

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2021 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Ash Ashbee (Chair); Councillors Pugh, J Bayford, R Bayford and D Saunders

In Attendance: Councillors Albon, Austin, Currie, Garner, M Saunders, Shonk, Whitehead and Wright

772. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Council Kup.

773. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

774. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Ashbee proposed, Councillor David Saunders seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 18 November 2021.

775. TLS KPI Q1 & Q2 - HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT

Cabinet discussed the Housing Services performance report that showed that the Housing team had made tangible improvements to the service since transition from East Kent Housing to a council in-house service. Members acknowledged where the service had done well, including receiving an outcome of 'reasonable assurance' in a recent audit for Landlord compliance. Members noted that the improvements have been made in income management and how they have turned the capital programme around.

The report also reflected where performance was not where the council would want it to be. Improvement actions have been identified to these areas; that included applying focus to Landlord compliance to complete Fire Risk Assessment actions and electrical safety certificates so that they are in a position to request the Regulator for Social Housing to remove the current notice on the Council. Cabinet further noted that Void performance was being improved by creating a dedicated team for this area through a recent restructure. The team was making progress on the ambitious improvement plan which will also make an impact on the team's performance over the coming year.

Councillor Whitehead spoke under Council Procedure Rule 20.1.

Councillor Jill Bayford proposed, Councillor Pugh seconded and Members agreed the following recommendations, to:

1. Note and scrutinise the contents of these reports for quarter 1:
 - Performance data Summary - Annex 1;
 - Performance report - Annex 2;
 - Compliance data summary - Annex 3;
 - Compliance report - Annex 4;
2. Note and scrutinise the contents of these reports for quarter 2:
 - Performance data Summary - Annex 5;

- Performance report - Annex 6;
- Compliance data summary - Annex 7;
- Compliance report - Annex 8.

776. REVISIONS TO THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS) - LOCAL PLAN WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Local Plan Programme for the revision of the Local Development Scheme (LDS). Every local planning authority has to “prepare and maintain” a work programme for its Local Plan-related work, known as the Local Development Scheme. This is a requirement under the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The current LDS was agreed by Cabinet on 17 December 2020, following the review of the adopted Plan. Since then, work towards the Local Plan update has proceeded, with a Cabinet Advisory Group (including Members from all political groups) sitting to discuss key matters for the update. However, there have been some delays to the work programme, set out in the report, and it is important that the LDS is updated to reflect the new programme.

The report also considered other elements of local planning policy and whether they needed to be updated. The proposed amendments to the Local Development Scheme were set out in the cabinet report for decision.

The following Members spoke under Council Procedure 20.1:

Councillor Austin;
Councillor Smith;
Councillor Whitehead.

Councillor Ashbee, Councillor Bob Bayford seconded and Cabinet agreed the proposals for the revised Local Development Scheme, as detailed in the Cabinet report.

777. INCREASE PROVISION OF HOUSING RESPONSE OFFICERS AT THE TOWER BLOCKS

Members were advised that the condition of the Council’s estates caused much dissatisfaction for residents. Complaints that have been forwarded to the Council included the presence of litter, fly tipping and weeds as well as the cleanliness of communal areas. The residents have also told the Council that they wanted to see a greater presence of Council officers on their estates.

Housing Response Officers (HROs) work on Council estates by providing essential services such as turning paladin bins in bin stores, unblocking bin chutes, removing rubbish and fly tipping, cleaning and litter picking. The council does not currently have enough HROs to provide a service that makes visible improvements to the condition of our estates; and therefore the report recommended an increase in the budget to support Housing Response Officers and provide two additional officers dedicated to the tower blocks.

In order to fund the additional resources, Cabinet considered recommendations for a new service charge for the residents of the tower blocks to pay for the enhanced services these officers would provide. The residents of the tower blocks had been consulted on this change and the results showed a good level of support for the proposals, as set out in the cabinet report.

The new dedicated officers will also bring additional benefits to the tower blocks, such as adding extra security to these estates, where the nature of high rise living does often

mean more incidents of Antisocial behaviour due to the number of people living in a smaller space. The Housing Response officers will become a familiar face to our tenants and leaseholders at the tower blocks, making residents feel safer and being someone to report issues to as well as making a noticeable difference to the condition of the estates.

