

Council

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

6. a) Review of Allocation Policy (Pages 1 - 2)
6. b) Land East of the High Street, Sevenoaks (Pages 3 - 4)
7. a) Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules Update (Pages 5 - 6)
7. b) Protocol on Webcasting & Electronic Voting (Pages 7 - 8)
9. To consider any questions by Members under paragraph 19.3 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given. (Pages 9 - 10)

To assist in the speedy and efficient despatch of business, Members wishing to obtain factual information on items included on the Agenda are asked to enquire of the appropriate Contact Officer named on a report prior to the day of the meeting.

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Item 6a – Review of Housing Allocation Policy

The attached report was considered by the Cabinet on 16 July 2024. The relevant Minute extract is below.

Cabinet (16 July 2024, Minute 16)

The Portfolio Holder presented the report for the Draft Housing Allocation Policy 2024-25 which had been revised following the feedback from the recent consultation. Making changes to the Housing Allocations Policy required a period of consultation and the report set out the results of the consultation. The Housing Allocations Policy had been amended to reflect the changes and the draft was attached at Appendix 1.

Following discussion at the Housing & Health Advisory Committee, it was requested that the definition of 'suitable accommodation' be clarified in the policy, and was included in the following sections, One offer/refusals, right to review and housing register panel, and recommended this change be approved.

Members discussed the report. In response to discussion points, the Head of Housing advised that frequently asked questions document and a guide for the Bands would be produced, as had been done when the current Policy was implemented in 2022. The monthly Housing and Community Hub held would be themed to tie in with the launch of the Policy, to enable residents to raise any questions. Further events would be held across the District. The Head of Housing emphasised that the Housing Register Team were available to assist residents with any queries.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the public sector quality duty.

Resolved: That

- a) the feedback received from the consultation exercise, be noted;
- b) the revised draft of the Housing Allocations Policy 2024-2027, be considered; and
- c) it be recommended to Council that the Housing Allocation Policy 2024-2027, be adopted, with the inclusion of the definition of suitable accommodation.

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Item 6b – Land East of the High Street, Sevenoaks

The attached report was considered by the Cabinet on 16 July 2024. The relevant Minute extract is below.

Cabinet (16 July 2024, Minute 19)

The Portfolio Holder for Improvement & Innovation presented the report which set out the identified opportunity to regenerate the Land to the East of Sevenoaks High Street, following the pressing need to undertake significant work to decarbonise the existing leisure centre and other buildings owned to ensure compliance with new environmental standards. Regenerating Land to the East of Sevenoaks High Street would help achieve this, whilst also helping to deliver other objectives, in line with principles and policies noted in the Council's Communities Plan, the emerging local plan, the Neighbourhood Plan, the Economic Development Strategy and the Town Centre Strategy. The report had been thoroughly considered by Finance & Investment Advisory Committee, People & Places Advisory Committee and Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee.

The Regeneration Development Project Manager brought to Members' attention that this project was an opportunity to improve Sevenoaks town centre for residents and visitors. He advised that the project was in the very early state of testing the vision and early concept ideas for the site. The Council had undertaken key stakeholder and public engagement activities to seek views and feedback on these early concept ideas. Members noted that feedback received from this engagement would be used to refine the vision and clearly set development objectives and principles prior to procuring a strategic development partner. It was further explained that this feedback would feed into the Sevenoaks Town Centre masterplan work, the design brief, the invitation to tender and other associated procurement documents, and the evaluation criteria to be used for the appointment of the strategic development partner.

Further key stakeholder and public engagement consultation exercises would be undertaken once the strategic development partner had been selected and the LLP established, as the project progressed and more details emerged.

Members noted the comments received from the Finance and Investment, People and Places and Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committees. They considered the supplementary document which detailed the revisions to the main report as it progressed through the Advisory Committees. Members further considered the report of the Finance & Investment Advisory Committee Working Group.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Investment expressed his thanks to the Member Working Group and the officers for their work.

Agenda Item 6b

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the public sector equality duty.

Resolved: That

(a) it be noted that the project supports the objectives, principles and policies noted in the Council Plan, Communities Plan, the emerging local plan, the Neighbourhood Plan, the Economic Development Strategy and the Town Centre Strategy;

(b) it be recommended to Council to approve the recommendations set out below (recommendations to Council (i) to (iiii)); and

(i) the development approach outlined in the report to deliver a mixed use scheme in collaboration with Kent County Council and to establish an appropriate special purpose vehicle and other arrangements between the two Councils and a Strategic Development Partner(s) be approved;

(ii) prior to the appointment of the Strategic Development Partner(s), a further Committee report be submitted to Cabinet to outline the heads of terms of the special purpose vehicle and the associated contractual documentation for approval;

(iii) authority be delegated to the Strategic Head of Property & Commercial together with the Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer Finance and Trading and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Investment to establish a special purpose vehicle and procure a joint venture Strategic Development Partner(s) subject to approval by Cabinet of the heads of terms of the special purpose vehicle and the associated contractual documentation; and

(iiii) authority be delegated to the Strategic Head of Property & Commercial, following consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer Finance and Trading, to enter into necessary professional appointments/contracts to procure the services of the necessary consultants.

