

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2014 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllrs. Hogarth, Ms. Lowe and Ramsay

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Bosley

Cllrs. Dickins, Firth, Mrs. Hunter, Scholey, Searles and Walshe were also present.

78. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 6 February 2014, be approved and signed as a correct record.

79. Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

80. Questions from Members (maximum 15 minutes)

There were none.

81. Ruling by the Chairman regarding Urgent Matters

In accordance with Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman advised the Committee he had agreed to accept an urgent matter - 'Flood Support Schemes'.

The matter was urgent because the Council was only notified of the Government grant for the Business Support Scheme the previous week and the instructions were to make funding available on an urgent basis. Therefore a decision on the report could not wait another month.

The urgent matter was taken as Agenda Item 11.

82. Matters referred from Council

There were no matters referred from Council.

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83. Matter referred from the Scrutiny Committee (Paragraph 5.20 of Part 4 (Executive) of the Constitution)

Scrutiny Committee – Car Parking Review Working Group

The Chairman advised that the Chairman of the Working Group had sent his apologies and that the Portfolio Holder would speak to the item on his behalf. The Portfolio Holder for Economic and Community Development thanked the Scrutiny Working Group for all their work and commented that it had been interesting and helpful and would be factoring it into the long term strategy and commended the report to Cabinet.

84. Recommendations from the Cabinet Advisory Committees

- a) Proposed Joint Working project between Sevenoaks District Council and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council on Building Control Services (*Finance & Resources Advisory Committee 21 January 2014 – Minute 40, Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee, 26 February 2014 – Minute 31*)

This was considered under Minute 84.

- b) Sevenoaks Town Centre Parking Review (*Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee, 26 February 2014 – Minute 32*)

This was considered under Minute 86.

- c) Allocation of Grants (*Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee, 26 February 2014 – Minute 33*)

This was considered under Minute 87.

85. Proposed Joint working project between Sevenoaks District Council and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council on Building Control Services

The Portfolio Holder for Economic and Community Development presented a report which proposed an operating model for joint working with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (T&MBC) for Building Control Services and that a joint working arrangement be entered into. Members considered the reference and recommendations received from the Finance & Resources Advisory Committee and the Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee. The Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services advised that until last September this Council's Building Control Manager had also managed the Building Control Service at T&MBC. Once this came to an end T&MBC had explored alternatives and concluded that they would like to explore shared working with this Council which would increase capacity and resilience, fulfilling obligations and service standards and bring efficiency savings for both councils. It would result in a staff reduction of 3.5 FTE which was subject to staff consultation but would not result in compulsory redundancies. It was not possible to put an exact figure on the savings but it was estimated that it would realise £100,000 (£50,000 for each authority). In response to a question he explained that the £10,000 was required for I.T. equipment to ensure that all Officers could access data from several sites and remotely. The Chief Officer Corporate Support confirmed that the PSN code of connection requirements would need to be met.

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The Chairman commended the project.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: 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 agreed to support the implementation of the project as a supplementary budget request (this figure represents a 50% share of implementation costs); and
- 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.

86. Annual Review of Parking Charges for 2014/15 - Results of Public Consultation

The Portfolio Holder for Economic and Community Development presented a report which reminded Members that on 9 January 2014, Cabinet had considered and approved proposals for consultation for increasing certain parking charges to contribute to the Council's overall budget target for 2014/15, and asked whether any of the proposals should be changed in light of the responses received. Members considered the reference and recommendations received from the Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee. The Portfolio Holder for Economic and Community Development advised that he was happy to continue as proposed.

The Chairman expressed disappointment at the responses received in relation to the proposed charge for the 15 minute parking period, as all of Westerham Town Partnership's proposals had been listened to but it was just not possible here. Retail recovery was embryonic and it was important to show retailers support.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That none of the proposed car park or on-street parking charges approved by Cabinet on 9 January 2014 be amended in light of consultation responses, and that the proposals be implemented on or as soon possible after 1 April 2014.

