

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2023 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Rick Everitt (Chair); Councillors Whitehead, Albon, Duckworth, Keen and Yates

In Attendance: Councillors Austin, J Bayford, Davis, Kup, Pugh, Rattigan and Rogers

44. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence made at the meeting.

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

46. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Everitt proposed, Councillor Yates seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 21 September 2023.

47. 2024/25 DRAFT BUDGET

Members welcomed the presentation of a balanced budget for 2024/25 and the setting process for setting the budget had begun in summer. Cabinet acknowledged Members and officers' dedication and the tremendous amount of time and effort to get to the balanced budget position. Cabinet thanked officers and Members who were involved and contributed to the budget making process.

The meeting was advised that the next stage in the process was to consult with residents on the draft budget proposals, using the annual residents survey. This would run for six weeks through November into early December. After Having considered the survey results, Cabinet would return in the early part of 2024 with the final budget proposals to recommend to Council for approval.

Cabinet noted that despite what may seem like a lengthy and complicated process, this level of planning was of critical importance. It was how the Council could continue to deliver the services that matter to people, protect and support the most vulnerable residents. Within this draft budget, Cabinet was proposing to increase the net spending on local services by £2.2m. This was a really significant increase.

The inflationary pressures that the district council continued to face were the same cost increases as everyone else was facing on fuel, transport and pay and this had to be funded. Inflation remained high and the current economic climate made it difficult to predict the future. The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources presented a number of proposals to invest in some of the council's key services, which made a difference to the lives of local people.

On the General Fund budget, the Portfolio Holder proposed increased spending on priorities such as investment in parks and open spaces and recruitment of more street cleansing staff. This investment had been prioritised for some of the service areas that matter the most to residents. When preparing this budget, Cabinet also made sure to

propose spending money wisely and in a way that was clearly aligned with the proposed corporate priorities, as detailed in the report.

Despite the fact that inflation was running at around 6.7%, the Council was only allowed to increase Council Tax by a maximum of 3%. The proposed 3% increase in Council Tax, at £7.64 per Band D equivalent property, represented an increase of less than 15p a week for each household. Therefore, Cabinet continued to look to optimise local income, in order to improve and provide quality services for local people. This was being done by optimising key income streams and applying inflation linked increases to charges for services which were only used by a limited proportion of residents.

The Council had a substantial capital programme to deliver over the next four years, through ongoing Levelling Up Fund projects for both Margate and Ramsgate and the Margate Town Deal. These funds provided the opportunity for significant investment in the district and the impacts on the budget were set out in the draft capital programmes for 2024-2028.

Cabinet was proposing investing in assets right across the wide range of services that were provided by Council to residents and visitors. This included the following:

- £1.5m allocated for Mill Lane Car Park refurbishment;
- Electrifying the Council's vehicle fleet and investing in charging infrastructure and
- Putting solar panels on the Council's leisure centres and decarbonising its property estate to meet its climate change targets.

In summary the Portfolio Holder said that Cabinet was proud to be making further investment in order to provide additional temporary accommodation to meet the needs of homeless people, with a plan to spend £8.4m over the next four years. This approach would help provide more temporary housing within the district for some of the most vulnerable residents. In the long run this would be beneficial to the Council's finances, as it would reduce the spend on temporary housing accommodation to private companies.

The following Members spoke under Council Procedure Rule 20.1:

Councillor Rattigan;
Councillor Davis;
Councillor Rogers.

Councillor Yates proposed Councillor Albon seconded and Cabinet agreed that:

1. The proposed budget consultation be approved for publication;
2. The draft 2024/25 General Fund revenue budget be considered and noted; and
3. The 2024-28 General Fund capital programme be considered and noted.

48. EXTENSION TO THE PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER FOR DOG CONTROL

Cabinet considered proposals for the extension of the Public Space Protection Order for Dog Control and Members agreed that Thanet District Council was committed to improving the environment and improving community safety. Directly relating to this commitment was the Council's ability to address anti-social behaviour and related complaints.

Public Space Protection Orders was a valuable tool to allow councils and partners to tackle behaviours that could have a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality. The Thanet Dog Public Spaces Protection Order was originally implemented in

2017 and extended for a further 3 years in 2020 and continued to be an important aspect in maintaining quality of cleanliness on Thanet's beaches, and protection of the district's coastline, cemeteries and playgrounds. The order had helped protect the diversity of bird populations and wildlife at Pegwell Bay.

Councillor Pugh spoke under Council Procedure Rule 20.1.

Councillor Keen proposed, Councillor Duckworth seconded and Cabinet agreed:

1. That the Current PSPO is extended for a further 3 years until 2026;
2. To delegate any minor amendment of the PSPO to the Chief Executive.

49. THE HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY

Cabinet considered the Health and Safety Policy proposals presented at the meeting. These proposals were reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 26 September 2023. The proposed policy was an update to reflect a new senior corporate management structure and legislative changes.

The new policy now reflected the new corporate management health and safety responsibilities, Health and Safety Committee restructure, the current Chief Executive endorsement of the policy through a new signature. The Policy needed updating to reflect the legal compliance to the latest health and safety regulation and standards.

Councillor Austin spoke under Council Procedure Rule 20.1.

Councillor Yates proposed, Councillor Keen seconded and Cabinet approved the Health & Safety Policy.

50. DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2024-28

Cabinet considered proposals for draft Corporate Plan for 2024-28. The council's previous Corporate Statement, which was approved by Council in 2019, had now reached the end of its four-year cycle and was due for renewal. The report proposed a new Corporate Plan which intended to set the direction of travel for the council over the next four years.

Having a clearly defined plan was essential to support the council to work towards achieving its longer-term aspirations for Thanet and to ensure that resources across the council were focused on what matters most to local people. This subject matter therefore followed on naturally from the proposed budget that Cabinet discussed earlier during the meeting.

The refreshed Corporate Plan proposed five new overarching priorities for the council:

1. To keep our district safe and clean;
2. To deliver the housing we need;
3. To protect our environment;
4. To create a thriving place;
5. To work efficiently for you.

These were clear statements and firmly reflect the feedback that was received from constituents when they told Council that they wanted their streets to be kept clean, be able to feel safe and have thriving towns in the district. A six-week consultation period was proposed to ensure that the local community and key stakeholders had an opportunity to comment. A final Corporate Plan document would be prepared taking into account the feedback received during this engagement. The plan would then be

presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel for their consideration and then to Cabinet and Full Council for formal approval and adoption.

Having a clear and concise Corporate Plan would help the Council to ensure that the community and stakeholders were aware of the work that it was delivering and through regular reporting of the corporate performance, would have an oversight of the progress being made. For this to be as clear as it could be the Portfolio Holder made additional proposals and said that further detail would be added to the draft Corporate Plan prior to public consultation, to provide some specific and tangible examples of the work the Council will deliver over the next four years against each of the priority areas.

Councillor Austin spoke under Council Procedure Rule 20.1.

Councillor Everitt proposed, Councillor Albon seconded and Cabinet approved the following recommendations:

1. That delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive, in consultation with myself, to provide examples of the projects and activities that the Council will deliver within the draft Corporate Plan;
2. That the draft Corporate Plan 2024-28 and proposed six-week public consultation beginning the week commencing 30 October.

Meeting concluded: 7.31 pm