

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2022 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Dickins (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Dyball, Maskell, McArthur and Thornton

Cllrs. Harrison and Pender were also present.

49. Minutes

Resolved: That subject to the addition of "The Leader of the Council said that the Council would not purchase either Hikvision or Dahua cameras in the future. The Leader said the council has no Dahua cameras and would remove Hikvision cameras from its network in the event that advice from central government recommended this, or if central government started to remove their own Hikvision cameras," under page 25 paragraph 44, line 5, the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October be approved and signed as a correct record.

50. Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

51. Questions from Members (maximum 15 minutes)

The Chairman set out that the Member for Leigh and Chiddingstone Causeway had asked him to explain why during a cost-of-living crisis has Customer Solutions employed 4 new Staff Members. The Chairman advised that the Officers in question were replacement staff for others who had left the Council. He explained that the number of Officers in Customer Solutions had remained static despite the team handling a 20% increase in calls.

The Chairman also set out that the Member had asked him about the Council's working from home policy. He explained that it was a matter for the Chief Executive but outlined that Officers were expected to attend the Office for a certain amount of time each week.

52. Matters referred from Council, Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee, CIL Spending Board or Cabinet Advisory Committees

There were none.

53. Rural England Prosperity Fund

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Investment presented the report which outlined the Council's proposals for the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) addendum to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan. The Council had received a provisional allocation of £501,000, to support the rural economy. The Finance & Investment Advisory Committee supported the report.

The Economic Development Officer explained that this support would primarily be through grants, which would be distributed through the Executive Local Action Group. She advised that the Council would be working within the West Kent Partnership to use business retention funding to facilitate grant distribution, but that the £501,000 from the REPF would be exclusively used within the District.

She advised that following comments made at the Finance & Investment Advisory Committee, if the allocation was successful, Members could be involved in identifying the projects. Members were advised of a typographic error in paragraph 23 which should read 2024/25.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That

- a) the proposals, which will form the Rural England Prosperity Fund addendum, alongside the previously approved UK Shared Prosperity fund investment plan, be noted; and
- b) the Strategic Head of Property & Commercial following consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to take the necessary decisions and actions required to finalise the addendum and accept the allocation of funds and to implement and administer the scheme, in accordance with the requirements and priorities of the fund; and
- c) that District Councillors have an upfront role to promote the Rural England Prosperity Fund to projects that may be suitable for funding, be noted.

54. Financial Monitoring 2022- 23 To the End of September 2022

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The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Investment presented the report which outlined the Council's financial position to September 2022 and the forecast position as at 31 March 2023. An unfavourable variance of £572,000 was reported at the September meeting of the Committee. Since then, £140,000 had been identified within in-year savings, and investment returns were forecast to be above budget by £103,000. These items have helped to reduce the forecast overspend for the year to £153,000. The Finance & Investment Advisory Committee had considered the same report and expressed some concern regarding the level of Agency staff costs.

The Head of Finance went on to advise that Parking and Development Management incomes were expected to exceed budget, but were partly offset by forecast unfavourable variances from the loss of income of the property investment strategy, and the net cost of Direct Services.

The pay offer from April 2022 was not included in the report, as it had not yet been agreed at the date the report was written, but would be included in the future. Members were reminded that an approach was agreed in September to deal with the 2022/23 unfavourable variance resulting from the pay offer.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the report and Finance & Investment Advisory Committee's comments, be noted.

55. Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2023/24 and beyond

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Investment presented the report which was the first stage of the Council's budget setting process for 2023/24. The report had also been considered by the Finance & Investment Advisory Committee who had recommended that Performance Indicators were included in the budget reports provided to the Advisory Committees.

The Chief Officer for Finance & Trading further advised that no changes to future assumptions had been made, but they would be reviewed in later stages of the process.

The April 2022 pay award had now been approved, and would result in an annual budget gap of £735,000, when factoring in the £100,000 annual savings target. The Council still intended to remain financially self-sufficient, but would need to make significant savings in this budget process to do so.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That

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- a) The ten-year financial planning approach, financial strategy and principles set out in the report, be endorsed;
- b) The Advisory Committees, be requested to review the Service Dashboards and advise Cabinet of possible growth and savings options; and
- c) Officers, be requested to continue to review the assumptions in the report and consider options to address the budget gap and report back to Cabinet on 12 January 2023.

56. Treasury Management Mid year Update 22/23

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Investment presented the report which set out the treasury activity in the first half of the current financial year, recent developments in the financial markets and fulfilled the reporting requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

The Head of Finance advised that the Council's investment income had a favourable variance of £102,000 against the budget. He advised that the current valuation of the Multi Asset Income Fund was lower than its initial investment, but that it was performing well in generating income. Fluctuations in its valuation were to be expected, as it was a long-term investment.

Resolved: That the Treasury Management Mid-Year Update for 2022/23, be noted.

57. Fleet Replacement Programme 2023- 2028

The Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener introduced the report which outlined the recommendations for the fleet requirements for statutory waste collection and associated services over the following 5 years. The Portfolio Holder advised that the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee had also considered the same report and recommended the report be approved.

The Head of Direct Services advised Members that a new approach was sought to ensure that it would fall within the Council's 10 year balanced budget. This would ensure that SDC could replace its oldest and most vulnerable vehicles quickly, while also taking into account delivery lead times. For 2023-24 the Council would be leasing five 26tonne Refuse Collection Vehicles which would be in service from June 2023.

