CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2020 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Dickins (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Dyball, Maskell, McArthur and Thornton

Cllrs. Dr Canet, Esler, Griffiths, Hudson, Mrs. Hunter, McGarvey, Osborne-Jackson and Purves were also present.

92. Urgent Matter

In accordance with Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman agreed to accept the urgent matter 'COVID-19 Financial Impact', which had been circulated but had missed the statutory despatch deadline.

The matter was urgent as the report was based on information provided for a recent Government return which was not available at the deadline for publishing the agenda. Due to the scale of the issue included in the report and the ever changing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was important to make Members aware of the situation at the earliest opportunity rather than wait for the next meeting.

The urgent matter was taken as Agenda Item 13.

93. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of Cabinet held on 4 June 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record.

94. Declarations of interest

There were none.

95. Questions from Members

There were none.

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

There were none.

97. Housing Options - Voluntary Housing Relocation Schemes

The Portfolio Holder of Housing and Health presented the report which sought Members' approval of pursuing the opportunity to work with organisations offering voluntary housing relocation schemes.

The Head of Housing and Health set out that the scheme could be added to the range of housing options for suitable customers at risk of homelessness, which would help to reduce the pressure on temporary accommodation and affordable housing locally.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Housing & Health Advisory Committee had considered the same report.

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

> Resolved: That the Council work with voluntary housing relocation schemes in other locations.

98. Draft Tenancy Statement 2020

The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Health presented the report which set out the changes to the draft document following a recent review in line with the District Council's Housing Strategy. Recommendations broadly followed those of the previous document with additions to cover pet-friendly policies, Community Land Trusts (CLT) and Quercus Housing.

The Housing Policy Manager advised that the Housing & Health Advisory Committee had considered the same report and recommended it with a proviso that the pet-friendly scheme be exercised with appropriate controls.

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

> Resolved: That the Draft Tenancy Statement 2020 be adopted as District Council policy.

99. Reopening High Streets Safely Fund

The Portfolio Holder for People & Places, presented the report which outlined the Reopening High Street Safely Fund (RHSSF) that would provide the Council with access to an allocated fund of up to £107,106 from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to put in place measures to establish a safe trading environment for businesses and customers.

The Chief Officer for People & Places set out that it was important for the Council to mitigate the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic upon the District economy.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the People & Places Advisory Committee had considered the same report.

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

Resolved: That the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund and proposed action plan, be noted.

100. Supporting the recovery of Leisure in the District

The Portfolio Holder, People & Places, presented the report which outlined the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the leisure industry and set out a request from Sencio Community Leisure for financial assistance to mitigate financial difficulties related to Government's temporary closure of all leisure facilities due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The Chief Officer for People & Places set out that lockdown has had a serious impact on leisure, particularly on leisure trusts, who haven't been able to realise any income to support their operations. She set out that leisure played an important part in the district's physical and mental wellbeing and welcomed the fact that government had just made the decision to allow the re-opening of leisure centres, swimming pools and gyms on 25 July.

She explained that the report outlined the financial position of Sencio Community Leisure Trust as a result of the current lockdown closures. She explained that the Trust had a recovery plan in place and had been proactive in trying to secure funding from other sources, notably when leisure providers are exempt from most Covid-19 support packages. Cabinet discussed the challenges facing the leisure sector and the desire to support it where reasonable and possible.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the People & Places Advisory Committee had considered the same report and held concerns.

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

Resolved: That

a) the request for an extension to the current payment holiday on Sencio's loan repayments to the Council by a further 3 months to 30 September 2021 be agreed;

b) the request from Sencio for a Council loan of up to £120,000 over the next 3 months towards essential utility costs not be agreed at this time;

c) the Leader of the Council in consultation with Cabinet and stakeholders be requested to write to the Members of Parliament for the District setting out the challenges facing the leisure sector;

d) the Chief Officer for People & Places be requested to write to Sencio requesting an updated plan to reopen leisure facilities within the District.

