
CABINET

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 13 April 2022 from 7.00 pm - 8.19 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock (Vice-Chairman), Monique Bonney, Angela Harrison, Ben J Martin, Richard Palmer, Roger Truelove (Chairman) and Tim Valentine.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Lisa Fillery, Jo Millard, Jeremy Pilgrim and Larissa Reed.

OFFICERS PRESENT (Virtually): Simon Algar, Billy Attaway, David Clifford, Charlotte Hudson and Claudette Valmond.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Derek Carnell, Ghlin Whelan and Mike Whiting.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillors Steve Davey, Mike Dendor, Alastair Gould, Ken Rowles, Paul Stephen and Sarah Stephen.

APOLOGY: Councillor Julian Saunders.

748 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chairman outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

749 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 March 2022 (Minute Nos. 687 – 701) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

750 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Monique Bonney declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest in respect of item 5 (Rodmersham Green Conservation Area) as she owned property within the Conservation Area. She left the room and did not take part in any discussion or vote on this item.

751 **Speech from Leader**

As the meeting was the final Cabinet meeting before the Council moved to the Committee System in May 2022, the Leader gave a short speech. He spoke of the introduction of Area Committees and the work required to make the Committee System work.

The Leader spoke of the Council's resistance to meet Government's housing allocations and the continued work on the Local Plan Review. He referred to the setting up of the Rainbow Homes company and said the Council would continue implementing improvement projects in the Borough. The Leader said he hoped the Council would spend the next five years and beyond investing Levelling-up funds in Sheerness. Finally, the Leader said the Council would continue to engage with the voluntary sector and the NHS,

and he said Swale Borough Council (SBC) had one of the best plans for climate change in the country.

752 Rodmersham Green Conservation Area

The Cabinet Member for Planning introduced the report which sought to update Cabinet on proposed Conservation Area boundary changes in Rodmersham Green, following the recent reviews. He said the reviews had been carried out from funding allocated by the Area Committees and he added that the current administration had carried out more Conservation Area reviews in the last three years than the previous administration carried out in the previous twenty years.

The Cabinet Member for Planning thanked and congratulated officers for their hard work on the review and for their adaptability after listening to public feedback. The Leader added his thanks to officers.

The Conservation and Design Manager acknowledged the praise given for the work on the review.

Other Members praised the review.

Resolved:

(1) That the responses received from the public consultation exercise (summarised in the response table at Appendix I) be noted.

(2) That the content of the conservation area character appraisal and associated management strategy document for the Rodmersham Green Conservation Area, as amended in response to the public consultation (set out in Appendix II) be noted.

(3) That the changes to the review document proposed by officers in response to the representations received during the course of the public consultation, and also following a re-evaluation of the conservation area boundary by officers following the close of consultation, to agree that a further 3- week period of public consultation be carried out (referencing the additional proposed boundary changes) be approved.

(4) That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning Services (in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Planning) to make a decision on re-designating the conservation area and adopting the amended appraisal and management plan review document for development management purposes, unless the reconsultation results in the receipt of significant objections to the proposed additional boundary changes – in which case the matter would be referred to the Council's Policy & Resources Committee for consideration and a decision on re-designation and adoption.

753 Tunstall Conservation Area Review

In introducing the report which sought to update Cabinet on proposed Conservation Area boundary changes in Tunstall, following the recent review, the Cabinet Member for Planning drew attention that Recommendation (4) should refer to Tunstall Conservation Area not Milstead. He spoke enthusiastically about the information documents on individual Conservation Areas in Swale which were being produced and would be available at a cost.

A Member praised all contributors and officers for producing the document.

Resolved:

(1) That the content of the public consultation draft of the character appraisal and management strategy document produced for the review, and the representations made on this by interested parties, the details of which are set out in the report appendices be noted.

(2) That the content of the conservation area character appraisal and associated management strategy document for the Tunstall Conservation Area, as amended in response to the public consultation (set out in Appendix II) be noted.

(3) That in light of 1 and 2 above, that the Tunstall Conservation Area is of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and that as such, that it should be re-designated as a conservation area in accordance with Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990.

(4) That in light of 1 and 2 above, that the boundary to the conservation area be re-drawn as proposed in the amended character appraisal and management plan document, and that this document for the Tunstall Conservation Area be formally adopted for development management purposes.

754 **Extension of Staying Put Framework**

The Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report which sought to extend the contract of the current framework of recommended contractors for Staying Put for a further two years. He advised Members that the original contract agreement in 2020 had included an option to extend for a further two years, and he was pleased that the two year fixed price contract agreed in 2020 had remained a fixed price. The Cabinet Member for Housing praised the good quality work carried out by contractors and thanked the Staying Put Manager. The Leader also gave thanks.

In the discussion that followed, Members spoke positively and said that residents received a fantastic service. A Member highlighted paragraph 2.5 of the report which explained that of the 16 contractors used, nine were local to Swale and all nine were in the top ten.

The Chief Executive said it was difficult to receive a quote for building works in the current climate, let alone a fixed price, and this was a significant gain.

Resolved:

(1) That the extension of the contractor framework for Staying Put started in April 2020 be agreed for an additional two years until April 2024.

