

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2014 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllrs. Bosley, Hogarth, Ms. Lowe and Ramsay

Cllrs. Mrs. Bosley, Brookbank, Mrs. Clark, Dickins, Gaywood, Mrs. Hunter, McGarvey, Piper, Mrs. Purves, Scholey and Searles were also present.

55. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 5 December 2013, be approved and signed as a correct record.

56. Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest

57. Questions from Members (maximum 15 minutes)

There were no questions from Members.

58. Matters referred from Council

There were no matters referred from Council.

59. Matters referred from the Audit Committee and Scrutiny Committee (Paragraph 5.20 of Part 4 (Executive) of the Constitution)

There were no references from the Audit Committee or Scrutiny Committee.

60. Recommendations from the Cabinet Advisory Committees

There were no references from the Advisory Committees.

61. Annual Review of Parking Charges for 2014/15

The Portfolio Holder for Economic & Community Development advised that the options as reported to Cabinet, along with a separate set of proposals for Westerham, which had been submitted for consideration by the Westerham Town Partnership, were put out for informal public consultation from 25 November to 15 December. The consultation had resulted in the involvement of various groups which had been most welcome and had resulted in innovative results. Contrary to recent press coverage the data had been positive, for example there had in fact been an increase in the use of the car parks within Sevenoaks town centre this financial year. He had a few minor amendments to propose to the report's recommendations and would like to see option 3 adopted.

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A Member addressed the meeting stating that a parking space should be treated as a saleable product that should be discounted and given better signage in order to increase use and feared that raising charges would be counter productive. It was clarified that the shortfall had arisen from the previous year and that whilst income was good this year it had not been enough to make up the shortfall. There was no indication that the increase in charges had had a negative impact on usage. The Portfolio Holder for Economic & Community Development indicated that looking forward the use of messaging signage would give a clearer indication of demand but it was currently positive. The dynamics were shifting and the opening of the new Marks and Spencers store would affect the town centre. Once the new signage was up and running it would be possible to look at a holistic parking strategy with much more informed data.

The Chairman pointed out that Option 3 did not affect those using the town for quick trips under 30 minutes.

A Member addressed the Cabinet and pointed out that there was a free car park in Edenbridge, yet people still parked on the double yellow lines rather than walk.

The Chief Officer Environmental & Operation Services pointed out that there were some concerns with the Westerham own Partnerships proposals which is why it was suggested that this be carried out on a trial period.

It was suggested that every opportunity possible should be taken to make it clear that a certain car park in Swanley was not a Council owned car park.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty, and that there was a low risk that any of the options presented would have an adverse impact on people with 'protected characteristics' and any issues would be monitored though complaints received..

The Portfolio Holder for Economic & Community Development proposed and it was duly seconded that:

- a) the proposed changes to car park charges for 2013/15 contained in Option 3 in Appendix B be approved but with the following changes:
 - 1) items 5.1 to 5.5 relating to Westerham be replaced by the Westerham Town Partnership proposals shown as Option 5
 - 2) that a 10p charge be applied to the new 15 minute periods included the Westerham proposals for the Quebec Avenue and Vicarage Hill car parks
 - 3) the proposals for Westerham be approved on the basis of one year's trial with review during 2014/15

all subject to public consultation as noted in the report;

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- b) the proposed changes to on street parking charges for 2014/15 contained in option 3 in Appendix C be approved but with the following changes:
- 1) items 10.0 to 10.2 relating to Westerham be replaced by the Westerham Town Partnership proposals shown as Option 4
 - 2) that a 10p charge be applied to the new 15 minute waiting periods included in the Westerham proposals, and
 - 3) that the proposals for Westerham be approved on the basis of one year's trial with review during 2014/15
- all subject to public consultation as noted in the report;
- c) that a change to the car park evening charge in Sevenoaks town centre should not be considered
- d) the introduction of parking charge on Saturdays in the Council office car park should not be considered
- e) charges on Sundays should not be considered
- f) the on street tariffs at Knockholt Station be aligned with the tariff structure (as approved) for Swanley
- g) it be noted that in view of recommendation (a) and (b) this recommendation is no longer available.

The motion was put to the vote and it was

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 - 3) that the proposals for Westerham be approved on the basis of one year's trial with review during 2014/15
- all subject to public consultation as noted in the report;
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62. Draft Budget 2014/15 - Verbal Update

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources reported that the [tabled update](#) followed on from the report to Cabinet on 5 December, and contained several changes including the Government Support Settlement which was finally published on 18 December 2013. The Government Support figures had been drastically reduced, even more than had previously been predicted and these changes resulted in a deficit of £3m over the 10-year budget period. Proposals for savings to remove the deficit had also been tabled.

The Chief Finance Officer ran through the main points on the tabled update.

A Member addressed the Cabinet, as Secretary of the Kent Association of Local Councils, explaining he had taken the lead and encouraged Town and Parish Council to raise their precepts and ready them for the loss of any ring-fenced money from the Revenue Support Grant. Those that had not heeded this advice would be hit by the loss of this expected income. Whilst he understood that as there was no evidence of a ring-fenced amount he felt that morally the money should be passed on. The perception was that there was Government intention that some money be passed on.