(c) the virement of £435,000 in the 2024/25 Capital Programme be allocated to this project to prepare, with the approval of the Portfolio Holder for Improvement & Innovation, the required documents and reports and procure the necessary consultants to assist with the appointment of the Strategic Development Partner(s), subject to approval of the development approach being approved by Council.

Item 7 (a) – Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedures Rules Update

The attached report was considered by the Governance Committee, and the relevant minute extract is below:

Governance Committee (11 July 2024, Minute 4)

The Head of Finance presented the report which provided recommendations to the Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules to ensure sound financial Management continued. It was an essential part of good governance as well as longer term financial planning. The rules were reviewed regularly by officers, but brought forward to Committee when there were significant changes.

Members discussed the report and Members expressed their thanks for the amendments that had been made following the last meeting of the Governance Committee, as it was considered these changes would assist with the financial management of the Council. Members discussed how often the procedure rules were updated and considered it important for the Governance Committee to review it on an annual basis. The Chairman used her discretion and allowed a visiting Member to address the Committee. In response to points made, the Head of Finance advised that training would be given following the adoption of the updated rules.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Council that

- i) the Financial Procedure Rules (Appendix A) be adopted with effect from 1 August 2024;
- ii) the Contract Procedure Rules (Appendix B) be adopted with effect from 1 August 2024;

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Item 7 (b) – Protocol on Webcasting & Electronic Voting

The attached report was considered by the Governance Committee, and the relevant minute extract is below:

Governance Committee (11 July 2024, Minute 7)

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented the report on Protocol on Webcasting and Electronic voting which provided an update on the electronic voting system and webcasting system together with email and verbal feedback received from Members. The report sought members confirmation of the Protocol and any further instructions as required.

Members discussed the feedback received from the electronic voting system and the comments made therein with members attention brought to the clarification of a recorded vote within the report. It was considered whether an electronic vote was required on simple votes, such as the Minutes. Further discussion took place on whether electronic voting impacted discussion and it was considered that it did not have a negative impact. Further discussion took place on webcasting of meetings.

The Chairman used her discretion and allowed a visiting Members to address the Committee, who expressed her thanks to Officers for the work put in to making the electronic voting system practicable.

Resolved: That it be recommend to Council that the Protocol on Webcasting and Electronic Voting be confirmed in line with the instructions of Members.

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Item 9 – To consider any questions by Members under paragraph 19.3 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given.

"My ward of Ash and New Ash Green, as well as neighbouring villages like West Kingsdown and rural settlements like the hamlet of Hodsoll Street suffer from a significant lack of bus services. This lack of connectivity reduces employment opportunities, restricts access to health services and exacerbates social isolation.

Two weeks ago, I had a 16-yr old work experience student with me for a week. She told me that the lack of buses prevents her and her friends from accessing the shops, cafes and other facilities they want to access and that this has a negative impact on their mental and physical wellbeing.

Last week, I received an email from a resident who works in the Emergency Department at Kings College Hospital. He wanted to share his despair at the lack of bus services in the early mornings and late evenings to help shift workers get to and from work; a particular problem for those who have no option but to navigate poorly lit, narrow country lanes on foot.

I have a friend who, in addition to carrying out his own full time job, has to drive his wife to and from the train station and his daughter to and from Bluewater every day so they can all access their workplaces. This is a huge strain on his time and productivity.

I understand that Public Transport isn't in this Council's remit but we have a People and Places Committee, a Housing and Health Committee, a Cleaner and Greener Committee and a Homelessness Review Board. Supporting our residents to get to their place of work or leisure in an affordable, safe and sustainable manner should fall under those banners somewhere.

In 2022, the Government provided a local authority toolkit for transport in rural areas which shows how local authorities can support schemes like car sharing and electric bike hire. Kent County Council has created a walking bus initiative. The campaign group Living Streets provides information on creating traffic-free School Streets. There are hundreds of case studies and ideas out there. Does the administration of Sevenoaks Council see an opportunity to support the rural communities around Sevenoaks District to get better connected?"

Cllr Manston

Ash and New Ash Green

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