

EXECUTIVE, POLICY & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2018 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber - Council Offices.

Present: Councillor Jonathan Curran (Chairman); Councillors Bambridge, Johnston, L Potts, Taylor and Wright

In Attendance: Councillors Dellar, Savage and Townend

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the following Members:

Councillor Glenn Coleman-Cooke;
Councillor Dixon;
Councillor Campbell, substituted by Councillor Johnston;
Councillor Rusiecki, substituted by Councillor Taylor.

14. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest received at the meeting.

When Members sought advice regarding item 4 on the agenda on 'Asset Management – The Museums,' Mr Tim Howes, Director of Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer explained that the only grounds that the Members who were also Margate Charter Trustees could declare an interest on was if there was a significant interest; i.e. if the issues in the report affected the financial position of the Charter Trustees.

However in this instance, there was no need for councillors to declare an interest, because the issue to be discussed did not affect the financial position of the Margate Charter Trustees.

15. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Bambridge proposed, Councillor Linda Potts seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the meeting that was held on 31 July 2018.

16. ASSET MANAGEMENT - THANET MUSEUMS

Ms Edwina Crowley, Head of Asset Management introduced the report and advised the meeting about the review work that had been undertaken by the asset team with regards to council assets in the context of the operational costs for managing those assets.

Responding to the proposals in the report the Panel raised questions and made comments as follows:

- The report was a fair reflection of the current status of the council assets under consideration;
- The boiler in the Margate Town Hall (Mayor's Parlour) kept breaking down and being repaired by TDC at high cost, instead of replacing the boiler;
- At one point the Mayor's Office had to be relocated to a different location for about 8 weeks during which time the boiler was being fixed;
- The building was continuing to deteriorate;

- The Dickens House Museum had been bequeathed with £50k. Was the issue regarding those funds resolved so that they could be used for maintaining the building?
- The Town Hall had a lot of potential. Why was it taking until about 2020 to conclude the disposal process;
- Could Council apply to the national lottery fund to pay for the maintenance of the buildings under review?
- Could Council employ an expert who could explore the option for setting up a joint venture with an established museum to run the local museums?
- These properties were assets of community value and had to be protected;
- Marketing a building that was gifted to the public in perpetuity could not be supported.

Speaking under Council Procedure 20.1, Councillor Dellar made a statement on the background and significance of the Margate Town Hall to the local community.

In response to Member observations and questions Ms Crowley said the following:

- There was no money allocated in the budget for the significant works to be undertaken on the Margate Town Hall and Museum;
- However some emergency works on gutters and windows are being carried out by the Facilities management and projects team;;
- The reasons for the closure of the Margate Town Hall were believe to be due to the a fire risk assessment but records would be checked;
- The Boiler in the Town Hall was condemned;
- With regards to Dickens House Museum, the Executor was still holding the funds bequeathed to the Museum;
- With regards to the seemingly long decision making process, the Council needed to take time to come to a decision as there was a significant amount of work to be done to ensure the right decision was finally made;
- The council wanted to use the most transparent approach in managing the disposals process for the assets in question and that process would involve going to tender in order to identify the most suitable organisation to operate the buildings.

After some considerable debate on the report Councillor Johnston proposed, Councillor Linda Potts seconded and Members agreed the following:

Before making a decision on the assets, Cabinet had to consider the following courses of action:

1. Fully investigate the full legalities and history of the buildings;
2. Establish when the £50k funds bequeathed to Dickens House would be made available to be used for the maintenance of the Museum and whether TDC had the right to dispose of the building.

Mr Howes advised the meeting that TDC had authority to make the decisions being proposed in the officer report regarding the Town Hall and that Members could also study the related documents lodged in the Lands Registry to confirm that view.

17. FOOD LAW SERVICE PLAN AND ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Councillor Game, Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods introduced the item for discussion and said that all local councils were required to produce Food Service Plans that reflected how they would deliver the statutory service in their respective areas. The current challenge was to adopt a policy that reflected the needs

and requirements of the food service sector before and after Brexit, as the implications of Brexit were unknown.

Panel Members made the following observations:

- The report was comprehensive and there was support for the recommendations;
- It was encouraging to note that physical inspections were part of the approach for delivering the proposed service plan;
- Did the Council have enough staff to implement the approach being proposed in the Policy?
- Was council going to recruit additional staff to add to the current staff complement?
- Was council going to provide training to staff?

Ms Penny Button, Head of Safer Neighbourhoods responded to queries and indicated that the council had to work with limited resources at its disposal.

The Panel proposed that Cabinet identified funding for staff training and additional staffing in order to effectively deliver the highly needed statutory service.

The Panel further agreed to recommend the Food Law Service Plan and Enforcement Policy to Council.

18. REVIEW OF EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2018/19

Members noted the report.

19. FORWARD PLAN AND EXEMPT CABINET REPORT LIST FOR PERIOD 12 SEPTEMBER 2018 - 28 FEBRUARY 2019

Members noted the report.

Meeting concluded: 7.45 pm