

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21 July 2011 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. P Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Mrs P Bosley, Cllr. Mrs E Bracken, Cllr Mrs J Davison,
Cllr. Mrs A Hunter and Cllr. B Ramsey

Apologies for absence: Cllr. Mrs C Clark

Cllr. I Bosley, Cllr. R Brookbank, Cllr Mrs A Cook, Cllr. A Eyre and
Cllr. Mrs D Morris were also present

13. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON 23 JUNE 2011

Resolved: That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 23 June 2011 be approved and signed as a correct record.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

15. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS (MAXIMUM 15 MINUTES)

There were no questions from Members.

16. MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE AND/OR SELECT COMMITTEES

(a) Property Review – Disposal of Public Toilets (Ide Hill, Kemsing, Leigh, Swanley) – (Performance and Governance Committee – 28 June 2011)

This was considered under minute item 20 below.

(b) Argyle Road Offices – Accommodation for Moat Housing - (Performance and Governance Committee – 28 June 2011)

This was considered under minute item 22 below.

17. PROGRESS WITH IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES IN DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

The Head of Development Services introduced a report which outlined progress with regards to the Cabinet Review of Development Services (2009) (DSR) and the Sevenoaks District Council-Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Planning Partnership which commenced in November 2008.

It was noted that at the time the DSR was initiated Development Services

performance against national indicators was in the lowest quartile, but as a result of the DSR performance had met or exceeded its target on all indicators. The most marked improvement had been against NI157(A), time taken to deal with Major Planning Applications, where over 86% were now determined within the target time. Good progress had also been made on the Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy had been adopted on 22nd February 2011, draft documents for Allocations for Land for Development had already been out to public consultation and Development Management policies were currently undergoing public consultation. It was noted that this had been achieved whilst there had been significant year-on-year reductions in net spending on Development Services which was expected to continue and that the service was performing well in terms of value for money. In view of this progress it was felt that the DSR has achieved its objectives, and that any ongoing improvements should be carried out as part of normal Development Services activity. The Cabinet was also asked to continue with the successful Planning Partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

The Cabinet congratulated the Head of Development Services and his staff for the improvements in performance and reduction in costs and noted that the transformational change associated with the DSR had been delivered. Members noted that any areas for continued change would be addressed as part of ongoing Development Services activity and the process of continuous improvement. If more significant changes were required this would be undertaken by following the business process review process.

Resolved:

(a) That subsequent to the changes already made as a result of the Cabinet Review of Development Services (2009) no further changes are considered necessary but that ongoing improvements should be carried out as part of the normal operation of Development Services; and

(b) That the Sevenoaks District Council-Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Planning Partnership be continued until further notice

18. BIG COMMUNITY FUND

The Head of Community Development introduced a proposal to establish a new grant scheme funded by the New Homes Bonus Scheme which would enable Members to take forward projects in their local communities. The fund, to be called the Big Community Fund grant scheme, would enable Members to bid for funding in partnership with a local delivery organisation such as a town or parish council, voluntary or community organisation to improve or strengthen the local community or local area. The total amount of grant available each month under the scheme would be £10,000 with a maximum of £3,000 per application, totalling £120,000 in a full financial year. Any amount unallocated from one month would roll-into the next month's allocations.

It was proposed that awards would be made by the Portfolio Holder for Community Wellbeing with advice and recommendations from a panel of

specially trained Members. This panel of 5 members drawn from a wider pool would meet each month to consider applications against the published criteria for the scheme and to make recommendations. Where applications related to the Portfolio Holder's Ward, or where she had an interest, or in her absence, then the Leader of the Council would take the decision. Where the Portfolio Holder's or Leader's view was contrary to the Panel's recommendation the application would be referred to the Cabinet for decision. The amount allocated to each ward would be considered as part of the grant appraisal process and it was proposed that the awards would be reported to the Performance and Governance Committee to ensure transparent scrutiny..