The Chairman advised that when it was clear the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) had been reduced and that there was no ring-fenced amount despite what had been stated by Brandon Lewis MP to NALC, he had asked the Chief Finance Officer to check the position

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of other authorities. Sevenoaks was one of only a few fully parished in Kent. If money was paid from the current RSG and it continued to be reduced at expected levels, it would get to the point where Parish and Town Councils were being paid out of the Council Tax. He had written a letter to Brandon Lewis MP asking where the money was as it was not ring-fenced. As the money was not ring-fenced it was not there and there was nothing to be passed on. He stated that he had been clear in all his dealing with Towns and Parishes that if the money was identified it would be passed on, but no money had been identified. The Chief Executive would be meeting Parish and Town Clerks the following week, and after that the Chairman would be holding a meeting to try and ensure that working relationships were not soured by the Government's failure to ring-fence any money. He would let everyone know the response he received from Brandon Lewis. No-one had made a decision not to pass the money on, there was no money to pass on, because there was no money identified for Town and Parish Councils within the RSG received.

The Chief Executive advised that the Council had been the first to announce last year, that the full amount received would be passed on, however this year there was no ring-fenced money and it was not possible to see where this money was. If any money were to be passed on it would leave an even greater shortfall in the Council's budget.

A Member stated that he thought the Minister definitely needed to clarify the position and work needed to be done to rebuild the relationships with Town and Parish Councils.

Looking at the proposed savings, a Member asked why these had not been brought forward before. The Chairman pointed out that some of these had been savings already being worked on (e.g. Building Control shared working arrangements) and with regards to planning it happened that a some staff had given notice and provided the Chief Officer with a chance to look at restructuring without redundancies. It was also pointed out that the amount recommended to be put in to the Financial Plan Reserve by Cabinet in December was being used to achieve the required amount.

In response to a question, the Chairman stated that when you looked at what the Government wanted to achieve, any growth was in housing and business, therefore they would do their best to drive this forward and be pushing local government towards a reward based system rather than a grant based system. It was the 40% that was guaranteed for two years, the NHB schemes would remain in place.

Cabinet Members were happy with the proposed savings to be put forward for consideration in the budget.

63. Calculation of Council Tax Base and other Tax Setting Issues

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources advised that as part of the budget cycle the Council was required to calculate the tax base of the district for tax setting purposes for the coming financial year. This represented the equivalent number of band D properties.

A collection rate of 99.3% had been included which was the same as used in 2013/14. In 2012/13, the rate was 99.5% and was reduced last year to allow for the expected difficulty in collection from people who were paying for the first time because of the change to Council Tax Support. In 2014/15, people of working age in receipt of Council

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Tax Support would have to pay a minimum of 18.5% of the council tax, rather than 8.5%, so it was considered prudent to leave the collection rate at 99.3%.

The report showed that the tax base for 2013/14 is 47,053 and the tax base for 2014/15 will be 47,629. As well as the addition of new properties, the increase was also due to the change to Council Tax Support where the difference between the 8.5% and 18.5% minimum payments was reflected in the tax base. The timetable leading up to setting the council tax for 2014/15 was also included in the report.

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 Council that

- a) the report of the Chief Finance Officer for the calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2014/15 be approved;
- b) pursuant to the report of the Chief Finance Officer and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended) the amount calculated by the Sevenoaks District Council as its council tax base for the whole area for the year 2014/15 shall be 47,629.02;
- c) pursuant to the report of the Chief Finance Officer and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended) the amount calculated by the Sevenoaks District Council as the council tax base for 2014/15 for the calculation of local precepts shall be:

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Tax Base</u>
Ash-cum-Ridley	2,379.72
Brasted	741.77
Chevening	1,433.20
Chiddingstone	577.53
Cowden	409.91
Crockenhill	625.29
Dunton Green	855.57
Edenbridge	3,383.75
Eynsford	899.56
Farningham	600.77
Fawkham	276.45
Halstead	743.16
Hartley	2,455.79
Hever	588.95

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Hextable	1,621.77
Horton Kirby & South Darent	1,253.76
Kemsing	1,791.17
Knockholt	610.99
Leigh	781.09
Otford	1,663.77
Penshurst	810.88
Riverhead	1,204.11
Seal	1,167.07
Sevenoaks Town	8,926.87
Sevenoaks Weald	606.62
Shoreham	976.02
Sundridge	901.54
Swanley	5,165.78
Westerham	1,932.18
West Kingsdown	2,243.98

- d) any expenses incurred by the Council in performing in part of its area a function performed elsewhere in its area by a parish or community council or the chairman of a parish meeting shall not be treated as special expenses for the purposes of section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS

This notice was published on 13 January 2014. The decision contained in minute 63 takes effect immediately. The decision contained in minute 61 takes effect on 18 January 2014.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.10 PM

CHAIRMAN