101. Supporting the recovery of Culture in the District

The Portfolio Holder, People & Places, presented the report which outlined the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the culture industry and sets out a request from Sevenoaks Town Council for financial assistance to mitigate current financial difficulties related to the closure of The Stag due to coronavirus outbreak.

The Chief Officer for People & Places explained the request and set out the challenges facing the culture industry at this time and the contribution of culture to the local economy and its recovery.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the People & Places Advisory Committee had considered the same report.

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

Resolved: That

a) a Council loan to Sevenoaks Town Council of up to £220,000 over the next 8 months towards essential recovery, maintenance and utility costs in respect of the Stag Theatre, be agreed; and

b) the loan would be interest free with the stipulation that it would be paid back to the Council in financial year 2021/22. If the loan is not paid within the repayment period, any outstanding balance will accrue and be charged a rate of 6% interest with effect from April 2022.

102. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Spending Board - Review of Governance

The Portfolio Holder for Development & Conservation presented the report which set out the annual review of governance arrangements of allocating Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to local and strategic infrastructure projects across Sevenoaks District. The Planning Policy Team Manager Leader set out some suggested changes following feedback received from Officers. The Chairman of the CIL Spending Board endorsed the report and its recommendations.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Development & Conservation Advisory Committee had considered the same report.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That

a) the amendments to Appendix X1 of the Constitution, as set out in Appendices G and H of the report be agreed; and

b) the report be noted.

103. Provisional Outturn 2019/20

The Portfolio Holder, Finance & Investment, presented the report that detailed the Provisional Financial Outturn figures for 2019/20, and showed that a favourable variance of £52,000 had been achieved which represented 0.3% of the net service expenditure budget. The Head of Finance indicated that the outturn had taken account of Covid-19 including increased expenditure, loss of income and additional grant funding.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Finance & Investment Advisory Committee had considered the same report.

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

Resolved: That the provisional outturn report for 2019/20 be noted.

104. Earning Income from Council Owned Assets

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Investment presented the report but updated the Cabinet on its contents. He introduced the Strategic Head of Property & Commercial who had worked on this matter and advised that as part of the due diligence process, officers had found that the land adjacent to 9 Pound Lane should not be within the Council's ownership. Although it was registered in the Council's name, it had been established that the land should have been transferred to Sevenoaks Town Council following the reorganisation of local government between 1972-1974. The Council was now seeking to transfer the land to Sevenoaks Town Council.

Officers had also considered other options for the disposal of the land to the rear of Sealcroft Cottages, and had proposed that an updated report be presented at a later meeting of Cabinet once further due diligence had been completed in order to consider if further benefits could be obtained from the land's disposal.

He advised that the Finance & Investment Advisory Committee had considered the same report and had endorsed the updated recommendations.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That

a) a further report be presented to Cabinet to approve the terms of the disposal of Land to the Rear of Sealcroft Cottages, following additional due diligence being undertaken to establish if further benefits can be derived from the sale of this land; and

b) the transfer of the parcel of land at 9 Pound Lane, Sevenoaks to Sevenoaks Town Council be noted.

105. COVID-19 Financial Impact

The Portfolio Holder Finance & Investment presented the report which detailed the financial impact of Covid-19 and the intended financial recovery plan. The report was based on the latest financial return that had been provided to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The Chief Officer for Finance and Trading spoke on this report and advised that the position would continue to change as ongoing financial impacts became clearer.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the Finance & Investment Advisory Committee had considered the same report.

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

Resolved: That

a) the financial impact of Covid-19 on the Council be noted; and

b) the Council address the impact of the Covid-19 response and recovery through the thorough 10-year budget setting process as set out in the report.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS

This notice was published on 13 July 2020. The decisions contained in Minutes 97, 98, 99, 102 and 103 take effect immediately. The decisions contained in Minutes 100, 101 and 104 take effect on 21 July 2020.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.44 PM

CHAIRMAN