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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, 7 October 2015 from 7.09 - 7.59 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Bowles (Chairman), Mike Cosgrove, Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Gerry Lewin (Vice-Chairman), Ken Pugh, David Simmons, Mike Whiting, Ted Wilcox and John Wright.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Anne Adams, Amber Christou, Della Fackrell, Charlotte Hudson, Kellie MacKenzie, Donna Price, Mark Radford, Dave Thomas and Nick Vickers.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors Roger Clark, Mick Galvin, Harrison, Mike Henderson, Roger Truelove and Ghlin Whelan.

### **251 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 September 2015 (Minute Nos. 166 – 175) and the Extraordinary Cabinet meeting held on 21 September 2015 (Minutes Nos. 223 – 224) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as correct records.

### **252 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mike Henderson, whilst not a member of the Cabinet, declared a financial interest in respect of item 9, tender approval for Front Brents Flood Defence Bund. Councillor Henderson left the room during consideration of this item.

### **253 COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMMENTS ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15**

#### **Leader**

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Commissioning & Customer Contact and the Leader. The Leader introduced the report and noted that there had been two peaks of complaints received and these were largely due to the introduction of the food waste collections and planning support. The Leader noted that the performance figures for planning had improved since the start of the process.

In response to queries, the Head of Commissioning & Customer Contact stated that complaints could be purely that customers were not happy with the response received but also about the time it had taken for officers to respond to queries particularly if stated performance standards had not been met. The website was constantly being reviewed to ensure greater clarity and the targeted staff training arranged was specifically for staff in the revenues and benefits section following complaints from claimants.

A Member was pleased to note the percentage of complaints responded to within 10 days but asked that moving forward the aim should be for a 100% target rate.

**RESOLVED:**

***(1) That the report be noted.***

**254 TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PROVISION FOR SWALE HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS**

**Cabinet Member for Housing**

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Residence Services and the above Cabinet Member. The Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report.

In response to queries the Cabinet Member for Housing stated that Sheerness and Sittingbourne had the highest numbers of homeless people in Swale in comparison to Faversham, so it made sense to focus on housing provision where the greatest need was. The Cabinet Member for Housing stated that all landlords were responsible for repairs and maintenance of their properties and also utility costs, so the Council was no different in that respect. They were also subject to the same risks to property. He confirmed that the savings made would need to be re-distributed within the housing service. The Cabinet Member for Housing noted that the Scrutiny Committee would be reviewing temporary accommodation which would be an opportunity for Members to look at the service and the costs involved.

**RESOLVED:**

***(1) That the update on the first six months' operating usage of the property purchased in November 2014 for use as temporary accommodation be noted.***

***(2) That the purchase of an additional property in or around Sheerness to use as additional or temporary accommodation up to a cost of £200,000 within the current financial year be approved.***

**255 STATIONERY SUPPLIER - EXTENSION OF EXISTING CONTRACT**

**Cabinet Member for Finance**

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Property Services and the above Cabinet Member.

**RESOLVED:**

***(1) That the existing contract for the supply of stationery be extended for nine months from January 2016 to 30 September 2016.***

**256 PROPERTY ASSET STRATEGY - ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT****Cabinet Member for Finance**

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Property Services and the above Cabinet Member which was for noting.

A Member thanked officers for their hard work in ensuring that outstanding asset transfers were completed.

In response to a query, the Cabinet Member for Localism, Sport, Culture and Heritage stated that the transfer of Faversham allotments was almost complete. With regard to the transfer of Queenborough allotments there was an issue about clawback which needed to be agreed with Queenborough Town Council.

The Chairman advised Councillor Mike Henderson that officers would keep him informed about when the transfer of Faversham allotments was likely to be completed.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the progress made against the Property Strategy Action Plan be noted.***
- (2) That the 2014/15 Property Performance Indicator results be noted.***

**257 THE MEADS COMMUNITY CENTRE ASSET TRANSFER****Cabinet Member for Localism, Sport, Culture and Heritage**

Cabinet considered the report of the Economy and Community Services Manager and the above Cabinet Member. The Cabinet Member for Localism, Sport, Culture and Heritage welcomed completion of the project and thanked officers and the ward member for their work on the project.

In response to a query, the Cabinet Member for Localism, Sport, Culture and Heritage advised that the Charity Commission would monitor the MCCT and ensure they were complying with their equalities policy.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That The Meads Community Centre be transferred to The Meads Community Centre Trust on a 125 year lease.***
- (2) That the Head of Economy and Community Services and Head of Property be delegated authority in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Localism, Sport, Culture and Heritage and Cabinet Member for Finance to negotiate the final terms of the lease based upon the Heads of Terms in Appendix I of the report.***

**258 TENDER AWARD FOR FRONT BRENTS FLOOD DEFENCE BUND PROJECT IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY****Leader**

Cabinet considered the report of the Resilience Partnership Manager and the Leader. The Leader welcomed the report which he considered was a good news story for Swale and a good example of partnership working.

The Cabinet Member for Environmental and Rural Affairs supported the scheme proposed which he considered was the right scheme and would enhance the area.

**RESOLVED:**

***(1) That the appointment of J Breheny Contractors Ltd as build contractor for the Front Brents Flood Defence Bund be approved.***

**259 BUSINESS RATE POOLING****Cabinet Member for Finance**

Cabinet considered the report of Head of Finance and the above Cabinet Member. The Cabinet Member for Finance reminded Members that business rates had been partially localised on 1 April 2013 and local authorities keep 50% of any growth from that point. He explained that this was a major reason why the Council had been able to see a growth in income and balanced budget without a major reduction in services. The Cabinet Member for Finance spoke about the existing business rate pooling system that Swale had entered into for 2015/16 along with other district councils to reduce levy payments in 2015/16. The scheme had been in operation 5 months. The first quarter monitoring suggested that Swale would receive £380,000 approximately. He advised that the Council had not budgeted for this sum so it was a windfall gain. He added that the exact amount would not be known until Summer 2016.

The Cabinet Member for Finance moved the following amendment to the recommendation: To delegate to the Cabinet Member for Finance, the Leader, and Head of Finance any decision to enter into a business rates pool for 2016/17. This was seconded by the Leader. On being put to the vote the amendment was agreed.

In response to a query the Cabinet Member for Finance stated that the recent Government announcement that local councils would keep all business rates collected but would lose the revenue support grant. He stated that this was a major development but would not come into effect until 2017.

In response to a query from a Member, the Head of Finance stated that this Council's share of the £373,000 from the appeal decision earlier in the year on purpose-built GP surgeries would not increase.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That delegated authority be given to the Cabinet Member for Finance, the Leader and the Head of Finance to enter into a business rates pool for 2016/17.**

**260 MINUTES OF THE SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD MEETING HELD ON 7 SEPTEMBER 2015**

Cabinet considered the recommendations from the Swale Joint Transportation Board (JTB) meeting held on 7 September 2015.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the recommendations in Minute Nos. 195, 196 and 197 be approved.**

Chairman

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