

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 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. Leaman, Reay, Skinner, Streatfeild, White and Williams were also present.

47. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Cabinet held on 14 November 2024, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

48. Declarations of interest

There were none.

49. Questions from Members (maximum 15 minutes)

Members took the opportunity to ask questions of the Cabinet. A question was raised regarding the motion which was put forward in the Extraordinary Council Papers and whether a round table between the Cabinet and all parties in the council could take place for a joint statement. The Leader advised that he would look into the possibility of conversations taking place.

In response to other questions raised, the Leader advised that the timeline for the land disposal policy would be known shortly. In response to questions regarding Design Review Panels and neighbourhood plans the Portfolio Holder for Development & Conservation advised that the Council had its own urban designer and in house tools which had been developed through government grants to create 3D designs which would enhance consultations.

In response to a question regarding ward boundaries, the Chairman of the Governance Committee working group advised that the proposed wards were based on the technical criteria as set out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). The wards questioned were all under the number set by the LGBCE and so merging was required.

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

There were none.

CHANGE IN ORDER OF AGENDA ITEMS

The Chairman, with the Committee's agreement, moved back consideration of agenda item 5 to take place after agenda item 8.

51. Fawkham Neighbourhood Plan

The Portfolio Holder presented the report which set out the direction of travel for the Fawkham Neighbourhood Plan and the process the plan had gone through. Following the two other Neighbourhood Plans which had been 'made.' Once made the plan would become part of the strategy development plan for the area and the policies within the plans were important in the determination of planning applications within those defined neighbourhoods and were considered alongside the existing policies contained in the local plan or currently in the Core Strategy in the ADMP.

The Examiner's final report was received on 24 October 2024, which recommended that the Plan proceeded to referendum subject to 16 recommended modifications. The draft decision statement was set out at page 197 of the report and was for agreement.

Officers were thanked for the substantial amount of work that had been undertaken to produce the document.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That

- a) the independent examiner's report at appendix A, be noted; and
- b) the modified neighbourhood plan, according to the examiner's recommendations, as well as any minor proposed modifications agreed with Fawkham Parish Council, be approved;
- c) the Decision Statement at Appendix D and the decision to progress the Fawkham Neighbourhood Plan to referendum be approved;
- d) the referendum takes place on a date to be arranged.
- e) It be recommended to Council that, in the event the referendum result on the Fawkham Neighbourhood Plan is positive (more than 50% of the vote), the Council formally 'makes' (adopts) the final referendum version of the Fawkham

Neighbourhood Plan, so that it has effect as part of the statutory Development Plan for the Fawkham Neighbourhood Area.

52. Infrastructure Funding Statement - Priorities

The Portfolio Holder presented the report which detailed the income and expenditure information for CIL and Section 106 contributions, and the infrastructure priorities for the coming year within the new Infrastructure Funding Statement. These priorities were not binding but provided transparency to the public on the Council's spending intentions. They were determined through considering the Infrastructure Development Plan, the Local Plan, and what had been funded so far.

A revised NPPF had been published and the significant changes that were brought to the district included a 58% uplift in the housing target, the strengthening of national landscapes and considering of grey belt means that the development strategy would need to be looked at again. This was likely to have a significant impact on what infrastructure.

The spending priorities remained largely the same with the removal of the Bat & Ball junction improvements priority as this had been secured through the s106 for the Sevenoaks Quarry site. Members were advised that the Development & Conservation Advisory Committee had considered the same report and supported the recommended to Cabinet.

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

- (a) the criteria for prioritising infrastructure projects as set out below should remain:
 - I. The project should fall within the infrastructure types/projects identified in the IFS report.
 - II. The project has been identified in the IDP. (This ensures that the infrastructure prioritised supports the Local Plan).
 - III. The project supports and is clearly related to proposed site allocations or new development in the District. There is a strong link between development and the proposed project.
 - IV. There is a strong social, environmental or economic justification for the proposed project.
 - V. The project has not previously received CIL funding.

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- VI. The project has support from infrastructure providers.
 - VII. There is an existing need for the project, or it will be expected to be delivered within the next 5 years.
 - VIII. That it is identified as having a critical or high need, where the project has to be delivered to support new development.
 - IX. There are no significant issues with funding or landownership.
 - X. Where there is a clear plan as to how the project would be funded; and
- (b) That the specific projects and types of infrastructure recommended in paragraphs 24-37 of the report (flooding, highways and transport, utilities, health and social care, affordable housing, corporate priorities, education and Broadband) be identified in the IFS as having a priority for full or partial funding.

53. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Spending Board - Governance & Social Value Review

The Portfolio Holder presented the report which set out the annual review of CIL governance, and how social value could be incorporated to the procedure. The annual review not only provided an opportunity to improve the process but also to ensure they remained robust and able to stand up to scrutiny. In 2021, this Council was highlighted by the Planning Advisory service as having excellent CIL governance following an independent review. The changes built on those solid foundations. The report recommended that the application form was restructured to make it more user friendly following feedback from applicants, and that a measure of social value is included in assessing skill bids where appropriate and achievable to complement and provide a useful sense check to the current process.

Members noted that the last CIL governance review resulted in a provision for 15% of the CIL money allocated to the CIL Spending Board to be set aside to spend outside of the timescales of the Board. The 15% pot continued to hold a significant amount of potential funding, and the Development & Conservation Advisory Committee, agreed on a further recommendation for Cabinet that £200,000 was appropriate to ensure the CIL Spending Board pot was maintained, whilst allowing for emergency funding for a range of small projects or one significant project, between meetings of the Spending Board, if required.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That

- a) where appropriate and achievable, to incorporate a measure of social value in assessing the social, economic and environmental benefits of

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infrastructure projects put forward for CIL funding, as set out in paragraphs 12-15 of this report;

- b) to restructure the CIL funding application form to be more user friendly, as set out in Appendix A to the report; and
- c) the 15% of the CIL money allocated to the CIL Spending Board set aside to spend outside of the timescales of the CIL Spending Board be capped at £200,000, with any money over and above this amount returned to the CIL Spending Board for allocation.