87. Sevenoaks Town Centre Parking Review

The Portfolio Holder for Economic and Community Development presented a report which detailed a proposal to provide additional parking capacity in Sevenoaks Town by 'decking' the existing Council owned Buckhurst 2 and/or the Suffolk Way car parks. The Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services advised that the report also detailed a review of current parking provision and the results and conclusions from a parking survey undertaken by an independent company in November 2013; provided details of estimated construction costs for various options for these two car parks and the existing planning policies and scope for both sites; provided a breakdown of estimated costs per option and the likely estimate of additional income generated and options for funding the project; and identified opportunities for increasing parking in the areas near the railway station by 'decking' the existing Council owned Bradbourne car park. The Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services confirmed the proposal was to provide much needed additional car parking capacity to assist with the economy of Sevenoaks. Members considered the reference and recommendations received from the Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee and noted the additional request for a working group to be set up. The Portfolio Holder for Economic and Community Development added that it had been thoroughly explored by the Advisory Committee and that he had allowed a member of the public to address the committee.

The Chairman reported that he, like other Members, had also been emailed by that member of public, along with the Knole Paddock Residents Association who had made some suggestions should the planning applications go ahead. This report represented the second part of the Council's possible solutions to parking issues, the first being the Variable Message Signs (VMS) that were being installed. Spaces needed to be delivered in a timely manner to help the growing economy. In response to a question he advised that more spaces should mean less vehicle movements as a large number of those were people looking for spaces. This report was about answering demand that already existed. Kent Highways would be consulted as part of the planning process. He further advised that options for long stay, such as allocations for season ticket holders would be explored as part of the process.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That

- a) 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; and
- b) the Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee be requested to set up a Working Group to look at car parking technology such as smart ticketing.
- c) it be recommended to full Council that:

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- 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.

88. Community Grant Scheme Draft Allocations 2014/15

The Portfolio Holder for Economic and Community Development presented a report which set out information about the Community Grant Scheme and summarised applications received by the Council from voluntary organisations for funding during 2014/15. The appraisal process included a lengthy and detailed consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic & Community Development and the Deputy Portfolio Holder for Economic & Community Development, both of whom were trained in appraisal techniques. The recommended grants were set out in Appendix C to the report. Members also considered the reference and recommendations received from the Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee.

The Chairman thanks the Portfolio Holder and Deputy for their work, the Portfolio Holder in turn thanked Officers.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the grants, as set out in Appendix C to the report be approved subject to the following conditions:

- a) that performance indicators as set out in the application forms are adhered to and monitored;
- b) that, appropriate Safeguarding policies and arrangements are in place, where necessary;
- c) that appropriate recognition of this Council's funding contribution is made in all their publicity; and

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- d) where services are provided over a wider area than the District boundaries, organisations will be required to hold grant aid from this Council in a restricted fund for the benefit of Sevenoaks District residents.

89. Flood Support Schemes

The Portfolio Holder for Economic & Community Development presented an urgent report which set out information about the Government's flood support schemes, which included: the Repair and Renew Grant; Business Rates Flooding Relief; Council Tax Discounts; and Business Support Scheme. The Farming Recovery Fund, to restore land in England to agricultural production, was provided by the Rural Development Programme for England and was managed by DEFRA.

The Government had made £172,500 available to the Council to fund one of those schemes, the Business Support Scheme, to help businesses in the District who have been affected by flooding. Further information was awaited regarding the other three schemes. The report asked Members to agree the Guidelines for the Council to administer the Business Support Scheme. The Portfolio Holder for Economic & Community Development suggested that it may be prudent to approve the grants in the context of a business continuity plan so it would be possible how to see the money would be used for a long term strategy.

The Chairman advised that the local Member of Parliament had made it clear to him that it was expected that this money would be distributed as soon as possible and such a request may delay this. However applicants could be signposted to the Kent County Council website that could help them prepare this information. Members agreed that this was an exception to the usual conditions imposed for allocating grants and that the process needed to be as simple as possible.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the Guidelines for the Council's Business Flood Support Scheme, as set out at Appendix B to the report, be broadly agreed subject to the comments above, and authority to approve the grants be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for responsible for Economic & Community Development.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS

This notice was published on 10 March 2014. The decisions contained in minutes 85, 86, 88, 89 take effect on 18 March 2014.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.39 PM

CHAIRMAN