

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2014 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Hogarth (Chairman)

Cllr. Horwood (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Ball, Mrs. Bosley, Ms. Chetram, Mrs. Cook, Davison and Maskell

An apology for absence was received from Cllr. Fittock

Cllrs. Mrs. Morris, Mrs. Purves, Raikes, Mrs. Sargeant and Walshe were also present

24. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the Committee held on 24 October 2013, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

25. Declarations of Interest

Cllr. Ball declared an interest in agenda item 10 as Swanley Town Mayor, one of the charities he had chosen to support for the year had submitted an application for grant funding. He also declared an interest in agenda item 15 as Swanley Town Mayor.

26. Actions from Previous Meeting

The Chief Officer, Communities and Business informed Members that Westerham had not been identified as a high area of deprivation because it did not fall into the areas that were categorised as an area that was deprived.

27. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Chairman and Portfolio Holder for Economic and Community Development updated the Committee on his work since the previous meeting of the Advisory Committee listed below:

- The escalate fund was launched, applications had been received and were being vetted.
- Fort Halstead was successful in the local grant scheme and soon be up and running.
- The Council was a member of the Sevenoaks District Chamber of Commerce and the meetings would take place on the 1 Wednesday of the month.
- A meeting with BT and other interested partnerships with broadband had taken place.
- One to one mentoring was underway for microbusinesses in the West Kent Partnership.

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- There was a meeting at K college with the transitional team
- The Portfolio Holder informed Members that he sat on the appraisal panel for the Grant Scheme.
- The annual review with the Citizen Advise Bureaux had taken place.
- Articles had been drafted for Real Business News and InShape Magazine.

28. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)

There were none.

29. To note minutes of the Health Liaison Board

The Chairman of the Health Liaison Board advised Members of the key points from the Meeting which included that Spring House still existed as a charity. There were more carers in the District than what was identified in the census. Older people's housing needs was a key priority and a review of Greenbelt and Brownfields sites should be reviewed. Staff and Councillors should be given the opportunity for training to help identify those who suffer from Dementia. It was agreed that a map which identified the different help that was available to those suffering from Dementia should be made.

Action 1: That the Chief Officer, Communities and Business provide a map which identifies where help was available for those suffering from Dementia and for their Carers.

In response to a question, the Chief Officer, Communities and Business advised Members that she would look into whether action 7 had been completed and would chase for the information packs from Carers First.

Action 2: To see whether action 7 from the Health Liaison Board minutes had been completed and to follow up for information packs from Carers First.

Resolved: The minutes were noted.

30. Business land conversion to residential land

The Chief Planning Officer advised Members on the conversion of business land to residential land. The Council was successful at having three sites which were exempt from permitted development changes introduced in May 2013 that enable the change of use of employment premises to residential without the need for planning permission. Only five other Local Authorities outside London were granted these exemptions. He also explained the planning policy position, at a national and local level, which illustrated that there were strong policies in place to protect business land.

In response to questions, the Chief Planning Officer informed Members that 'employment' was defined in the Use Classes Order and it did not include retail use, for which there were separate policies in place. He advised Members that 93% of the District was green belt land, but the Core Strategy did seek to balance the need for business land and residential land.

The Committee thanked the Chief Officer for attending.

31. Proposed Joint Working Project between Sevenoaks District Council and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council on Building Control Services

The Chief Officer, Environmental and Operational Services presented a report which proposed an operating model for joint working with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (T&MBC) for Building Control Services. He advised that until his promotion in September 2013 the Building Control Manager position was shared between the Council and T&MBC. T&MBC had explored various options for future delivery of their Building Control services and concluded joint working with SDC would be a preferred option.

A new joint structure could create a saving of 3.5FTE posts. There were currently four vacancies across the two Councils. It was estimated that the proposed structure would create £50,000 of savings for each Authority, subject to staff consultation and job evaluation. It was proposed that there would be a central 'hub' for the finances, and IT integration would be necessary.

In response to a question the Chief Officer, Environmental and Operational Services informed Members that a review had taken place for the Environmental Health Partnership and the Licensing Partnership. Both reviews were successful and service standards were being met, some were being exceeded. There were some staff vacancies but recruitment the posts were filled successfully. It was agreed that there would be a further £60,000 savings from the Environmental Health Partnership and £30,000 Savings from the Licensing Partnership from 2014/15 onwards. A review the Building Control shared working arrangement could be brought back to the Committee approx. 12 Months after full implementation.