54. Budget Update

The Portfolio Holder presented the report which set out the progress made in preparing the 2025/26 budget and updated Members on key financial information. The current position showed an annual budget gap of £437,000 if the SCIA's included in the report were agreed. Members, through the Advisory Committees and outside of meetings had been able to propose savings or income ideas for further consideration by the Cabinet. These suggestions were set out in Appendices E and F of the report.

The Chief Officer Finance and Trading further advised that the annual budget gap was due to a number of factors including the £100,000 annual savings built into the budget each year, the new leisure contract, low number of new homes built each year and the SCIA's presented to the Advisory Committees. There were a number of unknowns that would still impact the budget including the Local Government Finance Settlement which was expected shortly, the impact of the employer's National Insurance increase, the April 2025 pay award and the Council Tax base increase. Finally the impact of the budget decisions made by KCC.

Members discussed the SCIA's that were presented to the Advisory Committee and were in agreement. It was moved and seconded that the proposed SCIA's as set out in Appendix C should be included in the budget.

Resolved: That the growth and savings/additional income proposal (SCIA) listed in Appendix C and detailed in Appendix D, be included in the budget.

Members moved onto discussing recommendation (b) regarding the saving suggestions which were supported by the Advisory Committee as set out in Appendix E of the report and supplementary agenda. Discussion focused on InShape, giving consideration to the different suggestions around this by the Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee including reducing the number of issues to three a year. It was noted that InShape was an important communication tool and more advertising through InShape could be investigated. Other suggestions were discussed, and the Portfolio Holder's feedback regarding the positive engagement from all Members who made suggestions. In discussion it was noted that further information

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was needed before a decision could be taken. In regards to other suggestions, Members were advised on the reasoning behind not taking some ideas forward, such as knock on effects on other services. Members were advised that concern had been raised at Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee for losing the CCTV service. The Portfolio Holder advised that further discussions were taking place regarding modernising technology which could create a future saving. Members were also advised that a bio-digester was not within the Council's remit and so could not be taken forward.

Further discussion took place on value for money, and building sustainability, it was noted that these would require further information and investigation by the Portfolio Holder and Chief Officer.

Resolved: That the following suggestions in Appendix E:

- (i) Be considered within this budget cycle and ask for SCIA's to be presented to Cabinet in January:
 - Reduce the number of In Shape issues from 4 to 3, how much would that save. Breakdown of communication budget, what would 1 or 2 issues will be able to save.
 - Give people option to receive communication either electronically or via paper.
 - Produce 3 larger issues of In Shape (more content).
 - Work with parishes to get In Shape information into their publications
 - Increase In Shape advertising income
 - Review the print room service
 - look at sustainability of the building i.e. reduce heating and lighting use / costs
- (ii) Ask that the relevant Portfolio Holder has further discussions with the Chief Officer:
 - SDC should undertake systematic value for money studies of its activities. This would apply to all portfolio holders and all services. It should start as soon as possible and should be a continuing activity
 - Solar Panels on Council Property
 - increase the number of SDC buildings that have solar panels and taking out borrowing to fund their installation thereby reducing utility costs on an ongoing basis in a self-funding manner
- (iii) Do not take any further
 - Build Bio-digester at Dunbrik

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Moving onto appendix F, Members discussed the suggestions which had been put forward but not necessarily supported or that had been received after the relevant committee process. Members considered whether there were any suggestions detailed which should be taken forward. Consideration was given to advertising at Bevan Place, possible further increases to planning fees due to the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which had been published, the bus station toilets in Sevenoaks regarding charging for use or leasing to the Town Council, could also be considered. Discussion also took place on Solar Panels, which had been detailed in Appendix E but further suggestions around it were suggested and it was noted that the climate action plan could consider in due course.

Resolved: That the following suggestions in Appendix F:

- (i) Be considered within this budget cycle and ask for SCIA's to be presented to Cabinet in January:
 - none
- (ii) Ask that the relevant Portfolio Holder has further discussions with the Chief Officer:
 - Close or lease Bus Station toilet to Sevenoaks Town (5 year) so it doesn't clash with LEH. Possibly change it to a pay for use toilet.
 - To increase the number of solar panels across the district. Install rain water collection and also use solar panels in car parks for generation of electricity and also shade for cars.
 - Bevan Place and Council advertising.
- (iii) Do not take any further
 - All other suggestions listed in Appendix F.

Members moved onto discussion of recommendation (c), and it was suggested that consideration could be given to Tourism and the monetary contribution to website development, and the Leader advised that he had requested the Chief Executive to look for £200,000 for further savings within the management structure and to minimise the impact on front line service delivery.

Resolved: That Officers investigate the following areas and report back to Cabinet in January:

- £200,000 of savings from the management structure.
- Tourism.
- CCTV upgrade.
- Review of budget assumptions.

Members discussed the importance of savings being considered throughout the year, so that short, medium and long term implications could be considered. The Portfolio

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Holder for Finance & Trading expressed his thanks to Officers and Members for their work on the budget so far.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS

This notice was published on 16 December 2024. The decisions contained in Minute 51, 53, and 54 take effect immediately. The decisions contained in Minute 52 take effect on 24 December 2024.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.17 PM

CHAIRMAN