

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2014 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Johnston (Chairman); Councillors Nicholson, Everitt, D Green, E Green and Harrison

In Attendance: Councillors Bayford, Binks, Bruce, Fenner, King, Kirby, Poole, D Saunders, M Saunders and S Tomlinson

210. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received at the meeting.

211. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

212. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS SCHEDULED MEETING

Councillor Johnston proposed, Councillor Nicholson seconded and Members agreed the minutes of the previous scheduled meeting held on 11 September 2014.

213. MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

Councillor Johnston proposed, Councillor Nicholson seconded and Members agreed the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 16 October 2014.

214. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

Members considered a summary of the progress made between April and September this year against the eleven priorities agreed within the 2012 – 2016 Corporate Plan. In the first half of this financial year 23 projects had been progressed to work towards the priorities, and 38 performance indicators have tracked performance.

Of the 23 projects being progressed 18 are on track and five are showing some slippage. The report gives accounts of what we are doing to mitigate any risks.

Cabinet noted that of the 38 performance indicators 28 were on target, seven were performing under target with management action being taken, and three were just below target.

Despite on-going resource challenges the Council was continuing to make progress in key areas of service delivery. The main positive features of performance in this half-year were:

- On-going progress towards delivery of the Dreamland Heritage Amusement Park;
- Excellent progress in the way we are using our selective licensing powers to counter poor housing conditions in some private rented homes;
- On-going improvement of play facilities in the area, including getting works on site for Thanet's new skate parks;
- Good progress being made on 13 initiatives within this years' Community Safety Plan;

- Continuing improvement of the Yacht Valley facilities at the Royal Ramsgate Harbour.

The following Members spoke under Council Procedure Rule 24.1:

Councillor Bayford;
Councillor Bruce;
Councillor D. Saunders;
Councillor King.

Councillor E. Green proposed, Councillor Nicholson seconded and Members agreed that Cabinet notes the council's performance and consider the remedial actions listed (as set out in option 3.1 to the report).

215. BUDGET MONITORING - 2014/15

Cabinet received an update report against the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and capital programmes for 2014/15 based on monitoring undertaken for the period to the end of September.

The General Fund:

The six months monitoring data provided indication of the potential outturn position, although there remains pressure to deliver a breakeven position for the current budget. Managers were carefully monitoring the situation over the coming months and corrective action will be taken where required to bring it back to a balanced budget position. Efforts were being made to find further efficiencies over the remainder of the year in order to get the balance. Controls over non-essential spending and the restriction on recruitment to where it is absolutely essential will continue.

Housing Revenue Account:

The Housing Revenue Account had an overspend against budget of £172k and managers were working hard to find efficiencies.

Capital:

A surplus on the Minimum Revenue Provision and Cabinet was reported and Cabinet was asked to agree the movement of the surplus on the Minimum Revenue Provision budget of £369k to the Capital Project Reserve to give stability to the current capital programme.

Members were asked to consider a number of virements that were required within the General Fund and HRA Capital Programmes; as detailed in Annex 3 and Annex 4 to the Cabinet report.

Councillor Binks spoke under Council Procedure Rule 24.1.

Councillor Everitt proposed, Councillor Nicholson seconded and Members agreed the following:

1. That Cabinet note the council's performance and consider the remedial actions listed (as set out in option 3.1 to the report);
2. To approve the movement of the surplus on the Minimum Revenue Provision budget of £369k to the Capital Project Reserve;
3. To note the General Fund capital outturn and agreed the budget virements detailed as per **Annex 3** of the Cabinet report for the General Fund capital programme;

4. To note the HRA capital outturn and agreed the budget virements as detailed as per **Annex 4** of the Cabinet report.

216. COUNCIL TAX - EMPTY HOMES PREMIUM

Cabinet agreed that Council ought to send the message that Council did not accept a situation where the district had long term empty properties which could be put to good use.

Speaking under Council Procedure Rule 24.1, Councillor Binks suggested and Members agreed that the text in the Cabinet report should have the wording “substantially” added to paragraph 1.0; first sentence to read as follows;

‘The Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) (Amendment) (No.2) (England) Regulations 2012 give billing authorities the discretion to levy an empty homes premium of up to 50% on council tax payable in respect of dwellings that have been left empty and substantially unfurnished for two years or more.’

Councillor D. Saunders and Councillor King also spoke under Council Procedure Rule 24.1.

Councillor Everitt proposed, Councillor Nicholson seconded and Members agreed the following:

To approve going out to consultation for a month on introducing a “long term empty” premium for Council Tax. A report will be produced at the end of the period setting out the results and recommended next steps.

217. BUDGET STRATEGY 2015-2016

The budget proposal was developed within the context of the local government finance environment and the need for Cabinet to ensure that Council’s resources were managed efficiently and effectively. The Council was continuing to face significant cuts in Government funding over the next few years and with substantial savings already having been taken in recent years, it was becoming increasingly difficult to identify further savings without impacting on frontline services.

The budget proposals presented the revised outline funding position, increased Fees and Charges and a number of savings proposals which enabled Cabinet to recommend a balanced budget for 2015/16 to Council with the minimum impact on priority services.