755 **Beam Partnership - Housing and Employment Support**

The Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report by explaining that Beam were a crowdfunding platform that could help individual homeless people overcome financial barriers to career progression and provide support for homeless households. He explained the process in setting up a crowdfunding page for an individual which then sought donations to help with their specific needs and requirements. The Cabinet Member

for Housing said an individual was supported through and beyond the process by a Beam worker. He listed the benefits of the scheme which included helping people back into work and secure housing, and he said that by investing in the partnership it was anticipated there would be a significant saving in the temporary accommodation bill in the medium term. He referred to the cuts from Kent County Council's Kent Homeless Connect contract and said that SBC were taking the initiative by entering into the pilot scheme.

The Head of Housing and Communities highlighted that a waiver had been sought with Beam to evidence that the scheme worked. She explained how the project was unique and individuals that would be suitable to work within the programme had already been identified.

In the discussion that followed Members made points including:

- The size of homelessness issues was increasing, and SBC had to consider different projects to help;
- supported the holistic approach of considering an individual's needs;
- many people were a pay cheque away from being homeless;
- were the donations to an individual or a national pot?; and
- how would local organisations contribute?.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Housing explained that local organisations could sign up to offer training and would work with Beam to support individuals to secure sustained employment. He said that companies or individuals could choose to donate as a one-off or a regular monthly payment. The Cabinet Member for Housing went on explain that a cashable saving was temporary accommodation savings, and this could be measured. There would be indirect savings such as being employed and paying Council Tax in the Borough, or savings as a result of not claiming Universal Credit.

The Chief Executive gave her experience of working with Beam at a previous authority which was one of the first to participate. She spoke positively about the project when extensive and long-term support was given, which was vital in its success, and she said the majority of funding came from monthly donations which gave a more balanced split across individuals. The Chief Executive said that Beam were now more organised, and the project did work well, but every Borough was different and so the pilot scheme was a good idea.

Resolved:

(1) That a spend and save pilot in partnership with Beam be entered into.

756 **Project Funding**

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report which gave an update of projects that had been funded from one-off reserve allocations to deliver a range of public improvements in Swale, over the last three years. He said that just under £5million from dormant reserve funds was invested and he referred to the projects listed on pages 137 – 141 of the report.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance said that money had been invested to improve the recreational experience for residents and visitors to Swale and he said that toilet facilities, tree planting, play areas and public parks, community groups and public events had been funded. There had also been support for Area Committees and Member

grants and continued improvements to the High Streets, and for vulnerable people. He said that it was money well spent.

The Cabinet Member for Planning said the support represented a sea change across Swale and he listed projects that had benefited from funding including work to update the Tree Preservation Order register, a more effective and transparent Planning Enforcement register, work to neglected churchyards and the Eastchurch War Memorial and the Artesian Well at Oare. He referred to the Brexit Fund and said that money from that had made improvements to village halls and had provided new defibrillators across the Borough which would save lives.

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Property praised staff working on projects that helped make Swale a nicer environment to be in.

The Cabinet Member for Housing said that the £5million was being used to improve every part of the Borough and reminded Members that officers had worked on projects that were in addition to their routine work and he thanked and praised them.

The Cabinet Member for Community spoke about the changes that had taken place since the coalition led the Council in 2019 and the additional challenges faced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and he said that the community was more resilient going forward.

The Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency said the funding of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Officer had made a huge difference in being able to deliver on projects as part of the Climate and Ecological Emergency, and he was very proud of the progress made.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing referred to the positive difference the Fuel and Water Poverty Officer had made on the community.

The Leader joined other Members in praise of the work of officers in delivering projects.

Resolved:

(1) That the schemes funded from the Improvement & Resilience Fund, the Special Projects Fund and the High Street Fund be noted.

757 Recommendations from the Local Plan Panel meeting held on 24 March 2022

Resolved:

(1) That the recommendations in Minute Nos. 728, 729, 730 and 731 be noted.

758 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Members agreed the resolution to exclude the press and public in order to discuss the information in the restricted Appendix.

759 Bourne Place Units - Approval to Let Retail/Leisure Units

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Property introduced the report which sought to agree the letting of the remaining Units 1, 2 and 3a at Bourne Place, Sittingbourne. She highlighted that it had been a difficult few years for businesses impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and said that securing the prospective tenants for the units was a good result.

In the discussion that followed Members raised points including:

- It was a good investment;
- clarification on services charges;
- had the effect on similar businesses been considered?;
- the type of business leasing the units offered resilience and sustainability;
- clarification that the resolution should refer to Committee chairs not Cabinet members; and
- a mix of services at the site attracted more customers;

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Property said the company had a different market to the comparison discussed.

A visiting Member congratulated Members on securing a business for the remaining units.

Resolved:

(1) To approve the proposed letting to the preferred bidder as set out in Appendix I.

(2) To give delegated authority to the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods and the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Cabinet Member for Economy and Property, or the chairs of the relevant service committees in future municipal years, to negotiate, agree and complete leases in relation to remaining units on Bourne Place, Sittingbourne in the event that the letting proposed in the report does not proceed.

760 **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned from 7.47pm to 7.53 pm.

Chairman

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