The Cabinet welcomed the new scheme which it felt would have a very positive impact at local level, noted the criteria for applications, the assessment template and the draft timetable for implementation. The Leader of the Council had written to Members to ascertain interest in serving on the advisory panel and 14 Members had volunteered to undertake formal training to enable them to sit on the panel.

Resolved:

- (a) That £120,000 be allocated to the new grant scheme, entitled the Big Community Fund, from the additional New Homes Bonus Scheme funding received;
- (b) That approval of the award of grants under the Scheme be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Community Wellbeing provided such approval is in line with the recommendation of the Project Appraisal Group. If the Portfolio Holder's view is contrary to the Project Appraisal Group's recommendation, the application will be referred to Cabinet for decision;
- (c) That where the Portfolio Holder is unable to act due to unavailability or an interest or Ward connection the delegation in (b) above shall be exercised by the Leader of the Council;
- (d) That the 14 Members listed in the Appendix to these minutes be appointed to the panel to advise the Portfolio Holder for Community Wellbeing in determining grants under the scheme;
- (e) That the Big Community Fund guidelines set out in Appendix A to the report be approved; and
- (f) That the Appraisal Template set out at Appendix B to the report be agreed.

19. 2011/12 PERFORMANCE INDICATOR TARGETS

The Policy and Performance Manager reminded Members that the performance indicators were reviewed on annual basis to ensure that the focus of services aligned with the council's priorities, and that meaningful information was collected and to ensure progress against key Council and service objectives. The selection of performance indicators and target setting

were key aspects of the Strategic Service Planning process and Service Plans set out the key vision and service priorities whilst also documenting the resources available to deliver those priorities, risks and proposed savings.

The Cabinet was asked to agree 93 Performance Indicators and targets for 2011/12 across 29 service areas. The impact that delivering savings of £2.5m in 2011/12 would have on performance was highlighted and it was noted that, whilst it remained the intention to deliver high quality services and to make the best use of resources by innovative ways of working, some targets had been set at lower levels to reflect this.

The Cabinet was asked to amend the target in LPI CS001, which related to the percentage of telephone calls answered within 20 seconds by the Contact Centre, from 80% to 70% to more realistically reflect performance. Experience had shown that customers preferred to have calls resolved at the first point of contact even if this took longer rather than having slightly shorter response times. This had been endorsed at the last meeting of the Performance and Governance Committee.

The Portfolio Holder for the Cleaner and Greener Environment suggested that the target for LPI Waste 001, percentage of household waste sent for recycling, should be reduced from 26% to 23% as she felt that the higher target was not realistically achievable without an increase in funding. The change would also need to be reflected in LPI Waste 006, percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting, by reducing the target from 35% to 32%.

The Leader of the Council felt that it was important that Performance Indicators reflected the Council's ability to deliver within financial constraints and that the focus should be on maintaining the performance of public facing services. Whilst noting that the number of indicators had been reduced by 25-30% over the last few years he felt that there might be scope for further reductions in the number of LPI's and the information collected to support these.

Resolved: That the Performance Indicator targets for 2011/12 appended to the report, with the amendments to LPI's CS001, Waste 001 and Waste 006 as agreed by the Cabinet, be approved.

20. PROPERTY REVIEW – DISPOSAL OF PUBLIC TOILETS (IDE HILL, KEMSING, LEIGH, SWANLEY)

The Cabinet considered a report which explained that a number of public toilets had been closed as part of the 2011/12 budget process and the ongoing Property Review. In looking at the future of these toilets a number of factors had been considered including the desirability of not retaining vacant property which had no identified operational use but would still incur business rates and could be subject to vandalism. In each case the possibility of transferring the toilets to the relevant town/parish council had been explored but where this was not possible the disposal of the property on the most

economically advantageous terms had been investigated.