Councillor Bayford spoke under Council Procedure Rule 24.1.

Councillor Everitt proposed, Councillor Nicholson seconded and Members agreed the following:

1. To approve the approach being used to develop the budget estimates for the General Fund;
2. To delegate authority be approved for the Cabinet Member for Financial Services and Estates and the Director of Corporate Resources to set the Council Tax base;
3. To recommend to Council the draft fees and charges for 2015-16;
4. To note the financial risk assessment for the General Fund Revenue Account that will be used to inform the setting of reserves for 2015-16, and the associated impact on the levels and types of reserves held;

5. To approve the General Fund capital budget proposals for 2015-16 to 2018-19;
6. To approve the HRA budget estimates for 2015-16 to 2018-19;
7. To approve the Housing Revenue Account Capital Budgets for 2015-16 to 2018-19 as detailed in Annex 2 to the Cabinet report.

218. CCTV UPGRADE REPORT

The Council's investment in its CCTV system had lasted well and provided excellent value for money. However, despite the continued maintenance work carried out since its installation in 1997, the system now needs upgrading.

Councillor Fenner spoke under Council Procedure Rule 24.1.

Councillor Harrison proposed, Councillor Nicholson seconded and Members agreed the following:

That the control room be retained in the medium term at its current location but with financial provision made to co-locate in the Cecil Street offices and a tender exercise undertaken for the replacement of the control system, cameras, and mobile CCTV equipment in accordance with Option A in Annex 1 of the Cabinet report.

219. AGREEING NEW TENANCY CONDITIONS

The Localism Act introduced the new tenancy standard which identified a series of changes to the types of tenancy agreements that can be granted by local housing authorities.

East Kent Housing on behalf Thanet District Council has been reviewing the current tenancy agreement in light of these changes. Extensive consultation has already been undertaken by East Kent Housing to produce the draft tenancy agreement in Annex 1 to the Cabinet report. In order to introduce a new tenancy agreement for all tenants a statutory process of consultation must now be followed and cabinet are being requested to allow this process to move forward.

Councillor Nicholson proposed, Councillor E. Green seconded and Members agreed the following:

To approve the consultation required to introduce these changes by serving the notice in accordance with the statutory requirements.

220. ADOPTION OF ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Members acknowledged the need for a Corporate Asset Strategy that outlined a commitment to proactive corporate property and land asset management. The current asset strategy expired in 2011 and Cabinet was being asked to approve a new asset strategy that documented the key areas of focus. The proposed new strategy also introduced an improved disposal process.

Cabinet was advised that the proposed Asset Management Strategy had been considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel and recommend to Cabinet for approval.

Councillor Fenner spoke under Council Procedure Rule 24.1.

Councillor Everitt proposed, Councillor Nicholson seconded and Members agreed the following:

To approve the Corporate Property Asset Management Strategy 2014 – 2019.

221. PIER YARD, RAMSGATE

It was reported at Cabinet that a review of regeneration schemes for Ramsgate had identified Pier Yard as an area with potential to be designated as a town square and thus provided a focal point for the town, encouraging activities and events that would increase footfall and by doing this supported the economic development strategy.

Pier Yard's current use was predominantly for vehicles, as a throughput for access and as a car park. Traffic right of ways would not be stopped as part of any plans to pedestrianize. However car parking would need to be accommodated elsewhere in Ramsgate.

In recognition that Pier Yard had a number of existing uses and any development could impact a number of stakeholders including the harbour, maritime museum, harbour slipways, the Town Council, and the general public, it was proposed that a public consultation would be undertaken by Thanet District Council to seek views on the proposals to turn the area into a Town Square.

Councillor D. Green proposed, Councillor Nicholson seconded and Members agreed the following:

To give approval to Option 3.1 as detailed in the Cabinet report with the outcome of the public consultation being brought back to Cabinet by the latest Spring of 2015.

222. BEACH MANAGEMENT PLAN

The need for an audit of the facilities at Thanet beaches and bays was identified by the executive early on as it was important to know exactly what was required to be done to make the most of these facilities. The cost of beach management was around £1million per annum to local taxpayers through the Council.

Cabinet's view was that every penny spent in managing the beaches and bays as an investment in not only the district's tourism product but in the wellbeing of all local residents. There were a large number of stakeholders involved in developing this plan. The exercise was led by consultants.

The Council now had a huge task in developing project plans and engaging with stakeholders to take some of the larger aspirations of the plan forward. Through the reserves allocated to delivering the Destination Management Plan and Interreg funding; Consultants have been commissioned to develop a feasibility plan and proposal for a beach club at Ramsgate main sands.

Councillor D. Saunders and Councillor Bruce spoke under Council Procedure Rule 24.1.

Councillor Johnston proposed, Councillor Nicholson seconded and Members agreed the following:

That Cabinet adopt the Beach Management Plan and agree option 2 to the Cabinet report; to allow officers to take forward the required work as identified in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 of the report, subject to existing delegations and budgetary restrictions.

Meeting concluded: 8.35 pm