

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2015 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllrs. Dickins, Firth, Hogarth, Lowe, Piper and Searles

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs.

Cllrs. Clark, Eyre, Mrs. Hunter, Parkin, Scholey and Miss. Stack were also present.

20. Minutes

The Chairman advised that since the last meeting it had become apparent that there had been an administrative error on the papers received by Special Cabinet in May on Appointments to Outside Bodies. Cllr. Reay's proposed appointment to the Sevenoaks District Arts Council had been omitted and had this been realised before the last meeting it could have been rectified at Minute 18. Members were therefore requested to approve Cllr. Reay's appointment as a matter of urgency so that he could attend meetings as soon as possible.

Resolved: That

- a) the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 16 July 2015 be approved and signed as a correct record; and
- b) Cllr. Reay's appointment to Sevenoaks District Arts Council be confirmed.

21. Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

22. Questions from Members (maximum 15 minutes)

In response to a question concerning Minute 17 of the agreed minutes, the Chairman advised that with regards to the land adjacent to Shacklands Cottages Badgers Mount, the Head of Economic Development & Property was currently working to resolve the situation.

23. Matters referred from Council, Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee or Cabinet Advisory Committees

- a) Response to issues identified in petition relating to New Ash Green Village centre (Council – 22 July 2015 (Minute 64(a)))

Councillor Clark addressed the Cabinet as a local Member. He stated that the report before Cabinet was a good and comprehensive response to the petition, however it

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would be useful to extend the idea of a single officer point of contact (as had been achieved with one of the landowners) to all the principle landowners. The principle of the single point of contact or named officer, would also be useful for other key parties, including traders and residents in the centre. The availability and dissemination of information was a key point as a lack of communication could be perceived as a lack of action. He suggested that the previously issued occasional newsletter could be revived along with articles in local publications, perhaps starting with a summary of the Cabinet's response to the petition.

He thanked the Head of Economic Development & Property and Community Planning & Projects Manager and other officers for their invaluable help given to the New Ash Green Town Team which was very much appreciated.

Members considered the report which summarised the issues raised in the petition presented to Council on 22 July 2015, the action taken by the Council to date, and the recommending the focus for the Council's future involvement be in matters relating to New Ash Green Village Centre, and Councillors Clark's address. Instead of a newsletter the Portfolio Holder for Economic & Community Development suggested that it would be more appropriate to use the Council's twitter feed (@SDC_newsdesk or @SDC_ecodev) which all residents would have access to and would give more timely information. The Chairman pointed out that the Council needed to be clear and not give the wrong impression about its involvement as any redevelopment was completely up to the landowners. It was further suggested that a page could be placed in a publication such as 'In Shape' which signposted residents to the twitter feed and landowner contacts. In debate of the idea of a single point of contact, the Portfolio Holder for Economic & Community Development undertook to look into the idea of a single point of contact but warned that it could be complex.

Resolved: That

- a) an appropriate communication such as a one off newsletter be used to communicate to local residents what the Council could and couldn't do and to advertise the twitter feed;
- b) the Council, in its ongoing discussions with the landowners, to continue to encourage them to respond quickly and appropriately to tenants' concerns, and that it be noted that it was not appropriate that the Council got directly involved in:
 - private disputes or issues that relate to business relationships between landowner or their representatives and tenants or leaseholders;
 - private disputes between landowners on matters such as service charges
- c) that the Council's focus for future involvement in the village be
 - support and bring forward the regeneration of New Ash Green Village Centre and ensure that the community was engaged in bringing forward proposals

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- supporting and facilitating the New Ash Green Town Team
- carrying out functions relating to its services including environmental health, building control, licensing and planning development.
- continuing to support Community Safety activities such as Environmental Visual Audits and the Community Safety Focus Group.

24. Sevenoaks District Infrastructure Plan Update

Members noted and considered the relevant minute and recommendations received from the Planning Advisory Committee who had considered the same report. The Chairman of the Planning Advisory Committee advised that there had been lively discussion and it had been stressed that it was a 'live' document, at the time of consideration officers had still been awaiting information from Kent County Council (KCC) that had now been added to this report before members.