The Cabinet was asked to approve the disposal of four former public toilets. It was proposed that the toilets at Ide Hill be disposed of by transferring the lease to the toilets and lay-by to the Parish Council at nil cost and the toilets in the Wheatsheaf Car Park, Kemsing by seeking the permission of the freeholders of the adjoining Wheatsheaf Public House to grant a sub-lease of the toilets to the Parish Council at nil cost.

The report proposed that the toilets at Leigh School should be sold to Time Talk at a figure to be agreed with the District Valuer for conversion to offices. This would allow Time Talk to relocate from the Cobden Road Centre, where they were the last remaining tenant, which would allow the future of the Centre to be considered by Members. The Cabinet was also asked to agree to the sale of the public toilets at Station Road, Swanley to the existing tenant of the taxi office currently operating from part of the site at a figure to be agreed with the District Valuer. In the case of the commercial disposals if terms could not be agreed with the interested parties the properties would be sold on the open market by auction.

The Cabinet had regard to the comments and recommendations made by the Performance and Governance Committee at its meeting on 28 June 2011. In particular the Cabinet considered the recommendation that the Leigh Public toilets should be transferred to Leigh Primary School at the District Valuers figure as it considered that the social benefit of this should be a determining factor. Cllr. Mrs Cook addressed the Cabinet to support the sale of the toilet to the Primary School and explained that the school needed to have the land and had the funds available to purchase it. She was also concerned that any alternative prospective owner would need to be suitable to operate in proximity to young children. The Cabinet noted the arguments for transferring the property to the school and felt that whatever decision was made should include resolution of the ongoing land dispute with KCC, which might be possible as it was understood that KCC would fund the purchase by the school. In view of this the Cabinet felt that the disposal of the Leigh Public toilets should be re-evaluated before making a decision.

The Performance and Governance Committee had also recommended the Public Toilets at Station Road, Swanley should be offered to the Town Council rather than to the existing tenant. At the time of writing the report it had been understood that Swanley Town Council did not wish to take over responsibility for the public toilets but it was felt that negotiations may have been with the outgoing Town Council. Cllr. Brookbank informed the Cabinet that he believed that Swanley Town Council was interested in taking responsibility for the toilets and had understood that this was being pursued with the District Council. He asked for a decision to be deferred until the position could be ascertained and the Cabinet agreed to the deferral.

Resolved:

(a) That the public toilets at Ide Hill and Kemsing be disposed of in accordance with the recommendations contained in the report and subject to any other conditions that the Council's legal advisors

consider necessary to protect the Council's interests.

(b) That the disposal of the Leigh and Swanley public toilets be re-evaluated within the next 3 months in light of the Cabinet's discussion and the views expressed by the Performance and Governance Committee and recommendations brought back to the Cabinet within that timescale.

21. CONSIDERATION OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

Resolved: That, under section 100 (A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining items of business on the ground that likely disclosure of exempt information is involved in each case as defined by paragraph 3 of Schedule 12 (A) to the Local Government Act 1972.

22. ARGYLE ROAD OFFICES - ACCOMMODATION FOR MOAT HOUSING

The Cabinet considered an exempt report relating to accommodation for Moat Housing at the Argyle Road offices and welcomed the recommendations contained in the report.

Resolved: That capital reserves be used to provide office accommodation for Moat Housing on the terms and conditions detailed in the report and on such other conditions as the Council's legal advisors consider necessary to protect the Council's interests

23. LONDON 2012 OLYMPIC GAMES

The Cabinet considered an exempt report relating to the London 2012 Olympic Games torch relay.

Resolved:

(a) That the Cabinet supports the District hosting the 2012 Olympics Torch relay on Friday 20 July 2012;

(b) That Officers sign the formal contract with The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) to assist LOCOG with the staging of the event;

(c) That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive or, in his absence, the Community & Planning Services Director, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder, to sign the contract; and

(d) That Council service requirements are carried out in relation to this event, subject to the pre-agreed contract requirements.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.05 pm

Chairman