The following Members spoke under Council Procedure 20.1:

Councillor Austin;
Councillor Albon;
Councillor Whitehead.

Councillor Jill Bayford proposed, Councillor Bob Bayford seconded and Cabinet agreed the following:

1. To approve the introduction of an additional service charge to the tenants and leaseholders of the 6 tower blocks in the district, to enable the provision of 2 x HROs dedicated solely to the tower block estates;
2. To recommend to Full Council that the necessary budget is approved for this service funded from the new service charge.

778. COMMUNITY PARKS GRANT FUNDING - PROPOSED PLAY AREA IMPROVEMENTS

Cabinet considered proposals for the expenditure of £211k of grant funding for the improvement of a number of play areas in the district's parks. Members were advised that on 9 November 2021 the Council was notified of the grant allocation from KCC for Community Parks as part of Contain Outbreak Management Funding (COMF). The timescale for this project was reported as being short and the funding had to be spent by 31 March 2022.

A project proposal was therefore prepared at pace which proposed that the funding be allocated to make improvements at 4 play areas as follows:

1. At Ethelbert Crescent, Cliftonville the condition of the Viking Ship play equipment is deteriorating and action is required to manage Health and Safety risk. Without this funding it would have been necessary to close this play area in the short term. It is proposed to spend the majority (approximately £170k) of the community parks funding on the improvement of this play area.

The work will involve the removal of all existing play equipment and replacement with new modern equipment of durable design which includes 9 new pieces of play apparatus and the laying of rubberised safety surfacing. Draft details of the proposed installation can be found at Annex 1 to the Cabinet report.

Where possible the large natural timber sections of the old play equipment will be carefully removed and taken to Dane Park depot for storage with the intention of recycling for non structural uses such as raised bedding borders in future maintenance or improvement schemes.

2. At Crispe Park, Birchington the steel framed play equipment and steel perimeter fence will be repainted to extend asset life and improve their appearance to help encourage use of this play equipment.
3. At Northdown Park, Cliftonville the rubberised safety surfacing around the play equipment requires replacement. This work will reduce maintenance burden at the park and will improve appearance.

4. The play area at Memorial Recreation Ground, Broadstairs was substantially replaced and upgraded in 2014. However it has sadly suffered two major instances of vandalism and the entire timber boundary fence was damaged beyond repair last year. It is therefore proposed to install a new powder coated bow topped (and more vandal resistant) steel fence to encourage the safe use of this park.

The following Members spoke under Council Procedure 20.1:

Councillor Garner;
Councillor Austin.

Councillor Pugh proposed, Councillor David Saunders seconded and Cabinet agreed the following:

1. The Option 2 for expenditure as described in Section 4 of the Cabinet report, using allocated Community Parks funding. This will include major replacement and improvement works at Ethelbert Crescent play area in Cliftonville. All approved work to be completed by 31 March 2022.

779. COUNCIL MOTION ON NOTICE REFERRED TO CABINET - DISABLED PARKING SPACES

Cabinet considered the motion that was adopted and referred to Cabinet by Full Council. The meeting confirmed that the Council currently provided one hundred and sixty four disabled bays on-street that have been applied for by members of the public as well as bays in our off-street carparks. The process for applying for on-street disabled parking bays was controlled by Kent County Council (KCC) under the existing Agency Agreements. The KCC policy did not allow personalised permits for individual bays as these were provided on the public highway and accessible to all those who hold a relevant disabled parking badge.

Members were advised that the application process is very lengthy and throughout that process, the documents state that it is chargeable due to the amount of work it takes to get the bay written into a Traffic Regulation Order. The bay was not personalised as the bay facilities were part of the Highway which gave any blue badge holder the right to park in a disabled marked bay. However, Cabinet committed to engage KCC in discussion on the best way forward, mindful of the legislative framework that was currently in place for managing such facilities.

Councillor Whitehead spoke under Council Procedure 20.1.

Councillor David Saunders proposed, Councillor Ashbee seconded and agreed the following:

1. To engage with KCC on options available to accommodate all those who need access to disabled parking bays.

Meeting concluded: 8.02 pm