In response to a further question he explained that the contribution to the financial 'hub' would be based on each Council's activity from the previous year and the contribution would be reviewed each year.

The Committee expressed their thanks to officers at both authorities.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: The following recommendation to Cabinet be endorsed to recommend to Council that

- a) the Council enter into an agreement with T&MBC for a joint working project for Building Control Services;
- b) the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Community Development be delegated the Authority to agree the Heads of Terms for a joint working agreement;
- c) a provision of £10,000 investment costs be recommended to support the implementation of the project as a supplementary budget request (this figure represented a 50% share of implantation costs); and

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- d) the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Community Development be delegated the authority to approve any consequential actions required in order to implement the project.

32. Sevenoaks Town Centre Parking Review

The Chairman exercised his discretion and allowed a Member of the public Mr. FitzGerald to address the Committee. He expressed his agreement that there was a need for additional parking but that the design of the car park needed to be considered carefully, and have something that would take into consideration the landscape, as first impressions of Sevenoaks were important.

The Chief Officer, Environmental and Operational Services advised that there was no planning application submitted yet. Once a planning application had been submitted there would be a consultation period through the normal planning process. He advised that on site construction time needed to be as short as possible for minimum disruption for existing car park users. The Chairman thanked Mr FitzGerald for his comments.

The Chief Officer, Environmental and Operational Services presented a report detailing the proposal to provide additional parking provision in Sevenoaks Town Centre by 'decking' the existing Council owned Buckhurst 2 and / or the Suffolk Way Car Parks. He advised that an independent survey and the Council's in-house surveys had identified that additional capacity was required. In total for long and short stay parking an additional 300 spaces were identified. The on site construction period for 'decking' would be approximately 5 to 6 weeks. The additional spaces would provide additional income. The full cost pay back of the construction for Buckhurst 2 Car Park was 12 - 13 years. .

In response to a question, The Chief Officer, Environmental and Operational services advised that no formal consultation had taken place yet but views would be sought through the planning process and other consultation with interested parties.

A Member expressed their concern that opportunities before had been missed, and that something needed to be done to enhance the town. There was a long history of parking problems and it was something that should not be rushed. A proper consultation should take place first.

Members expressed concern that the process was moving too quickly and that the options needed to be considered in more detail. Some Members felt that it was a substantial amount of money for something that appeared to be a short term solution. Consideration also needed to be given to additional traffic congestion. The Chief Officer, Environmental and Operational Services advised that this would be considered as part of the planning process where Kent Highways would be consulted.

Cllr Mrs Purves addressed the Committee, expressing her view that by building on Suffolk Way Car Park it would create a barrier between the Leisure Centre and the Library and would cut it off from the town.

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Members questioned whether a working group could be set up to consider the design and review parking.

The Chief Officer, Environmental and Operational Services informed Members that the report would be brought to Cabinet on 6 March 2014 to make a decision to submit a planning application for Buckhurst 2 car park and other recommendations of Cabinet would be considered by Full Council on 1 April 2014.

Members thought it would be useful to set up a working group to consider the design and review parking in general.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet

- a) that a planning application be submitted to provide an additional 300 car park spaces on the existing Buckhurst 2 car park by providing a two storey elevated car deck;
- b) a Member working group of the Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee be set up to consider the design of the additional car park provision and review parking in general, following Cabinet's consideration of the recommendation's of the Scrutiny Members working group on parking. Members of the working group would include: Cllr Ball, Cllr Horwood and Cllr Maskell.
- c) That it be recommended to full Council that
 - i) subject to planning consent, to undertake a Procurement exercise for the project and subject to the successful tender being within the estimated costs as outlined in this report, to award a contract to design and build the elevated car park decks on the existing Buckhurst 2 car park.
 - ii) a budget of £3.5-£4.0 million be approved to be financed by borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board.
 - iii) that delegated authority be granted to the Portfolio Holders for Finance and Resources and Economic and Community Development to, after consideration of the tender evaluation, accept the most economically advantageous tender, to award the contract and authorise expenditure and approvals within the estimated costs outlined in this report and the borrowing approval.
 - iv) that a planning application be submitted for the decking of the existing Bradbourne car park to increase parking capacity in the area adjacent to the railway station.
 - v) a planning application be submitted to provide additional parking spaces in the existing Suffolk Way car park by providing either a one or two storey

elevated car deck, to allow for longer term provision of additional short stay parking capacity.