The lease would run for three years and would cost £324,000 per year for all five vehicles and would be paid for from the current Vehicle Reserve allocation for years 2023-24, 2024 - 25 and 2025-26. In 2026-27 the five leased vehicles would be purchased at a cost of £625,000, after this further vehicles would be identified for replacement and leased in the same way. Over these 5 years the balance of the vehicle reserve would be used to purchase smaller fleet vehicles, which would be electric whenever possible.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the 5 Year Fleet Replacement Programme 2023-28 as detailed in the report be approved.

58. Swanley Sunday Market Pilot Update

The Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener introduced the report which provided an update on the Swanley Sunday Market 6 month pilot and recommended that the pilot be extended by another 6 months. The Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee had considered the same report and recommended that the extension be approved.

The Head of Direct Services advised that Bray Associates commenced the proposed 6-month pilot on Sunday 3 April 2022 missing any Sunday dates agreed with Swanley Town Council. They had been responsible for the total management of the Sunday market, including publicity, marketing, operations and litter management. The Business Development Team and Direct Services had been monitoring the Sunday market pilot with planned meetings with the contractor, local businesses and the site owners, along with un-announced visits on a Sunday.

A public survey had been undertaken to engage with local people about the Sunday market pilot and to help evaluate the additional Sunday market and its operation under the pilot. The survey ran from 16 August to 16 September 2022.

The survey received 699 responses from members of the public with over 79% stating that they had visited the Sunday market. 85% of respondents were from a Swanley postal code. The results were generally split 50/50 on whether the market was a good idea, good value, good selection of goods to the opposite not needed or not good value and that it was just a copy of the Wednesday market.

It was recommended that a full procurement tender exercise was undertaken for the Swanley street markets to operate on Wednesday and Sundays as the Wednesday market contract would end on the 31 March 2023.

The Head of Direct Services confirmed that he had also kept in constant consultation with the Town Council and the survey had received a high response rate. As the results of the survey had been divided, it was recommended that the pilot be extended for another 6 months to allow time for the Market to progress.

Members discussed the report. Some Members had attended the Market and had received lots of positive feedback from attendees as well as support for the Market from local shops and services. Some Members raised concerns over the lack of diversity of the stalls and the rubbish that the Market produced.

The Head of Direct Services confirmed that he had attended a meeting of the Town Council in which the concerns over rubbish had been expressed and had

increased waste management services for the Market as a result. He had also encouraged Bray Associates to increase litter pickers on the days of the Market as well as visiting local shops to remind them of their duties to collect any rubbish from their premises. Cabinet had also approved a £25,000 Grant for the Town Council which could be used to provide extra relief for the rubbish.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the additional Swanley Sunday Market extension request be approved.

59. Parking Payment Machine Update

The Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener presented the report which advised Members of the essential upgrade to the District's parking payment machines. National phasing out of the 3G network would be taking place and this would provide the simultaneous opportunity to convert the machines to allow contactless card payment. The Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee considered the same report and were in support of option 2.

The Head of Direct Services advised that there were two options for consideration by the Cabinet. Option 1 - 4G Upgrade: Install all machines with 4G modem & antenna kits. A software update would be required for every tariff in the district, estimated at 14, with copies to other terminals on the same tariff at significantly reduced price. Engineer and labour costs would be fixed, and indicate an estimated 47 hours of work involved.

Option 2 - Contactless Payment + 4G Upgrade Combination - Install A1000 contactless pads, extended keyboards and all supporting parts to all terminals. Install all machines with 4G modem & antenna kits. A software update would be required for every tariff in the district, estimated at 14, with copies to other terminals on the same tariff at significantly reduced price. Engineer and labour costs would be fixed, and indicate an estimated 186 hours of work involved.

He advised that the favourable option was option 2 as there was a strong desire to pay by card in Council owned car parks. Members asked questions about so-called 'convenience charges', card payment transaction fees and affordability. Members made clear that they wished for a cash payment option to continue to be available to customers.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That option 2, for contactless payment + 4G Upgrade Combination, be approved. The details of option two were as follows: Contactless Payment and 4G Upgrade Combination; Install A1000 contactless

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pads, extended keyboards and all supporting parts to all terminals; install all machines with 4G modem & antenna kits; a software update would be required for every tariff in the district, estimated at 14, with copies to other terminals on the same tariff at significantly reduced price; engineer and labour costs would be fixed, and indicate an estimated 186 hours of work involved.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Resolved: That under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting when considering agenda item 12, on the grounds that likely disclosure of exempt information was involved as defined by Schedule 12A, paragraph 3 (Relating to the business or financial affairs of a particular person (or the authority holding that information)).

60. SDC Food Safety Plan

The Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener presented the exempt report which proposed the SDC Food Safety Plan 2022. She advised that the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee had considered the same report and recommended adoption of the plan.

The Environmental Health Manager advised that the food safety plan detailed how the Environmental Health Team intended to meet and discharge its statutory obligations in respect of Food Safety. The Team had worked hard to meet and exceed objectives. The Food and Safety Team Leader explained the item further.

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 the contents of the plan be adopted.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS

This notice was published on 11 November 2022. The decisions contained in Minute 54, 55, and 56 take effect immediately. The decisions contained in Minute 53, 57, 58, and 59 take effect on 21 November 2022. The decision contained in Minute 60 is a reference to Council.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.23 PM

