo Millard, Donna Price, Mark Radford and Nick Vickers.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Mick Galvin, Mike Henderson and Bryan Mulhern.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Mike Cosgrove and Gerry Lewin

166 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 July 2015 (Minute Nos. 101 – 110) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

167 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

168 TEYNHAM CAR PARK - COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

Cabinet Member for Localism, Sport, Culture and Heritage

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Property and the above Cabinet Member which set out the proposals for a new 125 year lease for Teynham Car Park. The Cabinet Member for Localism spoke about the history of leasing the car park, the ongoing costs involved and referred to the Asset Transfer Policy. The Cabinet Member for Housing discussed the security and location of the car park and whether there was any flexibility to improve the car park.

RESOLVED:

(1) That a new 125 year lease be entered into with Teynham Parish Council, the terms of which are set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report.

169 DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY

Cabinet Member for Finance

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Housing and the above Cabinet Member. The Cabinet Member for Finance outlined the policy change in the base-line funding which came into effect in April 2013. He also advised of an error in the draft policy at paragraph 2.9.3, the first line of which should read 'Full Discretionary

Relief for clubs will not normally be granted if the organisation operates a licenced bar.'

RESOLVED:

(1) That the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy be adopted subject to the amendment at paragraph 2.9.3 above.

170 DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENT POLICY

Cabinet Member for Finance

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Housing and the above Cabinet Member. The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and outlined how the welfare reforms had affected the budget for Discretionary Housing Payments.

In response to questions concerning the low response to the consultation, the Revenues and Benefits Manager (Financial and Technical) advised that 5,000 letters had been sent out. The consultation process had been reviewed and in future paper copies of the survey would be sent out. She also agreed to consider other methods of consultation and confirmed that the Appeals Officer worked in the Housing Benefit Team.

In response to a question concerning long term support, the Revenues and Benefits Manager (Financial and Technical) advised that payments were only for the short term and there was liaison with Housing in relation to the type of properties occupied to solve underlying issues rather than provide long term support.

It was suggested that this item could have been a topic for discussion at the Policy Development and Review Committee.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the Discretionary Housing Payment policy be adopted as outlined in the report.

(2) That the policy should include a further stage of review by the Head of Residents' Services.

171 COMBATING FRAUD - COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES

Cabinet Member for Finance

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Housing and the above Cabinet Member. The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and outlined the proposals for the shared service operation. The Cabinet Member for Housing spoke of how vital fraud investigation was.

The Cabinet Member for Performance questioned the costs quoted in the report, and the Revenues and Benefits Manager (Financial and Technical) advised one figure was for 2015 and the other, 2016.

In response to questions, the Revenues and Benefits Manager (Financial and Technical) advised that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) would investigate Housing Benefit Fraud whilst other fraud such as Council Tax would be investigated by staff of the new team being established.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That, subject to the agreement of Kent County Council, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils, the continuation of a counter fraud team to reduce the level of customer fraud and error in relation to council tax and business rates be approved.***
- (2) That the Revenues and Benefits Manager be authorised to make the necessary operational arrangements as set out in the report.***
- (3) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration to enter into a collaboration agreement with Kent County Council, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils for the continued delivery of a counter fraud service for council tax and business rates.***
- (4) That a review of the service be undertaken in 18 months with a further report to be provided detailing the impact of the service on fraud and error.***

172 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT: APRIL - JUNE 2015

Cabinet Member for Finance

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Finance and the above Cabinet Member. The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and was pleased with the forecast revenue underspend of £319,390. He advised that where a zero variance was reported, officers were predicting a break-even position for the year. He advised of an error in the second recommendation, in that it should refer to period 1 and not period 3. It was noted that all references to period 3 in the document should instead refer to period 1.

The Cabinet Member for Environmental and Rural Affairs discussed the benefits of negotiated contracts with Maidstone and Ashford Borough Councils and Kent County Council. He also advised that there was now significant income from garden waste and that additional savings had been generated from the lower than expected inflation rates.

In response to comments regarding planning fees and the estimated overspend in Democratic Services, the Head of Finance undertook to respond to the Member concerning the estimated income for planning fees. The Chief Executive considered that the report was a useful management tool, and confirmed that where a zero variance was shown, it was estimated that budgets would broadly balance

overall and officers were more prudent in the first quarter about the likely end of year position.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the projected revenue underspend on services of £319,390 be noted.

(2) That the capital expenditure of £119,800 to end of period 1 be noted.

173 BEARING FRUITS: SWALE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN: REQUEST FOR DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO FACILITATE EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

Cabinet Member for Planning

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Planning and the above Cabinet Member. In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Planning, the Chairman introduced the report and outlined the recommendations. He thanked the Vice-Chairman of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Panel for attending.

RESOLVED:

(1) That delegated authority be given to the Head of Planning Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning to agree the following for publication and debate at the Local Plan EIP:

- a) draft responses to representations made on the publication version of the plan;***
- b) draft modifications to the plan which may arise from consideration of the above;***
- c) draft modifications which may arise from discussions during the course of the EIP;***
- d) statements of Common Ground which may be issues jointly by SBC and other official bodies (such as Kent County Council and Highways England); and***
- e) delegated authority to respond to matters arising from adjoining local authorities' plan making processes and any other issues considered urgent and necessary.***

174 LOCAL ENGAGEMENT FORUM (LEF) UPDATE

Cabinet Member for Localism, Sport, Culture and Heritage

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Economic and Cultural Services and the above Cabinet Member. In introducing the report, the Cabinet Member noted the dates of the Local Engagement Forums and asked that consideration be given when the timetable of meetings was prepared for more timely reporting of the LEF updates to Cabinet.

There was some discussion regarding the level of attendance by the public at the LEF meetings, and it was noted that this varied across the Borough but the purpose of LEF's to engage with the public was worthwhile.

The Cabinet Member for Localism, Sport, Culture and Heritage suggested that the agenda items dictated the level of attendance but the purpose should not be lost. The Chairman drew attention to the review being undertaken by the Policy Development and Review Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

175 MINUTES OF THE SWALE RURAL FORUM HELD ON 25 AUGUST 2015

The Vice-Chairman outlined the discussions from the meeting and drew attention to the recommendation in Minute No. 162. It was clarified that the 'quiet lane' referred to in Minute No. 162 was two lanes joined – Sunnyhill Road and Munsgore Lane.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations in Minute No. 162 be approved.

Chairman

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