33. Allocation of Grants

The Chief Officer, Communities and Business presented a report which detailed information about the Community Grant Scheme and summarised applications received by the Council from Voluntary organisations for funding during 2014/15. The Community Grant Scheme supported local charities and voluntary sector organisations. The grant guidelines were reviewed during 2013/14 and revised guidelines were agreed by Cabinet on 12 September 2013. She explained that as part of the budget available £98,540 was set aside for the Citizen's Advice Bureaux which was subject to a three year Services Level Agreement. The Chief Officer, Communities and Business reported to Members that in the years 2012/13, the 28 Voluntary organisations that had funding supported 310,091 volunteer hours, this represented a benefit to the District of £3.89 million.

In response to questions the Chief Officer, Communities and Business advised Members that some reasons why applications for funding were not approved was because the applications did not make reference to the scheme's priorities, did not have enough detail, or the service was primarily the responsibility of another agency. She explained that the Voluntary Organisations were able to get in contact with the Council and they would be able to provide advice on how to fill out the application form. Officers would be able to give the rationale for the decision taken on the grant applications.

A Member questioned whether the amount of funding that was allocated was usually reduced from the amount that had been submitted. Members were advised that the suggested allocation was dependent on the value of work the organisation was going to do. In some cases it was felt that the amount was justified and in others it was not.

The Chief Officer, Communities and Business informed Members that the North Kent Crime Prevention panel was different to the Police as the panel was there to help residents to feel safe in their homes, Kent Police were able to provide advice to the panel. Community Safety was one of the Council's core requirements.

Other Members expressed their interest to sit on the appraisal panel next year. It was requested whether training could also be provided to Town and Parish Councils.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

34. Rural Broadband

The Chief Officer, Communities and Business presented a report which summarised the work that had taken place to improve broadband within the District. She advised Members that the Government had announced that it would invest £530 million in

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superfast broadband infrastructure in rural areas. Kent County Council (KCC) was successful in bidding for £10 million from the BDUK funding which was matched with an additional £10 million from the KCC Regeneration Fund. KCC signed a contract with BT which agreed that at least 95% of properties in Kent will have access to high speed broadband and every property will have access to at least 2mbps. The Council had also applied for funds from DEFRA Rural Community Broadband Fund (RCBF) with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to upgrade some of the 'heard to reach' rural areas. Parts of Leigh, Chiddingstone, Penshurst, Cowden and Hever would benefit from the funds.

The Economic Development Officer advised Members that the Rural Broadband Working Group had considered the options and favoured options 1 and 5. Members were informed that a technical study would have to be postponed until the roll out was on target.

In response to questions Members were advised that Edenbridge exchange cabinet would be upgraded in the next role out and that option 1 could be combined with any option. Option 2 was already functioning in Underriver, however there were other companies which could be used.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That either options 1 and 2; or 1, 2 and 3 contained in the report be recommended to Cabinet.

35. NHS Call to Action

The Chief Officer, Communities and Businesses advised Members that the NHS call to action was a survey regarding what the Council wanted to see in the NHS. Examples were given of the types of questions which were in the survey. Members agreed that this was something the Health Liaison Board could look at.

Resolved: That the Health Liaison Board be requested to look at the survey questions and a draft responses to be brought back to the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Community Development.

36. West Kent Priorities for Growth

The Chief Officer, Communities and Business presented a report to Members for the West Kent Partnership shared investment priorities, called West Kent Priorities for Growth. It included some of the Council's priorities and looked at the wider Economic Strategy. The document would be used to make funding bids for regeneration.

It was noted that Edenbridge, Station Road could also be reached from the South of the area.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That the recommendation to Cabinet to approve the adoption of the West Kent Priorities for growth investment document, be endorsed.

37. Work Plan

It was brought to Member's attention that the next meeting of the Committee would be the 1 May 2014. The Chairman asked that Officers populate the work plan with future items.

It was moved by the Chairman and

Resolved: That, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the ground that likely disclosure of exempt information is involved as defined by paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as identified in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

38. White Oak Leisure Centre

(Exempt Information Schedule 12a paragraph 3 LGA 1972)

Members discussed the options that were in the confidential report and it was

Resolved: That options 51, 55 and 56 as set out in the confidential report be recommended to Cabinet.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 10.02 PM

CHAIRMAN