

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2024 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Hogarth (Chairman)

Cllr. Perry Cole (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Perry Cole, Dyball, Maskell, Horwood, Roy and Thornton

Cllrs. Shea, Skinner, Penny Cole, White and Williams were also present.

37. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Cabinet held on 15 October 2024, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

38. Declarations of interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

39. Questions from Members (maximum 15 minutes)

A Member asked a question regarding the changing of meeting dates and times, and requested assurance that changes did not take place without the ability to substitute or without reasons given. The Leader advised that reasons for date and time changes would be given for any moves, and these were exceptional circumstances for changes. It was clarified by the Monitoring Officer that substitutions could not take place, without a change in the constitution.

A Member asked a question regarding the Council's land disposal policy and when this would be considered by Council. Members were advised that the policy was being worked on, but the Chief Executive would confirm the timescales.

40. Matters referred from Council, Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee, CIL Spending Board or Cabinet Advisory Committees (if any)

Members considered the referral from Housing & Health Advisory Committee following deliberation of the Housing Strategy Action Plan – 2 years on. The Committee considered that a separate strategy and action plan specifically for social housing should be explored, and therefore recommended that Cabinet set up a cross-party working group be established to develop a Social Housing Strategy & Action Plan.

The Cabinet Member for Housing & Health advised that West Kent Housing Association were due to attend the next meeting of Housing and Health Advisory Committee. In his view, it would be more appropriate to hear from the Housing

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Association regarding the opportunities and challenges in delivering social housing before a decision was taken to establish a strategy.

Resolved: That the recommendation from Housing and Health Advisory Committee, be noted and consideration deferred until further information had been provided to the Advisory Committee from West Kent Housing Association.

41. Housing - Scrutiny Working Group update

The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Health advised that the report had been produced following the recommendations from the Homeless Scrutiny Working Group which Cabinet had asked the Housing and Health Advisory Committee and Officers to consider and report back. The report provided an update on the recommendations, the current challenges for the Housing Service and outlined how the Council could effectively deliver an enhanced service.

Members considered the report. It was raised that there were a number of challenges for the housing team, who do a good job working with customers in vulnerable situations and that some of the recommendations in the report from the Scrutiny Working Group had been considered and adopted.

The Head of Housing advised that as part of one of the actions, the customer journey audit was making progress and stage one had been completed and the next step in the process was to see where any improvements could be made. It was anticipated that in January a new customer journey would be produced. A workshop could be provided to Members to update on the changes that will be adopted. Best practice nationally had been considered and a consultant had also been engaged with to look at the services and improvements.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

42. Treasury Management Mid-Year Update

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Investment presented the report which detailed treasury activity in the first half of the current financial year, recent developments in the financial markets and fulfilled 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 report gave an economic update provided by Link, the treasury advisors in order to understand some of the influences that may impact on the investment markets. It also gave a review of the council's investment and borrowing portfolios and provided an update on the council's capital position as well as the funding of that programme together with an update on the public works board (PWLb) borrowing rates. He was pleased to advise that as of 30th September, it was £164,000 above budget as shown in paragraph 46 of the report. The multi-asset investments funds were also performing well.

Members considered the report.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

43. Financial Monitoring 2024/25: to the end of August 2024

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Investment presented the report which provided information on the revenue and capital position of the Council as at the 31 August 2024 together with the forecasted financial position to the 31 March 2025. He advised that the Finance & Investment Advisory Committee had thoroughly considered the same report and a full discussion had taken place.

The Head of Finance advised that whilst the current forecast position was an unfavourable variance of £288,000 from July's position, due to the reasons outlined in the report, but that position had remained fairly consistent, and Officers continued to seek ways to resolve this position.

Since publication of the report, the pay award for 2024/25 had been agreed and was £71,000 below the budget assumption.

Members considered the report.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

44. Waste & Recycling Strategy

The Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener presented the report which set out the new domestic waste and recycling strategy for the District. The draft strategy set out the proposed approach to managing waste and recycling collections in a more sustainable way, with the aim of reducing the environmental impact of waste in the District and how successes would be measured. The Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee considered the report thoroughly and supported the recommendations to Cabinet.

The Head of Direct Services advised that following Cabinet's recommendations the internal review was being undertaken which explored service opportunities, costs and increasing recycling rates for new waste collection options that included food and glass, as the current collection system did not meet national recycling targets or be in line with forthcoming legislation. The new strategy would include a glass and food waste collection and increase the District's recycling rates which was top of the waste hierarchy.

Members considered the report noting the consultation that would be taking place with the public.

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) it be recommended to Council that the Waste and Recycling Strategy, be adopted;
- b) a public consultation on the delivery of the Waste and Recycling strategy, be undertaken with the Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener, be delegated responsibility to agree the survey approach and questions, be approved; and
- c) a further report to Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee be presented in March 2025, setting out options to deliver the strategy, following public consultation, be noted.

45. Trade Waste Update

The Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener presented the report which set out the business review of the commercial trade waste service. The Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee had considered the same report and looked at the three options presented before recommending option 3.

The Head of Direct Services advised that the commercial waste collection service had been run providing local businesses with a fairly priced transparent and flexible service. A business review undertaken presented three options available to Members regarding the service. Members considered the options which included, continuing the service as is, ceasing the service or reviewing the service to reinvent it as a more compact commercial entity.

Members considered the report.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That option 3 - reinventing the service as a more compact commercial entity to deliver an income surplus, be approved.

46. Annual Review of Parking Fees & Charges

The Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener presented the report, which set out the annual review of parking management for 2025/26 for on and off-street parking. The fees recommended an inflation increase. The Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee considered the same report and recommended the approval of option one and had also resolved a further recommendation for a parking management strategy.

The Head of Direct Services advised that the service budgeted for an inflationary increase of 2.5%, and the requirement to offset the assumed 25% reduction in parking in 2021/22, improving by 5% per year. This totalled an assumed parking

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increase of £306,000. Of this, £206,000 was adjusted for exceeding budget performance, efficiencies, and increased usage and enforcement. It was proposed that the remaining £100,000 be offset through a 3% increase on all parking fees and charges.

Members considered the report and hoped that final prices would not each increase by exactly 3% to make it easier for customers. It was also noted how full the car parks had been. Members considered the second recommendation from Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee, noting that the review of fees and charges came yearly, with a thorough research and analysis before producing the options. A strategy was already being considered by Officers.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the parking management proposal option 1 (overall 3% percentage inflationary increase on all parking fees and charges) for 2025/26, be agreed for consultation.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS

This notice was published on 18 November 2024. The decisions contained in Minute 40, 41, 42, and 43 take effect immediately. The decisions contained in Minute 44(a and c), 45 and 46 take effect on 26 November 2024. The decisions contained in Minutes 44b is a reference to Council.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.39 PM

CHAIRMAN