The Planning Officer (Policy) presented the report, which advised that a Sevenoaks Infrastructure Delivery Plan had first been prepared in 2010 for the Core Strategy (adopted 2011). As stated it was a "live" document which illustrated the infrastructure that was required to support development across the District. Following the adoption of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule in February 2014, the Council was currently updating its draft Infrastructure Plan, which would be used as evidence for the new Local Plan and provide up to date information for elaborating the Council's Regulation 123 List (adopted November 2014) which set out the infrastructure that could be funded through CIL receipts. He added that the awaited response from KCC had been that there was no further infrastructure requirement in the district than that which had already been identified in the previous infrastructure plan mentioned above. He further advised that the revised plan would be considered at the Planning Advisory Committee on 13 October, and that whilst a 'live' document it was unclear how regularly it would be updated and could possibly be annually.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the report on the progress of the Infrastructure Plan as an important element of the evidence base for the new Local Plan and CIL Regulation 123 List, be noted.

25. Financial Reports to the end of July 2015

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report, confirming that Members who had attended the inquorate meeting of the Finance Advisory Committee had been in support of the recommendations. The Head of Finance reported that only the July figures had been ready for reporting but that she was able to inform Members that the August figures were now showing a year end unfavourable forecast of £162,000, rather than the £202,000 detailed within the report.

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 report be noted.

26. Financial Prospects and Budget strategy 2016/17 and Beyond

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report, confirming that Members who had attended the inquorate meeting of the Finance Advisory Committee had been in support of the recommendations. It was the first report of the Council's budget setting process for 2016/17 onwards and set out the financial pressures the Council was likely to face in the coming years. It suggested an appropriate strategy, utilising the 10 year budget framework first adopted in 2011/12, to ensure the Council remained financially stable over the long term.

Informed by the latest information from Government and discussions with the Portfolio Holder and Cabinet Members the report proposed that from 2016, the Council set a budget which assumed no funding from Government through the Revenue Support Grant. This was the first major step taken towards the Council's ambition to be financially self-sufficient as set out in its Corporate Plan.

To achieve this aim and to ensure a balanced budget position over the next 10 year period, whilst also increasing the Council's ability to be sustainable beyond that time, a savings requirement of £500,000 in 2016/17 was required, along with additional income or savings of £100,000 in each of the following nine years.

Within the report there was an assumption of no reliance on the New Homes Bonus from 2019/20, the Portfolio Holder for Finance requested that in order to make it even more realistic he would like any reliance removed going forward.

In response to a question concerning the pension deficit, the Chief Officer Finance advised that the next triennial valuation will be for 2017/18. The Chairman advised that other Councils were starting to look at different fund models. There was discussion on the impact of the Government's pledge on the living wage and how it impacted on the 1% pay increase limit for public sector workers. The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that not many officers were on the current minimum wage so there should not be a great impact, and advised that there was flexibility within the 1% increase. More detail was awaited from central government. The Chairman pointed out that it may have an impact with regards to sub-contractors.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That

- a) the ten-year financial planning approach and principles set out in the report, be endorsed;
- b) the Advisory Committees be requested to review Service Dashboards and advise Cabinet of possible growth and savings options;

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- c) officers be requested to continue to review the assumptions in the report and report back to Cabinet on 3 December 2015;
- d) the budget timetable set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted; and
- e) officers investigate whether it was possible to bring forward the reduction in reliance on the New Homes Bonus.

27. Annual Treasury Management Report

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report, confirming that Members who had attended the inquorate meeting of the Finance Advisory Committee had been in support of the recommendations. The report provided the customary review of investment activity during 2014/15 as required by the Council's Financial Procedure Rules. The report also outlined the strategy adopted during the year, showed the position of the investment portfolio at the beginning and the end of the year and gave details of how the fund performed in comparison with previous years and against various benchmarks.

The Chairman and Portfolio Holder for Finance had attended the inaugural meeting of the Municipal Bonds Agency.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the Annual Treasury Management Report for 2014/15 be approved.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS

This notice was published on 21 September 2015. The decisions take effect immediately.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.55 PM

CHAIRMAN